Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

Spring 2024

The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors: A Phenomenological Investigation

Chelsea Jo Hilliard
Old Dominion University, chelsea.jo.carter@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

THE EXPERIENCES OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNING-FOCUSED

SCHOOL COUNSELORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

by

Chelsea Jo Hilliard
B.S. August 2018, Old Dominion University
M.S. December 2020, Old Dominion University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATION - COUNSELING

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
May 2024

Approved by:

Emily Goodman-Scott (Chair)

Stephanie Smith-Durkin (Member)

Natalie Edirmanasinghe (Member)

ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCES OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNING-FOCUSED SCHOOL COUNSELORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Chelsea Jo Hilliard
Old Dominion University, 2024
Chair: Dr. Emily Goodman-Scott

Equity in education has become increasingly prioritized, due to the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education. With the K-12 student population diversity continuously increasing in areas such as abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, languages, immigration status, and more, ensuring *equitable* access to education is vital. One such unique student group needing equitable access to education are multilingual learners or MLL. Located within schools, school counselors are uniquely positioned to equitably serve MLL students. Overall, while the research on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level) is evolving- more research is needed, to ensure school counselors are equitably serving this population, especially given their unique needs. This study took a phenomenological approach to capturing the lived experiences of 11 school counselors who primarily support their schools' MLL student populations. This study resulted in six themes: (a) advocating for equity; (b) unique challenges and responsibilities within the MLSC role; (c) linguistic nuances; (d) collaboration is crucial; (e) mutual respect and empathy with MLL students; (f) adapting interventions specific to MLL students. Implications for practice, preparation, advocacy, and future research are explored.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Still managed to moonwalk straight through a minefield." - Drake

My journey to this point started far before beginning this doctoral program. However, to save myself from writing another 158 pages, I would like to pay special acknowledgement to those who have been instrumental throughout this program.

To my dissertation committee: I cannot express the depths of my gratitude. Dr. Smith Durkin, you have been a constant source of inspiration as I came up behind you through these counseling programs. You have provided me with support, care, and authenticity which I am so grateful to have. Dr. Edirmanasinghe, I would not be in this program if it were not for your belief in my abilities to pursue it. Since my master's program, I have been in awe of your skills in self-advocacy and advocating for others. I am fortunate to have crossed paths with you, and still continue to learn from you. Dr. Goodman-Scott, you have been a staple throughout my time at ODU. Your unwavering positivity has consistently motivated me along the way. Thank you for chairing my dissertation, including the countless hours that you have put in to get me to this point. With you three, I feel as though I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

To my mom and two sisters: I think I always hoped this day would come, and I think you all knew that it would happen. In your eyes, I feel as though I can do anything. Although it hasn't been everyone's favorite decision of mine, thank you for supporting my move to Virginia. I hope I have, and continue to, make you proud.

To my Jamestown family: I have been SO fortunate to have supported such amazing students throughout my time at Jamestown. This dissertation was inspired by my multilingual

learning students- and I would not be here without their patience with and trust in me. Thank you. To my counseling team, my MLL teachers, and administration, your support has been instrumental in getting me through this program, and I cannot give enough thanks for y'all being so wonderful and accommodating.

To members of my doctoral cohort: Nic, Tom, Betsy, Jessica, and Onur, I could not have made it here without you. For 3 years each of you have been a constant source of encouragement, laughter, motivation, venting, friendship, and collaboration that I have never felt before. You provided me with the care and support that I never knew I needed, and cannot express my gratitude for the various ways that each one of you has impacted me. (Best social experiment EVER).

To my DSAs (Dissertation Support Animals): Kujo Dexter, Debo Drake, and Boogie Smalls, thank you for the cuddles, distractions, and the reminders to stop and smell the cheese.

Finally, to the love of my life. Jordan Hilliard, who would have known 8 years ago that we would be here now? You have *always* supported me with every endeavor, but I know this has been the most challenging one yet. You have sacrificed alongside me for three years, never complaining, and never making me feel guilty for choosing this for us. You have been a never-ending source of light, love, and encouragement. Above everyone else, it is you I could not have done this without. Thank you for being the best partner I could ever dream of. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an introduction to the professional literature and background for the topic of investigation for this dissertation. Namely, exploring the lived experience of K-12 school counselors' who primarily support multilingual learners in schools. This chapter will briefly: (a) shows how historically minoritized populations continue to be inequitably served in education; (b) explore who multilingual learners are; (c) discuss the role of school counselors and their commitment to ensuring equity for all students; (d) introduce the dearth of professional peer reviewed literature on school counselors working with multilingual learners; (e) explain the purpose and research question for this specific dissertation study; (f) and finally, outline the research methodology for the proposed study.

Equity in education has become increasingly prioritized, due to the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education. While education within the U.S. has been centered in Whiteness and other identities deemed dominant (Fallon et al., 2021), the U.S. student body has demographically evolved and become more diverse (NCES, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). With the K-12 student population diversity continuously increasing in areas such as abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, languages, immigration status, and more, ensuring *equitable* access to education is vital. One such unique student group needing equitable access to education are multilingual learners or MLL students.

Multilingual learners have formerly been named 'English-language learners,' 'English-as-second language learners,' 'English learners,' etc., but have begun to be reidentified as 'multilingual learners' (MLL), which draws upon their language learning from a strengths-based

perspective (WIDA, n.d.). From 2010 to 2020, the percentage of MLL students increased from 4.5 million students to 5 million students (NCES, 2023). Many MLL students and/or their parents are recent immigrants, and their stories often involve rich descriptions of their dream to come to the U.S. and the perseverance to overcome obstacles in that pursuit (McCabe et al., 2013). Immigrant families have a multitude of strengths that can ultimately aid in pursuing immigration to the U.S. Strengths of immigrant families include personal characteristics (i.e., multilingualism, optimism), family cohesiveness, multigenerational households, family support and stability, nurturing and loving upbringings and current environments, and strong social skills (Cabrera et al., 2022). Additionally, immigrant families have many protective factors which support them in the event they are faced with adversity. The most prominent protective factors include familism, social support, ethnic identity, religion, stable settlement, and resiliency (Fazel et al., 2012; Revens et al., 2021; Zetino et al., 2020).

Immigrant and refugee youth experience varying traumatic events before, during, and after their migration into the United States, including exposure to actual or threatened physical or sexual violence to themselves or family members, death of loved ones, and seeking asylum to avoid gang recruitment, abandonment, and abuse (Baily, 2017; Cohodes et al., 2021; Doctors Without Borders, 2020; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Exposure to these traumatic events places youth at increased risk for developing both immediate and long-term psychiatric symptoms (Shonkoff et al., 2012), which can result in meeting the criterion for having posttraumatic stress disorder (Cohondes et al., 2021). In fact, migrant and refugee children experience PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other psychiatric conditions at a high rate (Blackmore et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2015). Despite the possibility of serious mental health

concerns for immigrant and refugee youth, protective factors play a critical role in avoiding or counteracting those mental health concerns.

Once arrived, immigrant MLL students can face challenges that include having a sense of loss for their previous community and their families in their countries of origin, worrying about the status of their immigration applications, adjusting to living in their new environment, physical and mental health concerns and the inability to access healthcare, and changes in family economic status (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Oldroyd et al., 2022), all while being full-time students and often learning English for the first time.

Despite many MLL students having limited English proficiency and language differences that present challenges to communication, MLL students typically make great efforts to access their education (McCabe et al., 2013; Van Roekel, 2008). Schools use a variety of models when supporting their MLL students, including having students in courses taught by English-as-Second Language (ESL) teachers (Calderón et al., 2011), in 'shelter' content classes designed to have a majority of or only MLL students within them, in newcomer programs (i.e., short-term programs intended to address limited English Proficiency, low literacy, limited schooling, and ease transition; Adelman & Taylor, 2015), in classes surrounded by peers who only speak English (Hernández, 2004), or a mixture of these types. Despite the United States not having an official language, and the clear diversity in languages represented, MLL students are expected to assimilate to English-centered K-12 education. Just as the strengths-based terminology suggests, MLL students who have recently immigrated into the U.S. are often vacillating between the existing cultures and languages from their country of origin, as well as a set of new expectations and cultures placed on them from U.S. schools (Hernández, 2004).

The impact that trauma has on immigrant and refugee youth requires mental health care that is trauma-informed and developmentally sensitive by mental health caretakers that practice cultural humility, acknowledge systemic barriers, and recognize the cultural considerations of these youth (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017). Even though mental health caretakers may incorporate these necessary practices, a small portion of these youth receive mental health services in their lives (Betancourt et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012). One way to address this dilemma is to make sure youth have access to mental health caretakers. Thus, schools are well-positioned to provide these services, or aid in the referral to resources to support students' unique needs (Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012). With the U.S. having a historically inequitable education system, as well as the legal, ethical, and moral imperative to serve every student (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), schools and their personnel must be ready to modify schools to meet the needs of their rapidly growing MLL student population.

Located within schools, K-12 school counselors collaborate with students as well as school and community members to create a climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to promote student academic, career, and social/emotional development (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2021b). ASCA's position statements reinforce the organization's stance that school counselors equitably serve *all* students in K-12 schools, including those across a range of identities and demographics. One such student population is MLL students.

There is a growing body of literature that describes the training needs of pre-service school counselors to effectively support MLL students. Overall, scholarship on pre-service school counselors' preparation to serve MLL students shows that although training to date is not comprehensive (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al.,

2022), pre-service school counselors have a strong desire to engage in training that will allow them to better support their MLL students.

In addition to research conducted on pre-service school counselors, scholars have also begun to investigate practicing school counselors' work with MLL students. Overall, a growing body of literature describes interventions which school counselors implement to support the needs of their MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018), and the impact that this support has on the involved school counselors (Guillion, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Shi & Watkinson, 2019). While the research on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level) is evolving- more research is needed, to ensure school counselors are equitably serving this population, especially given their unique needs.

School counselors, as change agents who support the equitable educational experience of MLL students, can utilize the theoretical groundings of Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) to advocate for mutuality and respect at the societal level (Jordan, 2001), and to establish connections between school personnel and their MLL students. RCT is a theoretical construct often used to therapeutically support people who are minoritized, which can be used to describe MLL students in the context of U.S. K-12 education. Scholars have shown that RCT can be a beneficial tool for school counselors to use to support their MLL students due to their work in ensuring equity for *all* students (Tuttle et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Based on the growing literature on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level), recommendations for future studies include: interviewing practicing school counselors to determine what, if any, training they received that prepared them for their

work with MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009); qualitative investigations to understand the unique strategies school counselors implement when engaging MLLs (Johnson et al., 2016); hearing from school counselors who work with MLL students and who collaborate with school personnel in those efforts (Shi & Watkinson, 2019); and conducting a study with a national sample of school counselors at all K-12 levels (Guillion, 2020).

To further explore the limitations in these existing studies, future scholarship is warranted in order to: gather data from practicing school counselors who can provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of and future recommendations for MLL pre-service preparation; examine school counselors' experiences with MLL students over time (i.e., multiple trainings or extended professional experiences); and have larger, national sample sizes which extend beyond one school, one school level, and include a variety of student demographics (i.e., ethnicities, languages, etc.).

The U.S. is continuing to change immigration and citizenship policies, and both state and federal departments of education continue to better support MLL students, demonstrating that providing support and resources to this population is crucial. In fact, one of the top priorities of the current United States Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona is providing every student a pathway to multilingualism (as noted in his January 2023 speech). To align with that initiative, school counselors within positions of supporting MLL students must be examined. As it stands, there is no research that focuses solely on school counselors who serve in roles that are *primarily* focused on multilingual learning (MLL) students, or across K-12 levels and MLL populations, thus leaving the need for research.

Purpose and Research Question

In an effort to fill the literature gap and previous scholarly recommendations, I explored the following research question: *What are the lived experiences of K-12 school counselors who primarily serve their school's multilingual learning student population?*

Research Design

A descriptive phenomenological study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of school counselors who primarily support their school's multilingual learning student population. Taking a phenomenological approach allowed the voice of practicing school counselors to share their experiences with this phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2023). This methodology helped to describe the phenomena of school counselors within roles of supporting their school's multilingual learning student population (Hays & Singh, 2023).

This study followed the guidelines of a descriptive phenomenological approach as described by one of the founding researchers, Amedeo Giorgi (2009). My role as the researcher was that of the study's instrument (Hays & Singh, 2023). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 participants to describe the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009, Hays & Singh, 2023). Participants were deliberately invited, and conveniently sampled, to participate due to their experience with the phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2023). Participants met the inclusion criteria of being (a) located in the United States and (b) practicing school counselors who are currently or in the last two years, were the designated school counselor for the multilingual learning student population in their school. Various trustworthiness strategies were employed to ensure a credible and rigorous methodological qualitative study (Hays & Singh, 2023).

Definition of Terms

- **Multilingual Learners (MLL):** The national organization who created English language proficiency standards, WIDA (acronym for the three states who received the grant that

ultimately created the organization: Wisconsin, Delaware, Arkansas), more recently

changed what has been formally named 'English-language learners,' 'English-as-second

language learners,' 'English learners,' etc. to the term 'multilingual learners' (MLL)

(WIDA, n.d.). Previous and current research refers primarily to these students as English-

language learners. For purposes of this literature review, and all research conducted in

this study, this student population will be referred to the more recently adopted, strength-

based phrasing: multilingual learners (MLLs) and any English as a Second Language

(ESL) classes referred to as MLL classes.

- **School Counselor:** School counselors are certified/licensed educators who aim to

  improve student success for *all* students by implementing a comprehensive school

  counseling program (ASCA, 2023).

- **Phenomenology:** A phenomenon is something experienced by a person, and the

  phenomenology is the meaning and interactions it has with others (Hays & Singh, 2023).

  A phenomenological study is the act of examining these experiences with the intent to

  make meaning of them in a broader context.

- **Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT):** RCT was first seen as a feminist theory, with the

  understanding that women's voices were minoritized, but is now more widely used in

  support of all minoritized and centered identities (Jordan, 2017). RCT was founded as a

  conscious realization of our interconnectedness due to the "inevitability of needing one

  another throughout our lives" (Jordan, 2017, p. 231), focusing on core tenets such as

  mutuality, growth-fostering relationships, and mutual empathy and empowerment.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents the professional literature and background for the topic of investigation for this dissertation. Namely, exploring the lived experience of K-12 school counselors' who primarily support multilingual learners in schools. This chapter will: (a) review national data that shows how historically minoritized populations continue to be inequitably served in education; (b) explore who multilingual learners are; (c) discuss the role of school counselors and their commitment to ensuring equity for all students; (d) present the dearth of professional peer reviewed literature on school counselors working with multilingual learners; and finally (e) explain the rationale for this specific dissertation study.

State of Education

The United States Department of Education shares that their mission is " to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., see About ED). Similarly, other organizations, such as The Education Trust also aim for U.S. education to equitably serve all students and to prepare them for the opportunities and demands of the world outside of school doors (The Education Trust, 2023). Equity in education has become increasingly prioritized, due to the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education. Mainly, education was founded after the exploitative colonization of the U.S. and continues to be oppressive with instruction founded in White, European, Protestant virtues of family, religion, and community (Fallon et al., 2021; McClellan, 1999). Additionally, exclusionary practices within education

such as out-of-school suspension, self-contained English language learning classes and others further the gap in educational equity.

While education within the U.S. has been centered in Whiteness and other identities deemed dominant and receiving greater privilege (Fallon et al., 2021), the U.S. student body has demographically evolved and become more diverse. For instance, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that from 2010 to 2021, the percentages of students who are White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native have all decreased, and the percentages of students who are Hispanic, Asian, and of two or more races have increased (NCES, 2023). In regard to immigration status, the percentage of immigrant people within the U.S. increased from 4.7% in the 1970s to 13.7% in 2018 (Pew Research Center, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Additionally, over 350 languages are represented within the U.S. (Aud et al., 2011). Although the U.S. does not have an official language declared, U.S. schools require students to speak, learn, and write in English.

The U.S. requires the ideological monolingualism of the society as well as the hegemony of English and the minoritization of other languages. Despite the billions of dollars spent on foreign language education in the United States, only 1% of American adults who become proficient in the foreign language they study in a U.S. classroom (Friedman, 2015). Evidently not all bilingual education programs are effective, but their lack of meeting benchmarks can be attributed to socio-political and economic issues such as poverty, inequality of resource distribution, poorly prepared teachers, and overall abandonment of quality education from the school system within which the bilingual education program exists; in these schools, Math and English programs for mainstream students also fail to meet the state-mandated benchmarks (Macedo, 2019). Languages taught in schools and universities are tied to the imposition of

imperial and colonized languages (Macedo, 2019), made clear by the example of the term 'foreign languages' which describes all languages that are not English. College track students are required to study a foreign language, whereas non-college track students (mostly lower-class minoritized students) are not required to take foreign language courses as a precondition for high school graduation, furthering the prestige put on 'foreign language' tracks versus bilingual educated students. Unsurprisingly, the strict requirement of ideological monolingualism is one of the major reasons why Americans are said to be poor second-language learners (Macedo, 2019).

Public education in the U.S. should ensure that *all* students, across a range of identities (i.e., abilities, language, socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc.), have *equal* access to educational opportunities (Aud et al., 2011; Capps et al., 2005; McCabe et al., 2013; NCES, 2023). With the K-12 student population diversity continuously increasing in areas such as abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, languages, immigration status, and more, ensuring *equitable* access to education is vital.

As a result of an educational system that has been rooted in inequities, and has demonstrated time and time again inequitable outcomes, U.S. leaders have attempted reforms through the years to better meet student needs. Two such recent initiatives have been No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), both of which have an overall goal to determine measurable outcomes of student success (U.S. Department of Education, 2001; n.d.). At the same time, while K-12 education aims to serve all students equitably, these recent policies leave little-to-no room for student individualization- including meeting the rich, diverse identities and demographics present in today's K-12 schools (i.e., students with differing mental and physical abilities, cultural strengths, socioeconomic statuses, race and ethnicities, languages

spoken, etc.) (U.S. Department of Education, 2001; n.d.). One such unique student group are multilingual learners or MLL students.

Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners are students who interact with multiple languages a day: English and their native language(s). Multilingual learners have formerly been named 'English-language learners,' 'English-as-second language learners,' 'English learners,' etc., but have begun to be reidentified as 'multilingual learners' (MLL), which draws upon their language learning from a strengths-based perspective (WIDA, n.d.). Current research on MLL student terminology across the U.S. shows that 30 states and the District of Columbia use only EL on their state education web pages, 8 states use a combination of EL and ELL on their state education web pages, 7 states use a combination of EL and ML or ELL and ML/MLL, 3 states only use ML, and 1 state uses EL and EB (Snyder et al., 2023). Multilingual learners (or MLL) is the terminology that 4 out of the 5 leading organizations in the field of English language development education and assessment use to describe these students; 'MLL' is an asset and strengths-based term that values students' culture and languages, recognizing their ability to learn English in addition to other languages they may already know (Snyder et al., 2023). The myriad of terms used to describe language education (i.e., English as a foreign language [EFL], English as a second language [ESL], and bilingual education [BE], etc.) and the students in which they serve (i.e., English-language learners [ELL], English-second language learners, multilingual learners [MLL], etc.), is a clear depiction of the power hierarchy that exists- making it known that bilingual education programs are less valued by schools and society (Macedo, 2019). Previous and current research refers primarily to these students as English-language learners. For purposes of this literature review, and all research examined in this study, this student population will be referred to as

multilingual learners (MLLs) and any English as a Second Language (ESL) classes referred to as MLL classes.

Multilingual learners were guaranteed the right to equitable educational opportunities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. NCLB and ESSA require that the student bodies of each school, including each subgroup of students (i.e., MLLs) must meet the same academic standards. Multilingual learning students continue to be protected through each of the aforementioned educational reforms, ensuring they have equitable educational opportunities. Unfortunately, these opportunities can "go unrealized when schools and other social institutions lack the understanding required to respond sensitively to the particular needs of dual language learners" (Murphey, 2014, p. 1).

In response to the aforementioned educational reforms and the desire to make K-12 education *equitable* for all students, including those who are MLL, WIDA (an acronym for the state that founded the organization- Wisconsin, Delaware, Arkansas) was formed. WIDA was created with a mission to advance "academic language development and academic achievement for children and youth who are culturally and linguistically diverse through high quality standards, assessments, research and professional learning for educators" (WIDA, n.d., see WIDA Mission). Through their work, they provide resources and training for school personnel to ensure they make their educational content accessible, and therefore equitable, for MLL students.

In his 2023 address on education in the U.S., Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona emphasized that students within our multilingual programs should be viewed as "gifted with assets that we want other students to have. Being bilingual and bicultural is a superpower!" His priorities for education within the U.S. highlight these values and stress that multilingual learners have unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds that should be shared.

Context and Culture

As stated previously, the overall demographics of the U.S. student body have diversified in the past decade, which includes MLL students. From 2010 to 2020, the percentage of MLL students increased from 4.5 million students to 5 million students (NCES, 2023). Children learning more than one language are currently about 1 in 3 U.S. children (Child Trends, 2012). First- and second-generation immigrant children are the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. child population with nearly 25% of children in the U.S. coming from immigrant families (Hernández et al., 2008).

MLL families, whether newly immigrated or from a previous immigrant generation, are often ethnically diverse which includes a myriad of values and practices. The largest percentage of immigrant parents of children under six years old within the U.S. comes from Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean countries (64%). Meanwhile, smaller percentages come from countries in Asia (23%), Europe and Canada (7%), and Africa and the Middle East (6%) (Capps et al., 2005; McCabe et al., 2013). Although Spanish is the largest MLL language represented, over 350 languages represent the MLL population within the U.S. (Aud et al., 2011), highlighting the great diversity of languages and cultures within the K-12 MLL student population.

Many MLL students and/or their parents are recent immigrants and their stories often involve rich descriptions of their dream to come to the U.S. and the perseverance to overcome obstacles in that pursuit (McCabe et al., 2013). Immigrant families have a multitude of strengths that can ultimately aid in pursuing immigration to the U.S. Strengths of immigrant families include personal characteristics (i.e., multilingualism, optimism), family cohesiveness, multigenerational households, family support and stability, nurturing and loving upbringings and

current environments, and strong social skills (Cabrera et al., 2022). Additionally, scholars discuss that immigrant families often have many protective factors which support them in the event they are faced with adversity; the most prominent protective factors include familism, social support, ethnic identity, religion, stable settlement, and resiliency (Fazel et al., 2012; Revens et al., 2021; Zetino et al., 2020).

Immigrant and refugee youth experience varying traumatic events before, during, and after their migration into the U.S., including exposure to actual or threatened physical or sexual violence to themselves or family members, death of loved ones, and seeking asylum to avoid gang recruitment, abandonment, and abuse (Baily, 2017; Cohodes et al., 2021; Doctors Without Borders, 2020; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Exposure to these traumatic events places youth at increased risk for developing both immediate and long-term psychiatric symptoms (Shonkoff et al., 2012), which can result in meeting the criterion for having posttraumatic stress disorder (Cohondes et al., 2021). In fact, migrant and refugee children experience PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other psychiatric conditions at a high rate (Blackmore et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2015). Despite the possibility of serious mental health concerns for immigrant and refugee youth, protective factors play a critical role in avoiding or counteracting those mental health concerns.

Once arrived, immigrant MLL students can face challenges that include having a sense of loss for their previous community and their families in their countries of origin, worrying about the status of their immigration applications, adjusting to living in their new environment, physical and mental health concerns and the inability to access healthcare, and changes in family economic status (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Oldroyd et al., 2022), all while being full-time students and often learning English for the first time.

Despite many MLL students having limited English proficiency and language differences that present challenges to communication, MLL students typically make great efforts to access their education (McCabe et al., 2013; Van Roekel, 2008). Schools use a variety of models when supporting their MLL students, including having students in courses taught by English-as-Second Language (ESL) teachers (Calderón et al., 2011), in 'shelter' content classes designed to have a majority of or only MLL students within them, in newcomer programs (i.e., short-term programs intended to address limited English Proficiency, low literacy, limited schooling, and ease transition; Adelman & Taylor, 2015), in classes surrounded by peers who only speak English (Hernández, 2004), or a mixture of these types. Despite the U.S. not having an official language, and the clear diversity in languages represented, MLL students are expected to assimilate to English-centered K-12 education. Just as the strengths-based terminology suggests, MLL students who have recently immigrated into the U.S. are often vacillating between the existing cultures and languages from their country of origin, as well as a set of new expectations and cultures placed on them from U.S. schools (Hernández, 2004).

The impact that trauma has on immigrant and refugee youth requires mental health care that is trauma-informed and developmentally sensitive by mental health caretakers that practice cultural humility, acknowledge systemic barriers, and recognize the cultural considerations of these youth (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017). Even though mental health caretakers may incorporate these necessary practices, a small portion of these youth receive mental health services in their lives (Betancourt et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012). One way to address this dilemma is to make sure youth have access to mental health caretakers. Thus, schools are well-positioned to provide these services, or aid in the referral to resources to support students' unique needs (Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012).

With the U.S. having a historically inequitable education system, as well as the legal, ethical, and moral imperative to serve every student (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), schools and their personnel must be ready to modify schools to meet the needs of their rapidly growing MLL student population. Even further, they must be ready to celebrate their resiliency and understand and affirm their unique stories and rich cultures. One such K-12 educational staff member is a school counselor.

School Counselors

School counselors are certified/licensed educators and counselors who implement comprehensive school counseling programs to support students. For instance, scholars have demonstrated the positive relationship between school counseling and beneficial student outcomes. Specifically, lower student-to-school counselor ratios have resulted in: improved attendance (Carey et al., 2012), improved Grade Point Average (GPA; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018), higher graduation rates (Lapan & Gysbers, 2012), and decreased disciplinary infractions (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Lapan et al., 2012). Additionally, recent research suggests that school counselors should be equitably distributed in schools (i.e., student caseload), based on students' needs (Donohue et al., 2022).

In serving students, school counselors prioritize the success of *all* students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2023), including students across a diverse range of backgrounds and identities like abilities, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, spoken language, and more. School counselors ensure student success through leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration, to promote equity and access for all students; these behaviors include working with students directly (i.e., counseling, advising, classroom lessons) and indirect

services provided on behalf of students (i.e., consultation, collaboration, and referrals; ASCA, 2023).

School counselors' professional identity and corresponding roles are guided by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a national organization which provides advocacy for the profession, ethical standards of practice, and professional position statements (ASCA, 2021). In ASCA's commitment that school counselors serve all students and decrease equity and opportunity gaps, they have created a range of professional position statements, highlighting the importance for school counselors to: engage in anti-racist practices (ASCA, 2021); be culturally competent (ASCA, 2021); ensure equity for all students (ASCA, 2018); facilitate partnerships with schools, families, and their communities (ASCA, 2022); and remove barriers for students with undocumented status (ASCA, 2019). According to ASCA (2021), school counselors utilize anti-racist practices to enhance awareness, obtain culturally responsive knowledge and skills, and engage in action through advocacy. ASCA does not currently have a position statement that explicitly details their support and commitment to supporting linguistically diverse and/or MLL students. School counselors collaborate with students and school community members to create a climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to promote student academic, career, and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2021b). These position statements reinforce ASCA's stance that school counselors equitably serve *all* students in K-12 schools, including those across a range of identities and demographics. One such student population is MLL students.

Serving Multilingual Learners

As mentioned earlier, historically and currently, U.S. schools prioritize and ascribe privilege to White, cisgender, heterosexual, native English-speaking male identities over other

cultures and demographics. As the U.S. K-12 students continue to increase in a diverse range of identities, cultures, and demographics, educational inequities may also increase toward groups that have been historically oppressed, such as the growing MLL student population (Hernández et al., 2008). Given that school counselors are guided by ASCA's various position statements championing equity, advocacy, systemic change, and cultural competence to serve *all* students, school counselors are ideal and can be integral in supporting MLL students. Next will begin a review of literature pertaining to school counselors serving MLL students, first focusing on pre-service and then practicing school counselors.

Pre-Service School Counselors. There is a growing body of literature that describes the training needs of pre-service school counselors to effectively support MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). To start, Burnham and colleagues (2009) implemented an experiential exercise with pre-service school counselors that included a range of education activities (i.e., education on MLL class content; collaborating with an MLL teacher to design and implement a series of counseling lessons within an MLL class; etc.). As a result, the pre-service school counselors reportedly gained an increased: awareness of cultural diversity across students; teacher collaboration and consultation; as well as more insight into the cultural challenges that could come up while supporting MLL students. The authors suggest future research include interviewing pre-service school counselors after entering into their roles as professional school counselors to connect the dots between what experiences were useful in their training and what areas they would have liked more preparation in to support MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009). While gaining insight into pre-service school counselors' experiences is important, this study could have been stronger by interviewing practicing school

counselors who could reflect on their past training and provide suggestions for improving future training. Additionally, updated research is needed as this study was conducted in 2009.

In another study, Johnson and Cain (2019) conducted a mixed-methods investigation to determine how an MLL teaching strategies workshop would influence pre-service school counselors' presentation behavior and thoughts. They found that the workshop did not significantly increase the MLL teaching strategies used by pre-service school counselors, although it did increase their awareness of MLL students' needs. The authors suggest that in the future, researchers include longer educational experiences (i.e., workshops, series, etc.) and the benefit for pre-service school counselors to practice in-depth MLL teaching strategies. Additionally, they recommended that understanding counselor educators' MLL knowledge and expertise could prove valuable (Johnson & Cain, 2019). This study provided key knowledge-mainly, when school counselors spend time with MLL students, the school counselors' awareness of their MLL students' needs increases. However, the insight from providing one workshop to pre-service school counselors is bounded by time (i.e., one training). There is a need to deepen this line of research, through examining school counselors' experiences with MLL students over time (i.e., multiple trainings or extended professional experiences).

Next, Shi et al. (2022) engaged in a practitioner-focused study to understand the lived experiences of pre-service school counselors in an experiential MLL student learning activity. Results showed that pre-service school counselors had challenges with language barriers, building trusting relationships with the students, self-doubts, and role confusion. At the same time, the pre-service school counselors used visual tools and body language to overcome the language differences, and showed vulnerability and normalized the challenge that can be inherent in learning another language. The authors suggest that future scholarship utilizes

different research approaches, such as qualitative designs, and recruit a larger sample size ($N =$ 4) that extends beyond one middle school in Maryland (Shi et al., 2022). This study highlights that a low-level of pre-service school counselor training on supporting MLL students leads to role confusion and self-doubts.

Last, researchers noted that the training needs of pre-service school counselors is further exacerbated due to most graduate programs not providing specific courses on the MLL population (Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). For instance, in their 2010 survey, Pérusse et al. (2015) examined coursework specifically designed for pre-service school counselors, finding that only two of the 126 school counseling programs surveyed included courses on 'English Language Learners.' The authors suggest that in the future, scholars review screening methods, curricular content, faculty experiences, and fieldwork requirements to gain a more comprehensive understanding of training provided by graduate programs (Pérusse et al., 2015). This study could have been stronger by analyzing the two MLL counseling courses, and interviewing MLL-serving school counselors who were previous students within those courses.

Overall, scholarship on pre-service school counselors' preparation to serve MLL students shows that although training to date is not comprehensive (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022), pre-service school counselors have a strong desire to engage in training that will allow them to better support their MLL students. Gaps in the literature leave the need for future research, including: interviewing practicing school counselors who can reflect on their pre-service training and current needs for supporting MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009); more in-depth educational experiences for pre-service school counselors including practicing MLL teaching strategies; and gaining a more robust understanding of counselor educators' knowledge and expertise of MLL instructional strategies (Johnson & Cain,

2019); qualitative research studies which expand on the role confusion and self-doubts experienced when working with MLL students (Shi et al., 2022); and diving deeper into the training methods graduate programs provide and their impact on school counselors working with MLL students (Pérusse et al., 2015).

School Counseling Practitioners. In addition to research conducted on pre-service school counselors, scholars have also begun to investigate practicing school counselors' work with MLL students. Overall, a growing body of literature describes interventions which school counselors implement to support the needs of their MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018), and the impact that this support has on the involved school counselors (Guillion, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Shi & Watkinson, 2019).

To start, scholars have investigated school counseling intervention studies, centralizing MLL students. For instance, when examining group counseling interventions for MLL students, Shi and Steen (2015) found an increase in MLL students' self-esteem and social skills, while Steen and colleagues (2018) determined an increase in students' tests scores and school adjustment. In a similar vein, Montes and Ramos (2020) also implemented a counseling group for MLL students, showing an increase in navigational capital (i.e. increased help-seeking, using academic tools, etc.) and various benefits like increased self of community. Finally, Shi and colleagues (2023) implemented a culturally and linguistically adapted curriculum which helped MLL students identify, manage, and apply strong emotions during interactions with peers and family members. These studies show minor glimpses into the work school counselors do to support their MLL students, mainly, the importance of group counseling. Future research is needed to gain a holistic picture of the ways in which school counselors support MLL students beyond group counseling, in other direct and indirect capacities.

In discussing the impact of school counselors' support, first, Johnson and colleagues (2016) conducted an exploratory quantitative study to describe school counselors' self-efficacy with working with MLL students ($N = 202$). Results from the national sample showed that school counselors with exposure to and experiences with MLL students have higher self-efficacy than their peers without this exposure and experiences. As a result, Johnson et al. (2016) suggest that qualitative methods, such as phenomenological investigations, may be beneficial in understanding the unique strategies school counselors implement when engaging MLLs. Such a qualitative investigation into the practices of school counselors who work with MLL students would provide further insight and a thick description into school counselors' experiences serving MLL students.

In another study, Shi and Watkinson (2019) examined how school counselors perceive the experiences of MLL students, and MLL students' sense of belonging within a middle school. They found that within this middle school, MLL students had a low sense of belonging, and that the school counselors did not know how to support the unique needs of their MLL students, however, they desired better approaches to support these students (Shi & Watkinson, 2019). This study was conducted with MLL students ($N = 28$) and school counselors ($N = 3$) at *one* middle school. The results and study limitations highlight the need to hear from practicing school counselors with more varied experiences serving MLL students (i.e., working in a range of K-12 levels, larger caseloads of MLL students, and a larger sample of school counselors), in order to offer recommendations for best practices.

Next, in an unpublished dissertation, Guillion (2020) used a phenomenological methodology to examine the lived experiences of non-Spanish speaking high school counselors who work with large Hispanic MLL student populations. They found that school counselors

experienced various challenges and barriers in their efforts to support their MLL students, and at the same time, this study had many limitations that leave a need for future research. Namely, Guillion (2020) investigated school counselors who supported *only* large caseloads of *Hispanic* MLL student populations, rather than MLL students across *varied* races/ethnicities, spoken languages, and cultures. Additionally, the study only looked at *high school counselors*, leaving a need to investigate school counselors across K-12 levels. Therefore, there remains a need to interview practicing school counselors who support MLL students across a r*ange of student MLL demographics* and at a variety of schools *across K-12 levels.*

Overall, school counselors have a desire to support their MLL students, and when they spend time in these efforts, school counselors' self-efficacy improves (Guillion, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Shi & Watkinson, 2019). Also, as noted above, school counselors have implemented various school counseling interventions to support the academic and social/emotional development of MLL students, such as group counseling (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018). While research on the self-efficacy of school counselors working with MLL students, as well as the various interventions school counselors have implemented with MLL students is increasing and evolving, the literature explains gaps in the research and make recommendations for future research. Mainly, there exists a need for phenomenological investigations of practicing school counselors who provide support to MLL students (Johnson et al., 2016); to gain insight from practicing school counselors who have experience working with MLL students (Shi & Watkinson, 2019); and to investigate school counselor experiences across K-12 education who work with students across multiple demographics, beyond *only* Hispanic (Guillion, 2020). Overall, while the research on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level) is evolving- more

research is needed, to ensure school counselors are equitably serving this population, especially given their unique needs.

Relational-Cultural Theory

In the following section, I will outline the theoretical model on Relational Cultural Theory (RCT).

History and Definition

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) was founded as a conscious realization of our interconnectedness due to the "inevitability of needing one another throughout our lives… We grow through and toward connection" (Jordan, 2017, p. 231). RCT was first seen as a feminist theory, with the understanding that women's voices were minoritized, but is now more widely used in support of all minoritized and centered identities (Jordan, 2017). The core tenets of RCT are:

1. People grow through and toward relationships throughout the lifespan.

2. Movement toward mutuality, rather than movement toward separation characterizes mature functioning.

3. Relational differentiation and elaboration characterize growth.

4. Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships.

5. In growth-fostering relationships, all people contribute and grow or benefit; development is not a one-way street.

6. Therapy relationships are characterized by a special kind of mutuality.

7. Mutual empathy is the vehicle for change in therapy.

8. Real engagement and therapeutic authenticity are necessary for the development

of mutual empathy, (Jordan, 2000, p. 1007; Jordan et al., 1991)

These core tenets are foundational to the mutual growth experience between counselor and client. RCT posits that individuals develop mutually empowering relationships with others because relationships, not autonomy, are the key to growth. RCT seeks to develop strategies by which hurtful disconnections between groups of people (e.g., along lines of race, class, etc.) can begin to shift so that an attitude of mutuality and respect can develop at the societal level (Jordan, 2001). RCT has been shown to foster strong therapeutic-client relationships, and its application and reach has and continues to extend beyond its initial intentions (Jordan, 2000; Jordan et al., 1991).

MLL Students, School Counselors, and RCT

MLL students are a historically minoritized group due, in part, to oppressive actions from K-12 education systems due to MLL students' varying cultures and languages, which are different than those largely prioritized and standardized in the U.S. K-12 schools (Fallon et al., 2021; McClellan, 1999). School counselors, as change agents who support the equitable educational experience of MLL students, can utilize the theoretical groundings of RCT to advocate for mutuality and respect at the societal level (Jordan, 2001), and to establish connections between school personnel and their MLL students.

Mainly, the goals of using RCT within therapeutic relationships are:

(a) working with relational connections and disconnections, including counselor commitment to working through disruptions in the therapeutic relationship;

(b) focusing on the development of mutual empathy, including self-empathy;

(c) working through and restructuring negative relational images;

(d) therapist responsiveness, authenticity, and willingness to be impacted by the client;

(e) fostering relationship resilience; and

(f) validating and incorporating clients' cultural and social contexts (Jordan, 2001, p.

179).

School counselors can use the therapeutic goals of RCT when working with MLL students.

Chiefly, according to research, the RCT approach aligns well with the cultural values of Latinx

MLL students and their families (Tuttle et al., 2022). Leaning into the growth-fostering relational

aspect of RCT can provide invaluable insight into the experiences of Latinx families in relation

to their "barriers to language, accessibility issues, personal/social experiences, school and

community culture, and navigating transitions between grade-levels" (Tuttle et al., 2022, p. 124).

Further, Tuttle and colleagues (2022) outline how RCT can be utilized with Latinx

parents/caregivers and recommend building relationships, identifying needs, gaining knowledge,

providing services, and continuous communication. They posit that RCT can provide a

framework for school counselors to "proactively build relationships with Latinx

parents/caregivers and collaboratively support student success through academic, career, and

social emotional interventions and programs" (Tuttle et al., 2022, p. 124).

In sum, RCT is a theoretical construct often used to therapeutically support minoritized

people, which can be used to describe MLL students in the context of U.S. K-12 education.

Scholars have shown that RCT can be a beneficial tool for school counselors to use to support

their MLL students due to their work in ensuring equity for *all* students (Tuttle et al., 2022).

Rationale and Research Question

While the U.S. student population continuously increases in diversity in areas such as

abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, language diversity, and more, ensuring *equitable*

educational access to these diversifying student groups is vital. One such unique group are

multilingual learning students. MLL students encompass a wide array of cultural identities, linguistics, and strengths, which have varying impacts on their educational journey within U.S. K-12 schools. Located within K-12 schools, school counselors can be integral in ensuring MLL students have equitable educational opportunities, due to their commitment to supporting *all* students, including a commitment to anti-racist and culturally affirming advocacy, collaborating and communicating, providing direct and indirect services, and more (ASCA, 2023). Thus, given that school counselors are guided by ASCA's various position statements championing equity, advocacy, systemic change, and cultural competence to serve *all* students, they are ideal to support MLL students.

Literature on pre-service school counselors' preparation to serve MLL students shows that pre-service school counselors have a strong desire to engage in more comprehensive training that will allow them to better support their MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). Research on practicing school counselors serving MLL students shows that group counseling supports the academic and social/emotional development of MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018). Additionally, school counselors have a desire to support their MLL students, and their self-efficacy improves as they spend more time supporting them (Guillion, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Shi & Watkinson, 2019).

Based on the growing literature on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level), recommendations for future studies include: interviewing practicing school counselors to determine what, if any, training they received that prepared them for their work with MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009); qualitative investigations to understand the unique strategies school counselors implement when engaging MLLs (Johnson et al., 2016);

hearing from school counselors who work with MLLs and who collaborate with school personnel in those efforts (Shi & Watkinson, 2019); and conducting a study with a national sample of school counselors at all K-12 levels (Guillion, 2020).

To further explore the limitations in these existing studies, future scholarship is warranted in order to: gather data from practicing school counselors who can provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of and future recommendations for MLL pre-service preparation; examine school counselors' experiences with MLL students over time (i.e., multiple trainings or extended professional experiences); and have larger, national sample sizes which extend beyond one school, one school level, and include a variety of student demographics (i.e., ethnicities, languages, etc.).

In an effort to fill the literature gap and previous scholarly recommendations, the following research question guided this study: *What are the lived experiences of K-12 school counselors who primarily serve their school's multilingual learning student population?*

As a result of this study, I aim to broaden the professional understanding of the experiences of school counselors who work with multilingual learning (MLL) students. In particular, I recruited school counselors who serve as the main or primary school counselor at their school for MLL students, to most comprehensively understand this construct. That is, because MLL students have unique needs, a school counselor who primarily supports them will likely have deeper experiences, compared to a school counseling peer serving a limited number of MLL students. Next, this study aimed to understand school counselors across (a) K-12 levels, and (b) support a variety of MLL identities beyond what has previously been examined (i.e., race, ethnicity, languages, etc.).

Implications from this proposed study may provide valuable information to be used to more comprehensively understand the MLL-specific school counselors' roles, as well as related strengths, needs, and recommendations from their experiences. Subsequently, the results may guide future advocacy, preparation, and training efforts to support MLL school counselors– so they can better serve their schools, communities, and their MLL students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodologies allow for researchers to uncover thick descriptions of participant's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, to capture the lived experiences of school counselors who support their school's multilingual learning (MLL) population, I utilized a phenomenological approach. Through this methodological approach, I aimed to develop a description of participant experiences with the intent of gaining knowledge and awareness of these experiences. For this purpose, a descriptive phenomenological approach was used to identify the essence and general structures behind the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 2009). In this chapter, I will review the following for the conducted study: (a) research question; (b) researcher reflexivity and positionality; (c) methodology and rationale; (d) study design and protocol; (e) data analysis; (f) and finally, the trustworthiness strategies.

Research Question

The purpose of this proposed study was to illuminate the experiences of school counselors who support their school's multilingual learning population. As such, the following research question guided this study: *What are the lived experiences of K-12 school counselors who primarily serve their school's multilingual learning student population?*

Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative research calls for reflexivity and asks researchers to continuously reflect how their identities may be impacting their work (Hays & Singh, 2023). As a researcher, it is important to note my identities and inform how they impact my research agenda. I am a white, middle class, cisgender, bisexual, able-bodied, educated, young, monolingual female. Most of

my identities afford me unearned privileges and power, while few of my identities are historically oppressed and minoritized. Despite those few minoritized identities, I am still able to navigate society without much resistance because I appear straight, and because of my white skin.

As a current practicing SC who supports my school's multilingual learning student population, I can imagine myself in the spaces of those who I interview. I can understand much of the discourse used and can come into the conversation with a certain level of expertise that may allow my participants to feel comfortable and conversational. Given that I have insider experience and knowledge, I continuously engaged in bracketing my assumptions and reflecting on interview questions, ensured that I highlighted and prioritized the voices and experiences of participants, as well as focused on the research purpose in mind. This background serves to convey how my identities influence my research, as well as a recognition of those influences.

Philosophical Assumptions

As a researcher, my philosophical assumptions must be examined (Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023). *Ontologically*, I believe that there is not one primary Truth, but rather, each person has truth that they know to be correct. *Epistemologically*, I believe that knowledge is continuously constructed between myself as the researcher and my participants, and that my knowledge is limited to my experiences and interactions with the phenomenon and others' recollections of their experiences with the phenomenon. As previously described in my reflexivity statement, I am a school counselor who works closely with my multilingual learning (MLL) student population. As such, I care deeply about the population, the field of school counseling, and ensuring schools are equitable for *all* students. *Axiologically,* I believe my values and interests shape the research I engage in. To minimize the impact of my values on my

research, I engaged in multiple methods of trustworthiness strategies, such as memoing, reflective journaling, member checking, and utilizing an external auditor. These are described in more detail in the trustworthiness section. Due to my belief in centering participant voice and the nature of phenomenological research, the *rhetoric* for this study includes direct quotes and narratives from participants. The intersection of all these beliefs led me to pursue qualitative inquiry for my *methodology*, specifically phenomenological inquiry.

Researcher Paradigm

My research study was guided by my philosophical assumptions as well as my research paradigm of *constructivism*. From working in the schools, I have seen that no two buildings, roles, or people operate the same. I believe that knowledge is dependent on personal perspectives, beliefs, and experiences- and thus, there is no absolute truth. These notions align best with the *constructivist* paradigm, which supports "multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices" (Hays & Singh, 2023, p. 56). This approach allowed for flexibility and utilized trustworthiness to increase reliability and validity (Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, school counselors who primarily serve their school's MLL student populations hold an understanding of the phenomenon, and this study aimed to gain a more in-depth understanding of their lived experiences with this phenomenon. Viewing participant experiences from a social constructivist lens allowed me to deepen the understanding of their roles and experiences within school systems.

<div align="center">

Rationale for Methodology

</div>

Currently, literature exists on various ways in which pre-service school counselors are being taught to work with MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Shi et al., 2022; Tuttle et al., 2017; Watkinson et al., 2022), and interventions that school counselors

implement to support MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi et al., 2023; Shi & Steen, 2012; Steen et al., 2018). This current literature is based on school counselors who have some MLL students on their caseload, rather than school counselors whose job role focuses on *primarily* supporting MLL students. As a result of the gaps in literature, this study aimed to explore school counselors' lived experiences in primarily MLL-supporting school counselor roles.

Qualitative Phenomenological Investigation

Qualitative methodologies allow for researchers to understand thick descriptions of participants' experiences (Hays & Singh, 2023). Phenomenological research allows us to create descriptions of the lived experiences of those who have had direct experience with a phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, to capture the lived experiences of school counselors who support their school's MLL population, a phenomenological approach was used. Although these school counselors' experiences were individually experienced, through this study I hoped to capture the lived experiences across the sample of participants, or the experiences they shared socially and culturally (Hays & Singh, 2023).

By way of this methodological approach, I aimed to develop a description of school counselors' experiences with the intent of gaining knowledge and awareness of these experiences. As is common with all phenomenological approaches, I collected data through semi-structured individual interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2023). I collected and described participants' first-hand experiences, with special focus on the relationship between the person and their environments (Hays & Singh, 2023).

Phenomenological research has multiple approaches for better understanding phenomena (Hays & Singh, 2023). The descriptive phenomenological approach allows researchers to take

participants' descriptions of their experiences with the aim of developing a generalizable description of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). For this purpose, a descriptive phenomenological approach was used to identify the essence and general structures behind participants' experiences (Giorgi, 2009), mainly- describing the role of school counselors who primarily support MLL students.

Study Design and Protocol

Participants and Recruitment

Prior to conducting participant interviews, I obtained exempt approval from Old Dominion University's College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee. After approval, I contacted potential participants through a variety of electronic methods, such as email and social media (i.e., Facebook Messenger, X, etc.) to request their participation in this study. Participants were purposely and conveniently selected and invited to share their experiences based on their experiences working with MLL students. This sampling technique allowed me to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria (Hays & Singh, 2023). Phenomenological research allows the flexibility to determine how many participants is appropriate based on the phenomenon in question (Giorgi, 2009). Participation inclusion criteria included school counselors who are (a) located in the United States and (b) practicing school counselors who are currently or in the last two years, were the designated school counselor for the multilingual learning student population in their school.

Participant Confidentiality and Safety

Participants were informed of their rights, any limits to confidentiality, and the purpose of the study by way of informed consent (Appendix C) prior to collecting demographic information (Appendix D) and participating in interviews. These items were included in a

Google Form which was emailed to participants prior to participating in interviews. Before beginning the interview, all participants were reminded of their rights and the limits to confidentiality and were given an opportunity to ask questions.

To ensure participant and data confidentiality, I removed all identifying information from transcripts immediately after they were created and before any other members of the research team reviewed them. All identifying participant information was kept separately from the transcriptions. All interview data is stored within my university-sponsored, password protected Google Drive, and all audio and video recordings were destroyed immediately after data analysis. In alignment with ethical research practice, all data files will be destroyed after five years. All participants were given copies of their interview transcription and asked to review them as a member checking procedure. Member checking was also conducted throughout the interviews by asking clarifying questions and paraphrasing their statements.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study was conducted through individual participant interviews designed to understand the lived experiences of school counselors who support their school's multilingual learning student population. Aligned with a phenomenological approach, participants were asked to share their experiences and perceptions through semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study's semi-structured interview protocol is located in Appendix E. Each participant engaged in an approximately one-hour interview through a university-sponsored and protected Zoom video-conferencing platform. Participants were allowed flexibility in scheduling their interviews so they could pick from a range of times. Interviews were conducted through the university-sponsored video-conferencing platform Zoom which is secure and password protected. Utilizing a university-sponsored and protected Zoom

also allowed for recording and live transcriptions which made the interview more accessible and

allowed for the researcher to engage in the interview without having to be concerned with

rigorous notetaking. As is common with phenomenological interviewing, the interviews recorded

and then transcribed (Giorgi, 2009). Before recording, I spent time building rapport with the

participants, then helped direct participants to explore the phenomenon of interest while

maintaining a degree of spontaneity (i.e., semi-structured nature) throughout the interview to

ensure I gathered complete descriptions of participant experiences (Giorgi, 2009).

Data Management

All data is collected and stored in my password protected, university-sponsored and

protected Google Drive. Data will be stored for 5 years before being destroyed.

Participant Demographics

Participant demographic information was collected through a ODU university-sponsored

and protected Google form, located in Appendix D. Demographic information is stored in my

university-sponsored and password protected Google Drive. Participant names and emails were

separated from the demographic data to maintain confidentiality. Participant interviews were also

stored separately so they could not be connected to any participants. Participants were assigned

pseudonyms at the time of their interviews, so no identifying information was disclosed.

Participants of all identities were invited to participate in this study. As a result, the

research sample included one male (9.1%; n = 1) and 10 female participants (90.9%; n = 10) who

ranged in age from 20-59 years old. This age range provided a blend of both demographic and

professional experience. Seven participants identified as White (63.6%; n = 7), and 4 participants

identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x (36.4% ; n = 4). Eight participants worked in a high school

(72.7%; n = 8), 1 participant worked in an elementary school (9.1%; n = 1), 1 participant worked

in a school supporting middle and elementary students (9.1%; n = 1), and one participant worked in a school supporting students from elementary through high school (9.1%; n = 1) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of School Counselor Participants

	n	Percent
Gender		
Male	1	9.1
Female	10	90.9
Total	11	100
Race/Ethnicity		
White	7	63.6
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	4	36.4
Total	11	100
Grade Level		
High	8	72.7
Elementary	1	9.1
Middle and Elementary	1	9.1
Elementary, Middle, and High	1	9.1
Total	11	100

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is cyclical in nature and involves multiple steps. This process requires researchers to "assemble, disassemble, and reassemble information to address the research question" (Hays & Singh, 2023, p. 349). The goal of phenomenological analysis is to uncover the meaning of participant experiences (Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenological data analysis can be done in multiple ways depending on the type of approach used. Aligning with the chosen methodology, I engaged in descriptive phenomenological data analysis. The steps of this method include (1) reading for sense of the whole; (2) determination of meaning units; and (3)

transformation of participant's natural attitude expressions into phenomenologically psychologically sensitive expressions (Giorgi, 2009). Although this process is completed for nearly all qualitative data analyses, I operated from a descriptive phenomenological lens.

For step one, *reading for sense of the whole*, I read through each interview transcription from a phenomenological scientific reduction mindset to gain a bigger picture and overall sense of the entire description. For step two, *determination of meaning units,* I read through the transcriptions again with a phenomenological scientific reduction mindset and establish "units of meaning" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 129). Units of meaning were determined by ensuring they meet the phenomenological criteria, not by an established set of a priori criteria. For step 3, *transformation of participant's natural attitude expressions into phenomenologically psychologically sensitive expressions*, I attempted to describe the participant's phenomenon experiences while keeping in mind my epistemological belief that knowledge is subjective but can be best detailed by the analysis of multiple phenomenon experiences. Through this final step, I read through my meaning units and interrogated "each meaning unit to discover how to express in a more satisfactory way the psychological implications of the lifeworld descriptions" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 131). Throughout the considerable amount of time immersed in the data by way of the analyzing process, I remained open and reflective.

Trustworthiness Strategies

In qualitative investigations, researchers are often a tool or instrument of the study (Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, I engaged in several trustworthiness strategies. Throughout the participant interviews, I engaged in reflective journaling by taking notes on participant experiences, therefore minimizing researcher bias and increasing credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I engaged in memoing during each coding

session to minimize research bias and bracket assumptions. Participants were sent copies of their transcribed interviews as well as initial study findings as forms of member checking to ensure descriptive validation of the findings (Hays & Singh, 2023). To ensure dependability, I kept an audit trail of the research process and data analysis, used reflexivity journaling throughout the process, and had an external auditor to ensure researcher biases and assumptions were not impediments (Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). To ensure transferability, participant descriptions were made clear within the 'Participants' section. Additionally, participants detailed lived experiences were directly quoted throughout the 'Findings' section to ensure their voices are centered. Confirmability was ensured through my reflexivity and audit trails that describe my thoughts and feelings from the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school counselors who support their school's multilingual learning population. The current literature describes pre-service school counselors' preparation to serve MLL students and shows that pre-service school counselors have a strong desire to engage in more comprehensive training that will allow them to better support their MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). Additional literature shows that practicing school counselors serving MLL students support the academic and social/emotional development of MLL students through group counseling (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018). Additionally, school counselors have a desire to support their MLL students, and their self-efficacy improves as they spend more time supporting them (Guillion, 2020; Johnson et al., 2016; Shi & Watkinson, 2019). However, prior to this study there was no available research exploring the experiences of school counselors who primarily support their school's multilingual learning population.

This phenomenological study utilized semi-structured interviews with practicing school counselors to understand their experiences with supporting their schools' multilingual learning student populations in K-12 schools. Through this study, I also hoped to gain a better understanding of how school counselors support multilingual learners in K-12 schools within the United States, considering the necessity to make ensure that *all* students, across a range of identities (i.e., abilities, language, socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc.), have *equal* access to educational opportunities.

The results of this study are a combination of the participants' lived experiences and the centering of their voices. To explore the lived experiences of school counselors who support multilingual learning students in K-12 schools, the following question guided my research: *What are the lived experiences of K-12 school counselors who primarily serve their school's multilingual learning student population?* In this chapter, I present findings from data collected from semi-structured interviews with a sample of 11 school counselor participants. The interview protocol provided participants the space to share their unique experiences and perceptions on supporting their multilingual learning students. To maintain clarity throughout the paper, participant quotes have been modified to have consistency with the phrase 'multilingual learners' or 'MLL' rather than other variations like ESOL, ESL, etc. Through Giorgi's data analysis steps for phenomenological analysis, participants' responses resulted in 6 themes and 14 subthemes from the collected data. Specifically, the themes were (a) Advocating for Equity; (b) Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role; (c) Linguistic Nuances; (d) Collaboration is Crucial; (e) Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students; and (f) Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students.

<div align="center">**Themes**</div>

Theme 1: Advocating for Equity

In theme one, the participating school counselors discussed the various ways in which they worked to ensure their students had equitable access to their education, including the comprehensive school counseling program, despite the reality of various systemic hurdles that exist for MLL students. The first theme includes subthemes: (a) acknowledging systemic barriers and stereotypes; and (b) equity necessitates accessibility.

Subtheme: Acknowledging Systemic Barriers and Stereotypes

Within this subtheme, school counselors explored the existence of systemic barriers within their schools and education systems, and how they attempted to combat them. Additionally, they shared existing stereotypes that were present, which they rejected about their MLL students. To start, P11 noted that they "help [students] through… a system that doesn't always work for everyone. And figuring out what we can do to make it work for them." To combat barriers to family participation in school events, P08 shared that their,

> Previous school offer[ed] free babysitting services for the families because a lot of the barriers for the families coming might be, well, 'I have young children and I don't want to leave them at home, I don't want to bring them to the presentation because they're gonna be bored, they might not understand, I don't want them to be disruptive'.

Access to resources can be a challenge. P01 stated there's "a combination [of reasons why resources are limited]... it could also be their status. Sometimes they're not able to qualify for Medicaid… And the parents will be knocking on different doors, trying to find help and there's no help." Similarly, P02 explained that there is

> This lack of understanding of this demographic of students and what their needs are, and at the same time there seems to be this over exaggerated perception, 'Oh they are this [MLL] so therefore they are incapable of this'" and at their school they've "reached the percentage of where more than half of our student body is identified as MLL, so nobody wants to say it, we are a de facto bilingual school. We're gonna need that title because the city of [redacted] refuses to recognize that and it doesn't surprise me because they don't seem to recognize the need for said demographic… But this is the city and school district where there is that constant battle of who gets the oil type of thing… Back and forth. That quarry of who gets the grease?

Subtheme: Equity Necessitates Accessibility

In this subtheme, school counselors discussed the vital importance of ensuring their students had access to their school counseling programs and to their academics, which is how they fought for educational equity. Consequently, P05 shared,

When I try to vocalize that it's not enabling them [providing school counseling content in students' native languages], it's making sure they have access to the information and not punishing them for not being able to do it in English yet. It's more important to me that they have information than they know enough English to understand it.

Relatedly, P09 highlighted that,

We [school counselors] can create as many opportunities as possible for a student to be successful. And I tell my kids that all the time, 'I don't have a magic wand. I can't guarantee you success, but I can help create opportunities for that.' If that's as simple as making a phone call home or sending home a document in their native language, differentiating during classroom instruction or whatever that may look like, I'm absolutely going to do it.

According to P06,

I feel like there is a lot of counseling curriculum, especially for elementary, with metaphors…teacher trainings for how to teach ESL students [that] say 'don't use metaphors.' I'm trying to find examples and teaching things because it doesn't always translate well. They don't really understand… It's still not equitable and then we have our students who come from another country who don't even know how to read or write their home language, so even if I had everything translated, it's not [accessible] because they can't read or write it.

To overcome access challenges, P07 said,

> I always try to do a couple different translations on [my website] and make sure that I
> have resources available if parents need anything. For classroom lessons, I incorporate
> different non-verbal tasks, hand signals, and signs to hopefully engage students. If I
> notice that a student is not understanding something, I go through and translate directly or
> I'll lean on the teacher to help with translation. Usually if I'm in a classroom for an SEL
> lesson, teachers are good about helping me with those specific students so that I can
> continue to lead the lesson… And then I do try to incorporate a lot of games and things
> like that so that students aren't necessarily relying on language to talk or to understand.

Theme 2: Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role

In theme two, the participating school counselors discussed the nuances within their unique roles of primarily supporting multilingual learning students. The second theme includes subthemes: (a) MLSC role stigma and advocacy; (b) expansive responsibilities of the MLSC role; and (c) additional skills and training needed to support MLL students.

Subtheme: MLSC Role Stigma and Advocacy

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the stereotypes and stigma they have experienced from other educational professionals about their roles in specifically supporting MLL students, and how they have advocated for their roles. For instance, P01 believed,

> Every state should have a position like this [MLSC role] that can help the students be
> successful, because there is a push for students to graduate and do well, but many times
> we don't provide the resources or the classes they need to show that they can do it. This
> role is a great opportunity for the students to be successful.

P03 expanded on this,

I know that ASCA has their [caseload size] recommendation- 250 per counselor. There

needs to be an addendum that the recommendation for MLL Counselors is even smaller

than that. My suggestion would be 150, because of the hand-holding that goes into being

the MLL Counselor is so utterly time-consuming. That's what they [families and

students] deserve. That's what they need. That's what the school system deserves. They

deserve to have students who are educated in what it takes to be a MLL student. Making

a stink about it, even if it's not at a district level, even within your school advocating for

smaller caseloads than average, which you might have pushed back on it… I have

because they don't quite understand what I do for my job.

P05 reflected on their role,

My first years as a school counselor… were the first 2 years that the school had a

counselor working specifically with MLL students. It was really difficult. At first I was

like, 'oh, it's so great that they're trying to give some extra attention to the ESL students

that deserve it.' As I got further into my first year, I realized they just wanted to pass it on

to one person. I was the only person, for the most part, paying attention to those students.

I got a lot of push back and questionable responses from co-counselors, admin, and

teachers.

On a related note, P02 noted "the societal cultures" around serving MLL students, mainly

"microaggressions that come with it [serving MLL students], and in some cases ignorance. And

it's hard to call it out, because it sometimes is because someone doesn't know any better."

Subtheme: Expansive Responsibilities of the MLSC Role

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the ways in which their roles and

responsibilities were more wide-ranging than school counselors who do not predominantly

support MLL students, such as having to spend more time on tasks, being their students 'go-to' for a variety of roles- school counseling and beyond. According to P11,

> It's weird- school counselors do a little bit of everything. I'm taking my newcomers [students] down to the nurse because they have vaccine paperwork and they don't know where to go. And you're that first person that they met on their first day. 'Can you help me get a Chromebook? Can you help me go to the library? Can you help me take my vaccines to the nurse? Help me get a bus pass?' There's so many things that are different than grad school could have prepared me for.

Similarly, P03 shared,

> The heart of what we do, and on paper, the logistics of what we do is still the same [as traditional school counselors]. Our approaches are different, like being the students' go-to for everything. I'm not just their school counselor. I'm partially their teacher. I'm their nurse, I'm their direction finder. I'm their cafeteria lady. I'm everything in-between. I actually am a medical liaison for one of my families… But the approach is different, in that mine takes greater detail. When these counselors are doing class visits and talking about course planning, I can't go in and be like 'Alright. We're course planning, write down what you want next year.' These kids don't understand what that means. I have to go in a couple of times because we need to establish a foundation of what it takes to graduate because [they] don't know that yet. There are classes that are mandatory. 'Do you know what a credit is?' I'm like, 'consider a credit like a point. You pass a class, you get a point.' That's the best way I can explain it to them. There's a lot we do that's similar. It's just the approach that changes. There's a lot more hand holding in my position as a counselor than theirs [non MLL-focused school counselors].

Along the same line, P10 said,

> We do four [academic planning] lessons a year, but for newcomers we're working on it [alot] and one lesson is three weeks long, applying it and making it more practical because a lot of [non-MLL] students have been doing this plan since sixth grade. Showing [MLL students] them the importance and making it more relevant to their experience. Advisory teachers are usually the ones who give the lesson, except for newcomers, we do that.

Next, P05 disclosed,

> I have a friend who's a counselor in a different state, very high MLL population. And there's a counselor on their team for MLL students and her caseload is smaller, but her teammates don't throw that in her face. They're not like, 'oh, you have a smaller case. Your job is so much easier.' They're like 'your job is harder because on top of doing all the regular academic career counseling you also are helping students with the language.' You might have limited education students. You might have students that speak indigenous languages that we don't have access for. You have to explain what the education system in the United States looks like and you're helping them unpack trauma that they may not have shared previously.

Subtheme: Additional Skills and Training Needed to Support MLL Students

In this subtheme, school counselors explained the various skills that are needed in order to effectively support their MLL students, as well as additional training they had or sought which helped to better prepare them for supporting their students. For instance, P10 underwent additional training to work in their current school and said,

We [school counselors designated for MLL students] took the Berlis exam. It took me 3 times- I spent hundreds of dollars [$600] because it's reading, writing, and speaking. Spanish is my first language, but I couldn't get the reading down. It was so hard. It's 8 huge prompts and you only have 30 min to read them. Basically you take that test to show proficiency in Spanish. And then you get a stipend of $2,500 a year.

Being resilient was an important skill to have as P09 described,

Be flexible and be prepared to advocate for things that you see others not have. To be ready to be told no but to not stop there to really really learn the rights of your students. Get familiar with that student handbook and your district handbook and be ready to say, well Title 9 says this or my student has the right to XYZ. And really be able to be student centered. That it's probably one of the most beautiful experiences that they'll ever have. Be ready for it all. There's some days where I'm like, 'oh, I was not ready for that. I was not ready to be told no to that'.

One of the additional skills needed was to "engage in self-care," highlighted by P07,

I try my best to keep boundaries between work and home. I try my best to take time on my drive home from work to decompress and leave it behind so that when I walk in the door to go home I'm like okay, 'this is Home [name redacted]' and I can focus on doing some things that I enjoy and taking that time to reset and recharge so that I can do it all again the next day." Additionally, P04 shared that school counselors should "not be scared of the students like, 'Oh, my God!' cause you can't speak the language, but try not to fear like, 'I'm not gonna go over there. I'm not gonna say anything because I don't know how to speak their language.' There's always someone around willing to help, whether it's another student or Google translate.

Theme 3: Linguistic Nuances

In theme three, the participating school counselors outlined the multitude of factors they weighed when utilizing a translator or interpreter to communicate with MLL students and families. Additionally, the participants who were bilingual discussed the unique considerations of being a bilingual school counselor. The third theme includes subthemes: (a) unique factors of being a bilingual MLSC; and (b) translation/interpretation nuances.

Subtheme: Unique Factors of Being a Bilingual MLSC

In this subtheme, school counselors who were bilingual communicated the various ways that being bilingual affects their jobs such as having to act as a translator for multiple education professionals, and more. Participants noted ways in which being bilingual supported their school counseling efforts. P11 shared that it helps to be "Spanish-speaking. Once students know you are, you're able to make a direct connection and there's nothing wrong with using a translator/interpreter but it's nice to have somebody you can call or text directly 'Hey, this is going on'."

Although being bilingual is an additional skill, P09 disclosed that they are not paid extra and that,

> The research says that somewhere in other work or other career fields somebody like myself with my skill set can make anywhere from 20 to 25% more. I'm not compensated like that and it's unfortunate because it's a lot of work. Traditionally being a school counselor is a lot of work. We wear a lot of hats. We balance a lot of things. Add that to me doing what my counterpart does but in 2 languages. At the same time, my moral compass is like 'oh okay well when we think about equity, some students need a little bit more.' And I try to look at it through an equitable lens. I'm gonna do what I can do for

my students and if it means it's taking a little more for me in certain things then it is what

it is.

Additional reflections were made from P03,

> If the assistant principal calls me for some interpretation despite us having ready access
>
> by dialing an interpreter on the phone, it's that catch 22 of, yeah, if this was an English
>
> speaking kid, I would never be involved. However, if I don't get involved, do these kids
>
> really know what's going on? And isn't that ultimately a disservice to them?

Along the same line, P02 stated, "I'm learning that I'm the only one that's handling these kids in

this entire city. Why is it the one bilingual [school counselor] in this entire city [is] placed to

handle all that?"

Subtheme: Translation/Interpretation Nuances

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the intricacies of utilizing

translators/interpreters in their efforts to support their MLL students. For example, P05 noted,

"you have to request them [translator] like 3 days in advance if you want a person to come in or

for a 504 meeting or something." Although having translators/interpreters within their school

divisions is a resource, participants highlighted examples of challenges they faced, like P06 who

stated,

> We have the ESL office where we have interpreters and translators- 3 Spanish, one
>
> Arabic and 2 Pashto. But they're for the whole district which is nice because then we
>
> have a face to face interpreter. But they can be really frustrating because we can't get a
>
> hold of them. Some of them aren't the best interpreters in a counseling session. They'll
>
> say their own thing and they'll tell me afterwards like, 'oh, I told him this.' I was like,
>
> 'that's not what I said.' Some overstep and after I meet with a student they will reach out

to the families or go drive by like social workers. One of them went and brought her

pastor to the family's house to talk with them. Usually if I have to talk to a parent and it's

more personal, I will wait outside the office hours and I'll use our tele language

interpreters. And documents that we send home, we only have them in certain languages.

Our Swahili interpreter and translator can translate in other languages but because it's not

a majority population they don't have him translate things and I'm like, 'he's there, why

can't he do it?' And the head of the office, she's Ukrainian, and she refuses to write things

in Ukrainian for our families even though we have Ukrainian families because she's like,

'well, it's not a majority population' and I just don't get it. It can be difficult to work with

them."

To navigate this, P07 relayed,

Any individual sessions that I do, especially if a student is upset and crying, I will use

individual translations. In our district we usually use Google Translate and we have

different apps as well that are up to our individual discretion. Based on whatever

language the student speaks, I'll find some way to translate it and then I'll ask them to let

me know if they're understanding that translation or if it was correct. And we do have

access to different subscription services through our district. We have Talking Points, that

you can text on, we have Language Line as well for phone calls and things like that. Then

any small groups that I run, I typically will rely on students who are bilingual and then

have them help me with translation.

P10 shared an example highlighting students' concerns,

We have an in-school therapist but she doesn't speak the language. We were like, 'we can do an interpreter' and she's like, 'no, that's weird.' She went and the intake was weird to her that the therapist was talking and then the interpreter.. it was weird to her.

Theme 4: Collaboration is Crucial

In theme four, the participating school counselors discussed the vital need to communicate and collaborate with all educational partners relevant to MLL students: the students themselves, their families, teachers, administration, the surrounding communities, and more. This important collaboration included supporting MLL families through navigating the complexities of the United States educational system. The fourth theme presents the subthemes: (a) collaborating with a range of educational partners; and (b) helping families/students navigate the U.S. education system.

Subtheme: Collaborating with a Range of Educational Partners

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the multitude of people they must work with in order to effectively support their MLL students including administration, parents, students, MLL teachers, their surrounding communities, and so forth. P08 gave the advice to,

Be willing to listen to what the needs are of the students, of the families, of the teachers, and do what you can to support. And if you don't know the answer, that is okay. And then that's where hopefully you can reach out with the network and other counselors and say, 'this is something that my school is asking for or that I see a need for at my school. Can you help me with this or what would you do in a situation like that?' It's okay not to know all the answers. And trying to help and find those answers can be really rewarding because you're bringing the information or you're bringing ideas or new concepts to the students, to the family, to the school, and to the teachers.

Highlighting the prevalence of collaboration, P07 said,

> [Collaboration is evident] especially teachers who were thrown a lot of ELL students because I noticed that our district tends to cluster the students. And so it is nice in certain aspects because if you have 2 students who speak French and they're in that same classroom but it also makes it that much more challenging for that teacher. I noticed that a lot of teachers would also collaborate with one another and [say], 'I have this student who speaks this language, and apps that we're supposed to be using for translation don't have that language, do you know what can I do?' and leaning on each other for support and then administration as well collaborating to figure out what can we do if we don't have the resources or if there is a unique situation like, a lot of our refugee students were homeless. Trying to figure out different supports with them and working with the social worker and our homeless liaison for the district. There's a lot of work that goes into supporting students- collaboration and group work because there's always a lack of resources working in public education. You have to lean on each other and get support where you can.

Participants noted the importance of collaborating with administration, and shared,

> We pair up, so she has the exact same caseload that I do and it's good because she speaks Spanish, and she's really good with the students, and they all really like her. She's good about keeping me in the loop, and if there needs to be mediation, she tries to include me in that. I feel like we work well with trying to collaborate, especially any parent meeting, even attendance meetings. We try to always make sure to include each other on that.

Additionally, P01 noted that,

Resources are a big piece. We have to know resources- where to send a family. It could be based on not having food, not being able to pay rent. Those are the needs that have to be met before the student can come to school and sit down and concentrate in classes. So you have to be fluent in resources and willing to work with the family, literally holding their hand to apply for services like health insurance, free and reduced lunch so they can benefit from being in the country, have access to food. We have a lot of students who enroll who are over 18 who might need to work, so we have to find them a place to live. We have a resource here where they will provide them an apartment for free for 18 months so they can complete their graduation.

Subtheme: Helping Families/Students Navigate the U.S. Education System

Within this subtheme, school counselors shared the ways in which they must support MLL students and their families to understand and navigate the U.S. education system. To help paint the picture, P05 said,

You can't say, 'you need a credit of English this year.' Kids are like, 'credit? What is that?' You have to explain what a credit is, how you get it, what's a half credit, how you get a half credit, which classes fall under the half credit. You can't just say in order to graduate you need 21 credits, that means nothing.

Furthering the picture, P03 noted,

They come into a school where we're throwing out acronyms all the time, like SOLs. And at the end of the day I'm like, 'do you know what an SOL is?' And they're like 'Nope. Never heard this in my life.' And so having that opportunity to first recognize that as a counselor, a lot of our counselors take that for granted that these kids know what it is.

And so recognizing that it's not just a language barrier, it's a cultural barrier, and then being able to explain that and helping them along their way.

Many considerations go into ensuring students are ready to start at a U.S. school. P09 details this process,

We try to work with them as much as possible, in terms of getting them enrolled and we want them here in school as quickly as possible. So sometimes we give waivers for certain things and we have to advocate for those too, and say oh well we have this one physical that was done last year and it shows XYZ and can we get a 30 day waiver for the student and get them enrolled and then as long as we can set up something for them with the health department. Typically we can get the green light. Getting school records from another country is often very difficult and the school year in other countries runs very differently. Schools in South America typically end school in February because their summer looks different than ours and then there will be a big gap in their education because we don't start school till September. A lot of people don't know those things. And so we'll get them and they'll be like, well, they said that they finished third grade or second grade, but their age is this and a lot of times the front office will come me down and say oh can you look at this because it doesn't make sense and I'm like 'hey guys remember school year looks different so the ages we have for certain grade levels don't always correspond with other countries.' We take a whole picture look and all of those considerations go through our mind as we pick a class and a grade level for them. There's a lot of moving pieces.

Additionally, P04 stated,

We hold a meeting each year for the parents and the students. We have an ML Night that

looks different every year. But it's usually trying to give the parents a heads up of

expectations of discipline and attendance, what they should be doing, and credits they

need for graduation, but also trying to get that paperwork.

Theme 5: Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students

In theme five, the participating school counselors spoke on the importance of building

empathic and growth-fostering relationships between themselves and their MLL students.

Additionally, they discussed how those relationships and being within their roles personally

impact them. The fifth theme includes subthemes: (a) building meaningful, emotionally

supportive relationships with students; (b) understanding MLL students' backgrounds; and (c)

emotional impact on the MLSC.

Subtheme: Building Meaningful, Respectful, Emotionally Supportive Relationships with
Students

In this subtheme, school counselors communicated the importance of forming

relationships with students grounded in empathy and care. For instance, P03 disclosed,

When I first started school counseling, it felt harder to make connections with the kids

than being their teacher, because I don't see them every day. But over time I have started

building those relationships and that rapport where the word is finally getting out of what

a counselor is, and 'we have one of those?'

Relatedly, to form those relationships, P04 shared,

If I have their numbers, I stock them. If they're not here this morning, I'm like, 'hey?

Where are you? I haven't seen you in a while.' And that's been really crucial because

they'll usually come when I message. It's so good to form relationships with these kids. I

had a new student that came in the middle of the year, then she wasn't coming to school, and at this point I didn't know her. So the social worker and I went to her house because no one was answering the phone, and her boyfriend answered the door, which happened to be a former student of mine. Because I had a good relationship with him, I was like, "Oh, my gosh! What are you doing?" Which then in turn helped her to feel like she could trust me more. So she started coming to school, and we got her to graduate, and it was amazing. And it was all because of that relationship that I had with him, and going above and beyond. You have to meet them where they're at, even if it means going to their house. You're having to meet the student where they're at. Get a little bit creative with the ways that you're engaging them in school and outside of school.

P07 opened up and said,

I always feel silly if I'm trying to talk with a student and they don't understand me and you get to a point where you both look at each other shrugging 'I don't know' and so at the end of the day remembering that I want what's best for these students. These students want to be happy and safe at school. So what's a different way that I can reach them if this one thing isn't working, like drawing pictures or different hand gestures or finding a way to get your point across and be able to understand them to the best extent and make sure that they're having as good of an experience at school as possible.

Noting the importance of getting to know your students, P08 explained,

A lot of times teachers don't get to know their students who might be not native English speakers or who have trouble communicating because there's that language barrier and the teachers are trying to teach 20 to 30 kids. And yes, I have close to 500 students on my caseload, but I have more flexibility to meet with them during the school day or to get to

know them probably a little bit better and I'm a firm believer that if a student has at least

one trusted adult at the school who they feel like, 'okay, I can really go to this person and

talk to them if I have a problem. I know I can go to this person. I feel comfortable with

this person.' That makes high school a better experience. It might be harder for [MLL

students] to find that one person. So as a counselor, do your best to try to be that person

for that student so that they do feel more connected with the school.

Similarly, P11 said,

I love knowing my students and families. It's nice to have established relationships with

people. I can't relate to newcomer students that have moved to another country, but I

really look to emphasize their strengths so they can see what they have to offer. It is one

of my favorite parts of the job.

Last, P09 noted,

You really are the cheerleader for your students and when they see you believing in them.

They're like, 'oh yeah, I am all those things. And I am going to do that and watch me

conquer this and give me another challenge' and watching them succeed.. It's super

powerful.

Subtheme: Understanding MLL Students' Backgrounds

In this subtheme, school counselors shared their knowledge of the cultural backgrounds

of their MLL students, including the use of culturally affirming considerations. P07 stated,

Students at my school would talk about things to a certain degree. I found that a lot of my

Ukrainian students are a little bit more closed off towards me. I don't know if that's what

they're used to culturally, if talking with a counselor is not as common. I would have on

rare occasions a student open up and break down about things and say, 'my dad is still in

Ukraine who is not able to be here with us' or worried about their family who were still

over there. Then I would see students talking with one another and overhear certain

things. I definitely tried to intervene where I could, but the students really did lean on

each other about these things. I tried my best to keep open communication with those

families as well, making sure if they needed resources or anything they could contact me.

P09 explained,

It's always interesting having conversations with these students because their stories are

mind blowing. Third graders are typically 8 to 9 years old, and they are accompanied

minors at the border. Their stories differ so much where some will have really great

experiences of placement and then connecting when reuniting with family, state side or in

the United States, whereas I'll have students who it's not as ideal. I have students who

come in who've been at holding centers, where they have been provided with great

housing and clothing and shelter and they'll receive some type of even educational

testing. I have students come in with scores, have been vaccinated, given physicals and it

makes the process of enrolling in school super easy and then I'll have students who come

with nothing because their journey here was so different.

In a similar vein, according to P06,

They've all gone through so much trauma. And that's what we have to tell the teachers

like, 'remember they have gone through a lot of trauma and they're still going through

trauma here.' Our social worker shared with me the 'triple trauma paradigm of refugees',

which we share with the teachers. Some of our families can't go back to their home

country and will never be able to go back. That can be really hard for some of them. [Be]

trauma-informed.

In addition, P05 reflected:

> I had one student once that sticks with me a lot. His dad had two heart attacks and the doctor told him that if he was doing any more strenuous physical labor, he'd have another one, he'd probably die. So this kid was 15 helping his dad until 3AM with his company, moving box trucks. And his parents weren't forcing him to work. He felt that personal responsibility to make sure that his dad didn't get sick again. And so he would go on the bleachers during his classes, put a hat over his head and sleep. And it's teachers are all like 'He's not going to class, he doesn't care, he always looks high.' He wasn't high, he was tired. I talked with him, he shared all this with me and I told him 'you don't take a nap out on the bleachers, you come here for 5 min if you need to and I'll turn down the lights and you can rest and you go back to class.' And he started doing that. Straight A's after that. And I don't think the other counselors had the rapport to be able to have those conversations.

Subtheme: Emotional Impact on the MLSC

Within this subtheme, school counselors conveyed rich descriptions of the emotions they have when hearing the stories their MLL students shared, and the overall impact their strong empathy has on them. For example, P07 said,

> It's definitely a lot. It really pulls on your heartstrings to see all that happening and I think back to when some of the particular students who only spoke Ukrainian who had just moved 2 days ago coming in their first day of school and seeing them so anxious and scared about everything. And it feels in a lot of ways you're useless because you do the best thing you can and you try all of your efforts, but sometimes there's so much beyond your control. It's difficult not being able to bring over everyone's family from another

country and have everyone together. To see the children in particular suffering, and feeling upset or isolated in a school building. It's really tough to see the impact on families who were struggling with finding places to live. It's challenging and feels like you're putting in a lot of work and not seeing results at times. It can feel defeating, but when you know in your heart that you're doing the right thing, it's motivating to keep going.

According to P09,

It's tough. I think that's the hardest part. There are stories that resonate so closely for me. I'll have students, young girls who along their journey to the United States were physically abused and sexually assaulted. And that's trauma that they'll carry their whole lives. And when we think about these students who are considered undocumented and certain services not available to them. And we are supposed to be 'solution-focused.' It complicates things and it's very hard to hear those stories and to put feelers out into the community and see what's available for them. Sometimes it's extremely hard to stay 'solution-focused' because you want to keep checking in on these students. Their needs are so much more than learning, so that poses a lot of difficulties for me. There are times where I've been emotional with my students. I try to match the emotion, never anything more than what they're showing me but you can imagine having a young girl come in and tell you that on her journey to have the opportunity for the American dream she was assaulted by a man 3 times her age multiple times and she has phantom pains and that their cycle has started earlier and that things hurt and and that's a lot. That's a lot. That's probably the hardest part with some of their stories.

Also, P01 shared,

> Like any school counseling job, we have a lot of kids with trauma, and that can take a lot of your day- talking to them and finding resources. We have a lot of movement between the position, because it does take a long time, and you can get exhausted and really burnt out being ESOL school counselors because the different things that you have to do in order to meet any students… but I'm very positive about this position.

P04 contemplated on the emotional struggles within their role,

> I think knowing some of the things they've gone through in their home country…it's stuff that you hear in movies …it's tragic. That is probably the hardest piece of it, the emotional stuff that you deal with in knowing what they go through, and you wish you could take that away. But you can't. Ever since COVID it's gotten worse with the students. There's a lot more mental health issues and depression. The fatigue has been a little worse because of that.

Theme 6: Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students

In theme six, the participating school counselors discussed the numerous ways they adapted their interventions to best support their MLL students. The sixth theme includes the subthemes: (a) specialized counseling interventions; and (b) MLL-centered scheduling considerations.

Subtheme: Specialized Counseling Interventions

In this subtheme, school counselors disclosed the various interventions they implemented that were unique to supporting their MLL students particularly, such as creating a school counseling group for a subset of their MLL population. P07 shared their creation of a counseling group in response to the need to support refugee students,

It's a mix of refugee students who came, did not speak any English and were brand new to the country and the school. So it's those students and other students who have been in the school for a while and speak both English and that [Ukrainian/Russian] native language.... We already have so many students who are bilingual and can be a support for those students. Me and the school psychologist at my school were like, 'we should really do something to help them.'

P11 noted implementing an intervention called multilingual advising,

Members of our multilingual team have a period within their day where they have an advising caseload of like, 35 students so they're being another support person for our multilingual students and working with me in hopes that they can reach some more of these students and families that we're not always reaching, we're connecting with.

Subtheme: MLL-Centered Scheduling Considerations

In this subtheme, school counselors talked about the multitude of factors that go into scheduling MLL students. For example, P01 stated they,

Have around 120 level one students. This school has a lot of shelter classes- U.S. history, biology, algebra, and English classes. I personally go over their schedule to make sure this student who is level one receives support in every single class so they can be successful. We have created English 11 and English 12 classes that are supported by an EML teacher, so she will accommodate the learning.

Similarly, P09 noted their,

Third grade has 2 classrooms with MLL clusters, meaning we have identified these students by their WIDA scores and have placed them within their classrooms or teachers

who have experience working with multilingual learners, because there is a lot of differentiation that has to happen. It makes it easier for the students.

When discussing scheduling, P01 shared,

> When you are at the point in school where 200 students are level one or two, you have to make sure that they have classes available for when a student has to take art, for example. Digital art might be very difficult for a level one because they are not used to working with computers, whereas ceramics might be easier for them. So we wanna make sure that they leave spaces for our students so they can take those difficult classes and be successful.

Further detailing the issue of full classes, P04 reflected,

> You have to gauge and see what levels the students are at and what best fits, especially because our classes are now so full. We've had to add 2 classes already, so we had to take our MLL teachers out of- they were collaborating with maybe another English class or history- we had to take them from there and add new classes because we have no room so that meant a lot of schedule changes.

Last, a special consideration participants had to remember highlighted by P05 was the "influx of newcomers in the winter around January/February once the academic year in Central America is done. The MLL Director would oftentimes have to open up sections of newcomer classes so the other classes weren't too full."

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of school counselors who primarily support their schools' multilingual learning student populations. The goal of this research was to better understand how school counselors support their school's MLL student populations, therefore adding to the literature in order to help equip school counselors to support the growing MLL student population within the United States. Thus, in this phenomenological study, through the use of semi-structured interviews via Zoom, I captured the lived experiences of 11 practicing school counselors who work in different levels (i.e. elementary, middle, or high school) from various states across the U.S. Data analysis resulted in six themes and 14 subthemes. In this chapter, I will provide the following: (a) a summary of the research findings in the context of the existing literature; (b) a discussion and implications for practice, preparation, advocacy, and future research; and (c) the limitations for this study.

Summary of Findings in the Context of Existing Literature

With the ever-increasing number of immigrant and refugee families moving into the U.S. (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; NCES, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023), and the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education, school counselors must be prepared to support their MLL students' needs. In the following section, I will discuss the present findings in the context of other related scholarship. In this chapter, "MLL" will be the terminology used to describe students whose first language is not English. Also important to note, while many MLL students may be immigrants, not all immigrant students are MLL students (Zehr, 2007).

Theme 1: Advocating for Equity

In theme one, the participating school counselors discussed the various ways in which they fought for educational equity for their MLL students, and how they rejected stereotypes cast on their MLL students. School counselors have the imperative to support all students, and do so ethically through efforts in leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration, thereby equity and access for all students (ASCA, 2018; 2023), including MLL students. ASCA's position statements call on school counselors to engage in anti-racist practices (ASCA, 2021), as well as remove barriers for students with undocumented status (ASCA, 2019). In particular, scholars explored the necessity for professionals within education to refrain from holding stereotypes regarding MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015), and portrayed that school counselors are in a helpful position to advocate for MLL students at a systemic level, challenging systems from within (Attia et al., 2023). The current research extends this notion, providing a thick, rich description of this MLL-specific advocacy, including challenging other educational professionals who stereotype MLL students.

Multiple scholars have proposed models for decreasing equity and access gaps for MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Arora et al., 2021). This current study goes beyond the conceptual to empirically and specifically details how school counselors ensure that their school counseling programs are equitably accessible to their MLL students, thus supporting their social/emotional, career, and academic needs.

Theme 2: Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role

In theme two, the participating school counselors explained the nuances within their unique roles of primarily supporting MLL students. Specifically, the stereotypes and stigma they have experienced from other educational professionals about their roles; how they have advocated for their roles; the wide range of their MLSC roles; the various skills needed in order

to effectively support their MLL students; and additional training they had or sought, which helped to prepare them for supporting their students.

In their case study, Davis and colleagues (2023) shared findings that teachers do not fully understand the roles of school counselors. This misunderstanding is expanded upon through the present study, adding that educational professionals are further misinformed regarding the MLSC role specialization. Despite an increase in school counseling positions that specialize in supporting MLL students, to date, the current research is the first of its kind to exclusively explore the experiences of school counselors within these unique roles. As such, results from this subtheme add unique and important information to the literature base.

Scholars have shared the need and desire for pre-service school counselors (Burnham et al., 2009; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022) and practicing school counselors (Attia et al., 2023; Davis et al., 2023) to receive effective training and professional development in supporting MLL students. As shown in the research, school counselors are more confident in their abilities to work with MLL students when having received training specific to their needs (Johnson et al., 2016). Participants in the present study all held roles that primarily supported their schools' MLL students and shared ways in which they increased their confidence in supporting their MLL students, including: attending trainings, passing language examinations, multiple years of experience, building necessary personal skills, and so forth. The present study further explains what previous research indicates: additional school counseling skills and training are necessary in order to effectively support MLL students.

Theme 3: Linguistic Nuances

In theme three, the participating school counselors outlined the multitude of factors they weighed when utilizing a translator or interpreter to communicate with MLL students and families. Additionally, the participants who were bilingual detailed the unique intricacies of being a bilingual school counselor. Research has shown a vital need for more bilingual professionals in mental health and schools (Harris & Sullivan, 2017; Pope et al. 2022; Smith-Adcock et al., 2006), and that when school counselors are bilingual, they have a higher self-efficacy in working with MLL students (Johnson et al., 2016). Bilingual participants within the present study found their bilingualism beneficial to working with their MLL students and families. However, adding to the literature base, participants described several challenges they navigated because of their bilingualism, including being one of the few bilingual professionals in their schools; being asked to act as a translator for other professionals; not getting paid for their additional services; and having an increased workload. Participants expressed the need for additional bilingual professionals in education, in all languages, which aligns with the current literature base (Harris & Sullivan, 2017; Pope et al. 2022; Smith-Adcock et al., 2006).

Participants in this study highlighted the need for translators/interpreters to ethically support school counselors by providing culturally appropriate translations/interpretations, free of personal beliefs or values. Participants also provided detailed accounts of their experiences advocating for educational materials to be translated in the students' home languages by educational professionals, including translators within their buildings, their school divisions, and various translation services, which parallels the conceptual recommendations of Edirmanasinghe and colleagues (2022).

Theme 4: Collaboration is Crucial

In theme four, school counselors enumerated the multitude of people they worked with to effectively support their MLL students, including administration, parents, students, MLL teachers, their surrounding communities, and so forth. Additionally, participants described the importance of collaborating with MLL students and families, to support their navigation of the U.S. education system.

Outlined by one of ASCA's (2022) position statements, it is clear that school counselors must facilitate partnerships with schools, families, and their communities, although there is a desire for increased engagement between schools and MLL families (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). The present study builds upon Adelman and Taylor's (2015) prior research, noting the significance of school counselors engaging and communicating with MLL students and families, including the positive impact on MLL students (i.e., improvements in attendance, graduation rates, and emotional support). Additionally, the present investigation demonstrated the frequency, necessity, and collaboration school counselors used with educational partners within the school and the community, which also aligns with the current literature base (Arora et al., 2021; Attia et al., 2023; Burnham et al., 2009; Cook, 2015; Cook et al, 2012; Davis et al., 2023; Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022; Purgason et al., 2023; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Tuttle et al., 2021).

Scholars have described the experiences that MLL students and their families have faced, when entering and making their ways through the U.S. education system, and the vital role that educational professionals (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; España & Herrera, 2020), including school counselors play in supporting their journeys (Attia et al., 2023; Morrison & Bryan, 2014). Similar to the current literature base, participants within this present study highlighted the extensive time and effort they utilized to support MLL students and their families.

Theme 5: Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students

In theme five, the participating school counselors shared the importance of building empathic and growth-fostering relationships between themselves and their MLL students. Additionally, they discussed how those relationships personally impacted them. These findings support the theoretical framework utilized for this study; Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) posits that individuals develop mutually empowering relationships with others, as relationships are the key to growth (Jordan, 2000). The present study aligns with RCT, particularly, the core tenets of (a) relational differentiation and elaboration characterize growth; (b) mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships; (c) in growth-fostering relationships, all people contribute and grow or benefit; development is not a one-way street; (d) therapy relationships are characterized by a special kind of mutuality; and (e) real engagement and therapeutic authenticity are necessary for the development of mutual empathy. Scholars have used RCT as a lens for their conceptual framework for supporting Latinx students and families (Tuttle et al., 2022; Tuttle & Haskins, 2017); the present results are unique and expand previous scholarship, utilizing RCT specific to MLL students and school counselors, through an empirical investigation.

Next, school counselors have a vital role in promoting social/emotional skills (Attia et al., 2023), including resilience, which allegedly enhances student connectedness and relatability with others (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). In a similar vein, participants in the present study achieved student connectedness through their relational building with their MLL students. Furthermore, the participating school counselors shared advice for other school counselors who may enter similar roles, highlighting the importance of forming trusting and therapeutic relationships with their students, which echoes the sentiments of Attia and colleagues (2023).

In their mixed-methods study, Shi and Watkinson (2019) examined the needs of MLL students, finding that their overall sense of school belonging was low, suggesting solutions, such as intentional collaboration and counseling techniques. Relatedly, according to participants in the present study, they had a direct impact on MLL students' sense of belonging, which they wanted to increase. In fact, from their perspectives, participants indicated that they made intentional efforts to ensure their MLL students knew they were a resource to provide support and care. This finding parallels scholars who heard from MLL students, depicting having impactful relationships with their school counselors, knowing they were available for support and advocacy.

Next, when working with MLL students, it is crucial that school counselors are aware of the context of their immigration, particularly as MLL students and their families immigrate for a myriad of reasons (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; España & Herrera, 2020). Even further, best practices for fostering connections with MLL students includes: creating welcoming and accepting spaces in which students are comfortable sharing their stories and experiences (España & Herrera, 2020); considering the intersection of the cultural practices and identities of their MLL students (ASCA, 2021; España & Herrera, 2020); and remembering that building cultural competence comes in stages (Dogan, 2022). This study builds upon these recommendations, showcasing that school counselors within MLSC positions are cognizant of this imperative, and actively work to ensure they are culturally competent, in order to understand and empathize with their students.

Building growth-fostering, mutually empathic relationships emotionally impacts school counselors. Data on the experiences of school counselors shows that burnout and other negative emotions are common, considering the high and constantly changing emotional environments

they are immersed in (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Fye et al., 2020; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Limited literature exists on school counselors who primarily support MLL students, and therefore the literature base does not reflect the emotional impact of their specialized roles. Participants within this study shared the exuberant pride, turmoil, content, heartbreak, and joy they experience daily from the therapeutic relationships they formed with their MLL students. Therefore, this study adds to the existing literature, providing rich, nuanced descriptions of participants' emotional experiences serving MLL students.

Theme 6: Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students

This final theme addresses the multiple ways in which school counselors incorporated and adapted their interventions to best support their MLL students. In comparison, other scholars suggested that school counselors implement multiple interventions to meet the varied needs of MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015), including tailored, tiered school counseling interventions (Arora et al., 2020; Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022). Relatedly, Attia et al. (2023) recommended that school counselor training include content for group counseling for MLL students. In addition to these conceptual recommendations, other researchers have demonstrated school counselors implementing interventions to support their MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018; Vera et al., 2021), addressing social/emotional, academic, and career domains. From the MLL students' viewpoint, scholars have noted that MLL students who participated in school groups, activities, or mental health supports had overall benefits to their well-being (Vera et al., 2021), social skills, school adjustment, and feelings of empowerment (Steen et al., 2018). The current study provides specific examples of school counselor depicted interventions, detailing the positive feedback

they received from MLL students, which agrees with the current literature base (Montes &

Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018; Vera et al., 2021).

Finally, participants in the present study discussed their process for scheduling their MLL

students. Some participants noted that they schedule students in 'clusters,' 'shelter classes,' or in

classes exclusively for MLL students, such as English. This finding pairs with Vera and

colleagues (2021), who gathered feedback, but from the perspective of MLL students, finding

that students felt protected and bonded as a community when they were surrounded by their

MLL peers. Next, Guillion's (2020) phenomenological investigation also found scheduling MLL

students as a key challenge reported by school counselors. The present study provides an

extension, describing the MLL scheduling process in more detail, highlighting the time and

thought school counselors use in their scheduling decisions (i.e., considerations pertaining to

students' current English acquisition levels, the expertise of the teachers within the classes, the

amount of MLL students within classes, and more).

Implications and Future Research

This phenomenological investigation focused on the lived experiences of 11 school

counselors, and the findings can best be contextualized through their experiences. The following

section will detail implications related to this study, specifically, for practice, preparation,

advocacy, and research.

Implications for Practice

The present study holds many implications for school counseling practitioners. School

counselors are positioned to be advocates for MLL students within their schools, promoting

equity and removing barriers to their K-12 education. As such, school counselors must work to

ensure MLL students are not an afterthought; MLL student needs must be accounted for when

school counselors plan interventions like classroom lessons or groups, when collaborating and consulting with other educational professionals, and more. Additionally, practitioners need to advocate to remove systemic barriers at the division and/or building that prohibit the success of their MLL students (i.e., appropriately awarding credit from schools attended in other countries, ensuring they are connected with necessary resources, and more).

School counselors in the present study desired professional development tailored to school counselors, and more pointedly, that addresses working with their MLL students. State and national associations as well as school divisions must provide relevant, timely school counseling professional development, and school counselors must communicate their professional development needs.

Participants within this study described the wrap-around support they provided to their MLL students, oftentimes collaborating with a myriad of professionals (i.e., nurses, teachers, administration, community members, translators/interpreters, etc.). Especially important is the collaboration with MLL students and their families. Given that the U.S. education system is nuanced and challenging to acclimate to, extensive time and resources must be provided to help MLL students and families navigate this system. Practicing school counselors must consider the imperative of collaboration to more holistically support their MLL students.

Next, MLL students have rich stories and backgrounds, and school counselors should take time to support them: understanding their backgrounds, forming therapeutic relationships, and being versed in trauma-informed practices. At the same time, participants in this study shared vulnerable accounts of the emotional impact of their MLSC roles. To navigate this emotional impact, practitioners can consider self-care, such as: setting healthy boundaries, participating in personal counseling, avoiding burnout, among others.

Finally, practicing school counselors must move away from using terms such as 'ESL' and 'ELL' and use the strengths-based term 'multilingual learners' (MLL). Having consistent languaging will help to set a supportive tone, encouraging discussions with other educational professionals about the terminology transition, providing a platform for deeper understanding of MLL students' strengths.

Implications for Preparation

In addition to implications for current practicing school counselors, is the need to consider implications for preparing the next generation of school counselors. Although pre-service school counseling graduate preparation for supporting MLL students is growing, more preparation is needed. Preparation programs could consider including trauma-informed counseling, tailoring interventions to be accessible and relevant for MLL students, advocacy concerns related to MLL students, to name a few. Although specific training on this population is not delineated as a requirement by CACREP, given the growing number of MLL youth, CACREP and other accrediting bodies may consider requirements for serving MLL students. Relatedly, school counselor preparation programs must intentionally incorporate information on MLL students across the curriculum, such as in case examples, as part of experiential learning, etcetera.

It is evident that we need more multilingual professionals in education, and more specifically, in school counseling positions. Counseling preparation programs have begun to address this need by providing bilingual counseling certifications (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021). However, more programs and certifications are needed to prepare school counselors to provide counseling services in multiple languages. Additionally, as of current, Spanish is the

only language represented in these certification programs, leaving the need for programs to include other languages represented in the U.S.

Implications for Advocacy

As advocacy and systemic change are cornerstones in school counseling, in this next section I discuss advocacy implications resulting from the current investigation. Participants in the present study depicted a need for greater advocacy at several levels. ASCA has various position statements that reinforce school counselors' roles engaging in anti-racist practices (ASCA, 2021), being culturally competent (ASCA, 2021), ensuring equity for all students (ASCA, 2018), facilitating partnerships with schools, families, and their communities (ASCA, 2022), and removing barriers for students with undocumented status (ASCA, 2019). However, there lacks an ASCA position statement specifically for MLL students. Thus, there remains a need for ASCA to outline how school counselors support MLL learners, reinforcing consistent, intentional advocacy efforts to remove systemic barriers and create equitable access to education for MLL students.

Additional advocacy efforts need to be addressed at the federal and state education departments, to examine, interrupt, and remove systemic and policy level hindrances to MLL success. Such as, presently, MLL students are expected to assimilate to U.S. education systems, despite having multiple barriers, including: taking and passing standardized tests offered only in English; having greater barriers for pursuing post-secondary education (i.e., receiving federal financial aid), and so forth. The path to MLL student graduation needs to be critically examined, with an emphasis on viewing their multilingualism as a strength to continue to develop, rather than forcing assimilation.

As noted by several participants in this study, the role of a school counselor who primarily supports their school's MLL student population can be demanding and over-extending. Although the recommended ratio for school counselors-to-students is 1:250, the national average from 2021-2022 was 1:408 (ASCA, 2022). State and national level associations should continue advocacy efforts to reduce ratios overall, and more specifically, reinforce lower ratios for school counselors who primarily support their schools' MLL student populations.

Finally, according to this study, multilingual school counselors provided additional student services beyond the scope of their job (i.e., translation services), but oftentimes did not receive financial compensation for this additional time and efforts. Employers across educational fields must acknowledge professionals' multilingualism as an additional skill, and award compensation and disperse workload appropriately.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the present investigation is an important step in filling a much-needed research gap, there remains a need for future research on supporting MLL students in K-12 education. First, school counselors are integral in supporting MLL learners, often as one of the only access points MLL students have for mental health care. Hence, in the future, scholars should examine how to best train pre-service and practicing school counselors to be advocates for MLL students. Specifically, studies could include quantitative investigations exploring the impact that MLL-focused school counselor positions have on the success of MLL students in K-12 schools (i.e., social/emotional, academic, and career outcomes).

Next, to increase generalization of MLSC research, future quantitative studies should include larger, more representative samples. Additionally, mixed-method studies could provide a comprehensive view of this impact, incorporating numerical data points (i.e., grades, graduation

rates, attendance, etc.) and rich descriptions from MLL students, families, and other educational partners. Further, future research could build off on this qualitative investigation and any future quantitative studies to develop an instrument detailing the roles and responsibilities for supporting MLL students.

Finally, the U.S. Department of Education, under the leadership of the Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona, set forth new initiatives, including a greater prioritization of MLL students. Among those initiatives are "Creating Pathways for Global Engagement," with a goal of providing every student a pathway to multilingualism. This federal initiative includes grants; utilizing these grants, school counseling scholars can be on the forefront of investigating MLL learners within schools.

Research Limitations

This study must be understood in the context of its limitations. First, this study described the lived experiences of a sample of school counselors who primarily support their school's multilingual learning student population. As a practicing school counselor who primarily supports my school's MLL student population, there is a possibility for my biases to have impacted the data collection and/or analysis (i.e., I see first-hand my students' experiences while navigating our school, and I could provide a personal account of my experiences in supporting MLL students). To mitigate this possible limitation, I engaged in bracketing my biases and assumptions, and a range of other trustworthiness strategies: reflexivity journaling, the use of an external coder, and the use of an external auditor.

Next, in regard to demographics, this study included one male participant, participants who identified as Hispanic/Latinx or White, and no participants on the West coast. While this

study did not seek to be representative of larger populations, future studies could replicate this study with different demographics, to determine replicability.

Summary and Conclusion

In this section, I discussed the results of this study in the context of previous literature. In addition, I shared implications for practice, preparation, advocacy, as well as future research. Given the need for greater supports for MLL students, this study serves as a springboard to enable school counselors to advocate against systemic barriers, work towards equitable access to education, and continuously seek professional development to ensure school counselors are prepared to meet the needs of MLL students.

CHAPTER SIX

MANUSCRIPT

The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors: A Phenomenological

Investigation

Chelsea Hilliard

Old Dominion University

Abstract

Equity in education has become increasingly prioritized, due to the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education. With the K-12 student population diversity continuously increasing in areas such as abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, languages, immigration status, and more, ensuring *equitable* access to education is vital. One such unique student group needing equitable access to education are multilingual learners or MLL. Located within schools, school counselors are uniquely positioned to equitably serve MLLs. Overall, while the research on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level) is evolving- more research is needed, to ensure school counselors are equitably serving this population, especially given their unique needs. This study took a phenomenological approach to capturing the lived experiences of 11 school counselors who primarily support their schools' MLL student populations. This study resulted in six themes: (a) advocating for equity, (b) unique challenges and responsibilities within the MLSC role, (c) linguistic nuances, (d) collaboration is crucial, (e) mutual respect and empathy with MLL students, (f) adapting interventions specific to MLL students. Implications for practice, preparation, advocacy, and future research are explored.

Keywords: school counselor, multilingual learner, phenomenology, relational-cultural theory

The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors: A

Phenomenological Investigation

The United States Department of Education shares that their mission is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., see About ED). Similarly, other organizations, such as The Education Trust also aim for U.S. education to equitably serve all students and to prepare them for the opportunities and demands of the world outside of school doors (The Education Trust, 2023). Equity in education has become increasingly prioritized, due to the growing mainstream recognition of the inequitable practices that historically have and presently continue to exist in K-12 education. Mainly, education was founded after the exploitative colonization of the U.S. and continues to be oppressive with instruction founded in White, European, Protestant virtues of family, religion, and community (Fallon et al., 2021; McClellan, 1999). Additionally, exclusionary practices within education such as out-of-school suspension, self-contained English language learning classes and others further the gap in educational equity.

While education within the U.S. has been centered in Whiteness and other identities deemed dominant (Fallon et al., 2021), the U.S. student body has demographically evolved and become more diverse. For instance, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that from 2010 to 2021, the percentages of students who are White, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native have all decreased, and the percentages of students who are Hispanic, Asian, and of two or more races have increased (NCES, 2023). Additionally, over 350 languages are represented within the U.S. (Aud et al., 2011). Although the U.S. does not have an official language declared, U.S. schools require students to speak, learn, and write in English.

The U.S. requires the ideological monolingualism of the society as well as the hegemony of English and the minoritization of other languages. Despite the billions of dollars spent on foreign language education in the United States, only 1% of American adults who become proficient in the foreign language they study in a U.S. classroom (Friedman, 2015). Evidently not all bilingual education programs are effective, but their lack of meeting benchmarks can be attributed to socio-political and economic issues such as poverty, inequality of resource distribution, poorly prepared teachers, and overall abandonment of quality education from the school system within which the bilingual education program exists. Unsurprisingly, the strict requirement of ideological monolingualism is one of the major reasons why Americans are said to be poor second-language learners (Macedo, 2019).

Public education in the U.S. should ensure that *all* students, across a range of identities (i.e., abilities, language, socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc.), have *equal* access to educational opportunities (Aud et al., 2011; Capps et al., 2005; McCabe et al., 2013; NCES, 2023). With the K-12 student population diversity continuously increasing in areas such as abilities, race/ethnicities, socioeconomic status, languages, immigration status, and more, ensuring *equitable* access to education is vital. One such group included are multilingual learners or MLL.

Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners are students who interact with multiple languages a day: English and their native language(s). Multilingual learners have formerly been named 'English-language learners,' 'English-as-second language learners,' 'English learners,' etc., but have begun to be reidentified as 'multilingual learners' (MLL), which draws upon their language learning from a strengths-based perspective (WIDA, n.d.). Multilingual learners (or MLL) is the terminology that

4 out of the 5 leading organizations in the field of English language development education and assessment use to describe these students; 'MLL' is an asset and strengths-based term that values students' culture and languages, recognizing their ability to learn English in addition to other languages they may already know (Snyder et al., 2023). For the purposes of this literature review, and all research examined in this study, this student population will be referred to as multilingual learners (MLLs).

Context and Culture

Many MLL students and/or their parents are recent immigrants and their stories often involve rich descriptions of their dream to come to the U.S. and the perseverance to overcome obstacles in that pursuit (McCabe et al., 2013). Immigrant families have a multitude of strengths that can ultimately aid in pursuing immigration to the U.S. Strengths of immigrant families include personal characteristics (i.e., multilingualism, optimism), family cohesiveness, multigenerational households, family support and stability, nurturing and loving upbringings and current environments, and strong social skills (Cabrera et al., 2022). Additionally, immigrant families have many protective factors which support them in the event they are faced with adversity. The most prominent protective factors include familism, social support, ethnic identity, religion, stable settlement, and resiliency (Fazel et al., 2012; Revens et al., 2021; Zetino et al., 2020).

Immigrant and refugee youth experience varying traumatic events before, during, and after their migration into the United States, including exposure to actual or threatened physical or sexual violence to themselves or family members, death of loved ones, and seeking asylum to avoid gang recruitment, abandonment, and abuse (Baily, 2017; Cohodes et al., 2021; Doctors Without Borders, 2020; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Exposure to

these traumatic events places youth at increased risk for developing both immediate and long-term psychiatric symptoms (Shonkoff et al., 2012), which can result in meeting the criterion for having posttraumatic stress disorder (Cohondes et al., 2021). In fact, migrant and refugee children experience PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other psychiatric conditions at a high rate (Blackmore et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2015). Despite the possibility of serious mental health concerns for immigrant and refugee youth, protective factors play a critical role in avoiding or counteracting those mental health concerns.

Once arrived, immigrant MLL students can face challenges that include having a sense of loss for their previous community and their families in their countries of origin, worrying about the status of their immigration applications, adjusting to living in their new environment, physical and mental health concerns and the inability to access healthcare, and changes in family economic status (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Oldroyd et al., 2022), all while being full-time students and often learning English for the first time.

The impact that trauma has on immigrant and refugee youth requires mental health care that is trauma-informed and developmentally sensitive by mental health caretakers that practice cultural humility, acknowledge systemic barriers, and recognize the cultural considerations of these youth (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017). Even though mental health caretakers may incorporate these necessary practices, a small portion of these youth receive mental health services in their lives (Betancourt et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012). One way to address this dilemma is to make sure youth have access to mental health caretakers. Thus, schools are well-positioned to provide these services, or aid in the referral to resources to support students' unique needs (Ellis et al., 2013; Fazel et al., 2012).

With the U.S. having a historically inequitable education system, as well as the legal, ethical, and moral imperative to serve every student (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), schools and their personnel must be ready to modify schools to meet the needs of their rapidly growing MLL student population. Even further, they must be ready to celebrate their resiliency and understand and affirm their unique stories and rich cultures. One such K-12 educational staff member is a school counselor.

School Counselors

School counselors are certified/licensed educators and counselors who implement comprehensive school counseling programs to support students. In serving students, school counselors prioritize the success of *all* students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2023), including students across a diverse range of backgrounds and identities like abilities, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, spoken language, and more. School counselors ensure student success through leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration, to promote equity and access for all students; these behaviors include working with students directly (i.e., counseling, advising, classroom lessons) and also indirect services provided on behalf of students (i.e., consultation, collaboration, and referrals) (ASCA, 2023).

Serving Multilingual Learners

As the U.S. K-12 students continue to increase in a diverse range of identities, cultures, and demographics, educational inequities may also increase toward groups that have been historically oppressed, such as the growing MLL student population (Hernández et al., 2008). Given that school counselors are guided by ASCA's various position statements championing equity, advocacy, systemic change, and cultural competence to serve *all* students, school counselors are ideal and can be integral in supporting MLL students.

Pre-Service School Counselors. There is a growing body of literature that describes the training needs of pre-service school counselors to effectively support MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). To start, Burnham and colleagues (2009) found that pre-service school counselors reportedly gained an increased: awareness of cultural diversity across students; teacher collaboration and consultation; as well as more insight into the cultural challenges that could come up while supporting MLL students. Johnson and Cain (2019) found that the workshop did not significantly increase the MLL teaching strategies used by pre-service school counselors, although it did increase their awareness of MLL students' needs. Shi et al. (2022) found that pre-service school counselors had challenges with language barriers, building trusting relationships with the students, self-doubts, and role confusion. At the same time, the pre-service school counselors used visual tools and body language to overcome the language differences, and showed vulnerability and normalized the challenge that can be inherent in learning another language (Shi et al., 2022).

Last, researchers noted that the training needs of pre-service school counselors is further exacerbated due to most graduate programs not providing specific courses on the MLL population (Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022). For instance, in their 2010 survey, Pérusse et al. (2015) examined coursework specifically designed for pre-service school counselors, finding that only two of the 126 school counseling programs surveyed included courses on 'English Language Learners.'

School Counseling Practitioners. Scholars have investigated school counseling intervention studies, centralizing MLL students. For instance, when examining group counseling interventions for MLL students, Shi and Steen (2015) found an increase in MLL students' self-esteem and social skills, while Steen and colleagues (2018) determined an increase in students'

tests scores and school adjustment. In a similar vein, Motes and Ramos (2020) also implemented a counseling group for MLL students, showing an increase in navigational capital (i.e. increased help-seeking, using academic tools, etc.) and various benefits like increased self of community. Finally, Shi and colleagues (2023) implemented a culturally and linguistically adapted curriculum which helped MLL students identify, manage, and apply strong emotions during interactions with peers and family members. These studies show minor glimpses into the work school counselors do to support their MLL students, mainly, the importance of group counseling.

In discussing the impact of school counselors' support, Johnson and colleagues (2016) showed that school counselors with exposure to and experiences with MLL students have higher self-efficacy than their peers without this exposure and experiences. Shi and Watkinson (2019) found that within this middle school, MLL students had a low sense of belonging, and that the school counselors did not know how to support the unique needs of their MLL students, however, they desired better approaches to support these students. Guillion (2020) found that school counselors experienced various challenges and barriers in their efforts to support their MLL students.

Theoretical Framework

MLL students are a historically minoritized group due, in part, to oppressive actions from K-12 education systems due to MLL students' varying cultures and languages, which are different than those largely prioritized and standardized in the U.S. K-12 schools (Fallon et al., 2021; McClellan, 1999). School counselors, as change agents who support the equitable educational experience of MLL students, can utilize the theoretical groundings of Relational-Cultural Theory to advocate for mutuality and respect at the societal level (Jordan, 2001), and to establish connections between school personnel and their MLL students.

Rationale

Based on the growing literature on school counselors serving MLL students (at the pre-service and practice level), recommendations for future studies include: interviewing practicing school counselors to determine what, if any, training they received that prepared them for their work with MLL students (Burnham et al., 2009); qualitative investigations to understand the unique strategies school counselors implement when engaging MLLs (Johnson et al., 2016); hearing from school counselors who work with MLLs and who collaborate with school personnel in those efforts (Shi & Watkinson, 2019); and conducting a study with a national sample of school counselors at all K-12 levels (Guillion, 2020). In an effort to fill the literature gap and previous scholarly recommendations, the following research question guided this study: *What are the lived experiences of K-12 school counselors who primarily serve their school's multilingual learning student population?*

Method

Qualitative methodologies allow for researchers to uncover thick descriptions of participant's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, to capture the lived experiences of school counselors who support their school's multilingual learning (MLL) population, I utilized a phenomenological approach. Through this methodological approach, I aimed to develop a description of participant experiences with the intent of gaining knowledge and awareness of these experiences. For this purpose, a descriptive phenomenological approach was used to identify the essence and general structures behind the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 2009).

Participants and Data Collection Procedures

To explore the lived experiences of school counselors who primarily support their schools' MLL student population, participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) located in the United States and (b) practicing school counselors who are currently or in the last two years, were the designated school counselor for the multilingual learning student population in their school.

Prior to engaging in this research, I obtained exempt approval from my university's College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee. After approval, I contacted potential participants through a variety of electronic methods, such as email and social media (i.e., Facebook Messenger, X, etc.) to request their participation in this study. Participants were purposely and conveniently selected and invited to share their experiences based on their experiences working with MLL students. This sampling technique allowed me to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria (Hays & Singh, 2023).

Data collection for this study was conducted through individual participant interviews; aligned with a phenomenological approach, participants were asked to share their experiences and perceptions through semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each participant engaged in an approximately one-hour interview through a university-sponsored and protected Zoom video-conferencing platform.

Participants of all identities were invited to participate in this study. As a result, the research sample included one male (9.1%; n = 1) and 10 female participants (90.9%; n = 10) who ranged in age from 20-59 years old. This age range provided a blend of both demographic and professional experience. Seven participants identified as White (63.6%; n = 7) , and 4 participants identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x (36.4% ; n = 4). Eight participants worked in a high school (72.7%; n = 8), 1 participant worked in an elementary school (9.1%; n = 1), 1

participant worked in a school supporting middle and elementary students (9.1%; n = 1), and one

participant worked in a school supporting students from elementary through high school (9.1%; n

= 1) (see Table 1). Phenomenological research allows the flexibility to determine how many

participants is appropriate based on the phenomenon in question (Giorgi, 2009), and 10-12

participants is generally agreed upon as adequate (Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is cyclical in nature and involves multiple steps. This process

requires researchers to "assemble, disassemble, and reassemble information to address the

research question" (Hays & Singh, 2023, p. 349). The goal of phenomenological analysis is to

uncover the meaning of participant experiences (Giorgi, 2009). Phenomenological data analysis

can be done in multiple ways depending on the type of approach used. Aligning with the chosen

methodology, I engaged in descriptive phenomenological data analysis. The steps of this method

include (1) reading for sense of the whole, (2) determination of meaning units, and (3)

transformation of participant's natural attitude expressions into phenomenologically

psychologically sensitive expressions (Giorgi, 2009).

Trustworthiness Strategies

In qualitative investigations, researchers are often a tool or instrument of the study

(Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). As such, I engaged in several

trustworthiness strategies. Throughout the participant interviews, I engaged in reflective

journaling by taking notes on participant experiences, therefore minimizing researcher bias and

increasing credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I engaged in memoing during each coding

session to minimize research bias and bracket assumptions. Participants were sent copies of their

transcribed interviews as well as initial study findings as forms of member checking to ensure

descriptive validation of the findings (Hays & Singh, 2023). To ensure dependability, I kept an audit trail of the research process and data analysis, used reflexivity journaling throughout the process, and had an external auditor to ensure researcher biases and assumptions were not impediments (Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023; Hays & Singh, 2023). To ensure transferability, participant descriptions were made clear within the 'Participants' section. Additionally, participants detailed lived experiences were directly quoted throughout the 'Findings' section to ensure their voices are centered. Confirmability was ensured through my reflexivity and audit trails that describe my thoughts and feelings from the research process.

Reflexivity Statement

Qualitative research calls for reflexivity and asks researchers to continuously reflect how their identities may be impacting their work (Hays & Singh, 2023). The researcher reflected on their identities and their varying degrees of power and privilege. The researcher is a practicing school counselor who supports their MLL students. Given their experiences, the researcher engaged in bracketing their assumptions, reflecting on interview questions, highlighted and prioritized the voices and experiences of participants, as well as focused on the research purpose in mind. This background serves to convey how the researcher's identities may influence their research, as well as a recognition of those influences.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school counselors who primarily support their school's multilingual learning population. The results are a combination of the participants' lived experiences and the centering of their voices. To maintain clarity throughout the paper, participant quotes have been modified to have consistency with the phrase 'multilingual learners' or 'MLL' rather than other variations like ESOL, ESL, etc. Data analysis

resulted in 6 themes and 14 subthemes. Specifically, the themes were (a) Advocating for Equity, (b) Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role, (c) Linguistic Nuances, (d) Collaboration is Crucial, (e) Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students, and (f) Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students.

Advocating for Equity

In theme one, the participating school counselors discussed the various ways in which they worked to ensure their students had equitable access to their education, including the comprehensive school counseling program, despite the reality of various systemic hurdles that exist for MLL students. The first theme includes subthemes: (a) acknowledging systemic barriers and stereotypes, and (b) equity necessitates accessibility.

Acknowledging Systemic Barriers and Stereotypes

Within this subtheme, school counselors explored the existence of systemic barriers within their schools and education systems, and how they attempted to combat them. Additionally, they shared existing stereotypes that were present, which they rejected about their MLL students. P11 noted that they "help [students] through… a system that doesn't always work for everyone. And figuring out what we can do to make it work for them." To combat barriers to family participation in school events, P08 shared that their,

> Previous school offer[ed] free babysitting services for the families because a lot of the barriers for the families coming might be, well, 'I have young children and I don't want to leave them at home, I don't want to bring them to the presentation because they're gonna be bored, they might not understand, I don't want them to be disruptive'.

Equity Necessitates Accessibility

In this subtheme, school counselors discussed the vital importance of ensuring their students had access to their school counseling programs and to their academics, which is how they fought for educational equity. Consequently, P05 shared,

> When I try to vocalize that it's not enabling them [providing school counseling content in students' native languages], it's making sure they have access to the information and not punishing them for not being able to do it in English yet. It's more important to me that they have information than they know enough English to understand it.

Relatedly, P09 highlighted that,

> We [school counselors] can create as many opportunities as possible for a student to be successful. And I tell my kids that all the time, 'I don't have a magic wand. I can't guarantee you success, but I can help create opportunities for that.' If that's as simple as making a phone call home or sending home a document in their native language, differentiating during classroom instruction or whatever that may look like, I'm absolutely going to do it.

Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role

In theme two, the participating school counselors discussed the nuances within their unique roles of primarily supporting multilingual learning students. The second theme includes subthemes: (a) MLSC role stigma and advocacy; (b) expansive responsibilities of the MLSC role; and (c) additional skills and training needed to support MLL students.

MLSC Role Stigma and Advocacy

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the stereotypes and stigma they have experienced from other educational professionals about their roles in specifically supporting MLL students, and how they have advocated for their roles. For instance, P01 believed,

Every state should have a position like this [MLSC role] that can help the students be

successful, because there is a push for students to graduate and do well, but many times

we don't provide the resources or the classes they need to show that they can do it. This

role is a great opportunity for the students to be successful.

In reflecting on the stigma they're received, P02 noted "the societal cultures" around serving

MLL students, mainly "microaggressions that come with it [serving MLL students], and in some

cases ignorance. And it's hard to call it out, because it sometimes is because someone doesn't

know any better."

Expansive Responsibilities of the MLSC Role

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the ways in which their roles and

responsibilities were more wide-ranging than school counselors who do not predominantly

support MLL students, such as having to spend more time on tasks, being their students 'go-to'

for a variety of roles- school counseling and beyond. According to P03,

The heart of what we do, and on paper, the logistics of what we do is still the same [as

traditional school counselors]. Our approaches are different, like being the students' go-to

for everything. I'm not just their school counselor. I'm partially their teacher. I'm their

nurse, I'm their direction finder. I'm their cafeteria lady. I'm everything in-between. I

actually am a medical liaison for one of my families… But the approach is different, in

that mine takes greater detail. When these counselors are doing class visits and talking

about course planning, I can't go in and be like 'Alright. We're course planning, write

down what you want next year.' These kids don't understand what that means. I have to

go in a couple of times because we need to establish a foundation of what it takes to

graduate because [they] don't know that yet.

Additional Skills and Training Needed to Support MLL Students

In this subtheme, school counselors explained the various skills that are needed in order to effectively support their MLL students, as well as additional training they had or sought which helped to better prepare them for supporting their students. For instance, being resilient was an important skill to have as P09 described,

> Be flexible and be prepared to advocate for things that you see others not have. To be
> ready to be told no but to not stop there, to really learn the rights of your students. Get
> familiar with that student handbook and your district handbook and be ready to say, well
> Title 9 says this or my student has the right to XYZ. And really be able to be student
> centered. That it's probably one of the most beautiful experiences that they'll ever have.
> Be ready for it all. There's some days where I'm like, 'oh, I was not ready for that. I was
> not ready to be told no to that'.

Linguistic Nuances

In theme three, the participating school counselors outlined the multitude of factors they weighed when utilizing a translator or interpreter to communicate with MLL students and families. Additionally, the participants who were bilingual discussed the unique considerations of being a bilingual school counselor. The third theme includes subthemes: (a) unique factors of being a bilingual MLSC; and (b) translation/interpretation nuances.

Unique Factors of Being a Bilingual MLSC

In this subtheme, school counselors who were bilingual communicated the various ways that being bilingual affects their jobs such as having to act as a translator for multiple education professionals, and more. Participants noted ways in which being bilingual supported their school counseling efforts. P11 shared that it helps to be "Spanish-speaking. Once students know you

are, you're able to make a direct connection and there's nothing wrong with using a translator/interpreter but it's nice to have somebody you can call or text directly 'Hey, this is going on'."

Although being bilingual is an additional skill, P09 disclosed that they are not paid extra and that,

> The research says that somewhere in other work or other career fields somebody like myself with my skill set can make anywhere from 20 to 25% more. I'm not compensated like that and it's unfortunate because it's a lot of work. Traditionally being a school counselor is a lot of work. We wear a lot of hats. We balance a lot of things. Add that to me doing what my counterpart does but in 2 languages. At the same time, my moral compass is like 'oh okay well when we think about equity, some students need a little bit more.' And I try to look at it through an equitable lens. I'm gonna do what I can do for my students and if it means it's taking a little more for me in certain things then it is what it is.

Translation/Interpretation Nuances

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the intricacies of utilizing translators/interpreters in their efforts to support their MLL students. For example, P05 noted, "you have to request them [translator] like 3 days in advance if you want a person to come in or for a 504 meeting or something." Although having translators/interpreters within their school divisions is a resource, participants highlighted examples of challenges they faced, like P06 who stated,

> We have the ESL office where we have interpreters and translators- 3 Spanish, one Arabic and 2 Pashto. But they're for the whole district which is nice because then we

have a face to face interpreter. But they can be really frustrating because we can't get a

hold of them. Some of them aren't the best interpreters in a counseling session. They'll

say their own thing and they'll tell me afterwards like, 'oh, I told him this.' I was like,

'that's not what I said.' Some overstep and after I meet with a student they will reach out

to the families or go drive by like social workers. One of them went and brought her

pastor to the family's house to talk with them. Usually if I have to talk to a parent and it's

more personal, I will wait outside the office hours and I'll use our tele language

interpreters. And documents that we send home, we only have them in certain languages.

Our Swahili interpreter and translator can translate in other languages but because it's not

a majority population they don't have him translate things and I'm like, 'he's there, why

can't he do it?' And the head of the office, she's Ukrainian, and she refuses to write things

in Ukrainian for our families even though we have Ukrainian families because she's like,

'well, it's not a majority population.'

Collaboration is Crucial

In theme four, the participating school counselors discussed the vital need to

communicate and collaborate with all educational partners relevant to MLL students: the

students themselves, their families, teachers, administration, the surrounding communities, and

more. This important collaboration included supporting MLL families through navigating the

complexities of the United States educational system. The fourth theme presents the subthemes:

(a) collaborating with a range of educational partners; and (b) helping families/students navigate

the U.S. education system.

Collaborating with a Range of Educational Partners

In this subtheme, school counselors shared the multitude of people they must work with in order to effectively support their MLL students including administration, parents, students, MLL teachers, their surrounding communities, and so forth. Highlighting the prevalence of collaboration, P07 said,

> [Collaboration is evident] especially teachers who were thrown a lot of ELL students because I noticed that our district tends to cluster the students. And so it is nice in certain aspects because if you have 2 students who speak French and they're in that same classroom but it also makes it that much more challenging for that teacher. I noticed that a lot of teachers would also collaborate with one another and [say], 'I have this student who speaks this language, and apps that we're supposed to be using for translation don't have that language, do you know what can I do?' and leaning on each other for support and then administration as well collaborating to figure out what can we do if we don't have the resources or if there is a unique situation like, a lot of our refugee students were homeless. Trying to figure out different supports with them and working with the social worker and our homeless liaison for the district.

Helping Families/Students Navigate the U.S. Education System

Within this subtheme, school counselors shared the ways in which they must support MLL students and their families to understand and navigate the U.S. education system. To help paint the picture, P03 noted,

> They come into a school where we're throwing out acronyms all the time, like SOLs. And at the end of the day I'm like, 'do you know what an SOL is?' And they're like 'Nope. Never heard this in my life.' And so having that opportunity to first recognize that as a counselor, a lot of our counselors take that for granted that these kids know what it is.

And so recognizing that it's not just a language barrier, it's a cultural barrier, and then being able to explain that and helping them along their way.

P09 shared,

We try to work with them as much as possible, in terms of getting them enrolled and we want them here in school as quickly as possible. So sometimes we… have to advocate for … a 30 day waiver for the student and get them enrolled and then as long as we can set up something for them with the health department…Getting school records from another country is often very difficult and the school year in other countries runs very differently. Schools in South America typically end school in February because their summer looks different than ours and then there will be a big gap in their education because we don't start school till September. A lot of people don't know those things. And so we'll get them and they'll be like, well, they said that they finished third grade or second grade, but their age is this… We take a whole picture look and all of those considerations go through our mind as we pick a class and a grade level for them. There's a lot of moving pieces.

Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students

In theme five, the participating school counselors spoke on the importance of building empathic and growth-fostering relationships between themselves and their MLL students. Additionally, they discussed how those relationships and being within their roles personally impact them. The fifth theme includes subthemes: (a) building meaningful, emotionally supportive relationships with students; (b) understanding MLL students' backgrounds; and (c) emotional impact on the MLSC.

Building Meaningful, Emotionally Supportive Relationships with Students

In this subtheme, school counselors communicated the importance of forming

relationships with students grounded in empathy and care. For instance, to form relationships

with students, P04 shared,

If I have their numbers, I stock them. If they're not here this morning, I'm like, 'hey?

Where are you? I haven't seen you in a while.' And that's been really crucial because

they'll usually come when I message. It's so good to form relationships with these kids. I

had a new student that came in the middle of the year, then she wasn't coming to school,

and at this point I didn't know her. So the social worker and I went to her house because

no one was answering the phone, and her boyfriend answered the door, which happened

to be a former student of mine. Because I had a good relationship with him, I was like,

"Oh, my gosh! What are you doing?" Which then in turn helped her to feel like she could

trust me more. So she started coming to school, and we got her to graduate, and it was

amazing. And it was all because of that relationship that I had with him, and going above

and beyond. You have to meet them where they're at, even if it means going to their

house. You're having to meet the student where they're at. Get a little bit creative with the

ways that you're engaging them in school and outside of school.

Understanding MLL Students' Backgrounds

In this subtheme, school counselors shared their knowledge of the cultural backgrounds

of their MLL students, including the use of culturally affirming considerations. P07 stated,

Students at my school would talk about things to a certain degree. I found that a lot of my

Ukrainian students are a little bit more closed off towards me. I don't know if that's what

they're used to culturally, if talking with a counselor is not as common. I would have on

rare occasions a student open up and break down… I definitely tried to intervene where I
could, but the students really did lean on each other about these things.

In addition, P05 reflected:

I had one student once that sticks with me a lot. His dad had two heart attacks and the
doctor told him that if he was doing any more strenuous physical labor, he'd have another
one, he'd probably die. So this kid was 15 helping his dad until 3AM with his company,
moving box trucks. And his parents weren't forcing him to work. He felt that personal
responsibility to make sure that his dad didn't get sick again. And so he would go on the
bleachers during his classes, put a hat over his head and sleep. And it's teachers are all
like 'He's not going to class, he doesn't care, he always looks high.' He wasn't high, he
was tired. I talked with him, he shared all this with me and I told him 'you don't take a
nap out on the bleachers, you come here for 5 min if you need to and I'll turn down the
lights and you can rest and you go back to class.' And he started doing that. Straight A's
after that. And I don't think the other counselors had the rapport to be able to have those
conversations.

Emotional Impact on the MLSC

Within this subtheme, school counselors conveyed rich descriptions of the emotions they
have when hearing the stories their MLL students shared, and the overall impact their strong
empathy has on them. For example, P07 said,

It's definitely a lot. It really pulls on your heartstrings to see all that happening and I think
back to when some of the particular students who only spoke Ukrainian who had just
moved 2 days ago coming in their first day of school and seeing them so anxious and
scared about everything. And it feels in a lot of ways you're useless because you do the

best thing you can and you try all of your efforts, but sometimes there's so much beyond

your control. It's difficult not being able to bring over everyone's family from another

country and have everyone together. To see the children in particular suffering, and

feeling upset or isolated in a school building. It's really tough to see the impact on

families who were struggling with finding places to live. It's challenging and feels like

you're putting in a lot of work and not seeing results at times. It can feel defeating, but

when you know in your heart that you're doing the right thing, it's motivating to keep

going.

Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students

In theme six, the participating school counselors discussed the numerous ways they

adapted their interventions to best support their MLL students. The sixth theme includes the

subthemes: (a) specialized counseling interventions and (b) MLL-centered scheduling

considerations.

Specialized Counseling Interventions

In this subtheme, school counselors disclosed the various interventions they implemented

that were unique to supporting their MLL students particularly, such as creating a school

counseling group for a subset of their MLL population. P07 shared their creation of a counseling

group in response to the need to support refugee students,

It's a mix of refugee students who came, did not speak any English and were brand new

to the country and the school. So it's those students and other students who have been in

the school for a while and speak both English and that [Ukrainian/Russian] native

language.... We already have so many students who are bilingual and can be a support for

those students. Me and the school psychologist at my school were like, 'we should really do something to help them.'

MLL-Centered Scheduling Considerations

In this subtheme, school counselors talked about the multitude of factors that go into scheduling MLL students. For example, P01 shared,

> When you are at the point in school where 200 students are level one or two, you have to make sure that they have classes available for when a student has to take art, for example. Digital art might be very difficult for a level one because they are not used to working with computers, whereas ceramics might be easier for them. So we wanna make sure that they leave spaces for our students so they can take those difficult classes and be successful.

Last, a special consideration participants had to remember highlighted by P05 was the "influx of newcomers in the winter around January/February once the academic year in Central America is done. The MLL Director would oftentimes have to open up sections of newcomer classes so the other classes weren't too full."

Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the present findings in the context of other related scholarship, and the terminology "MLL" will be used to describe students whose first language is not English. Also important to note, while many MLL students may be immigrants, not all immigrant students are MLL students (Zehr, 2007).

Theme 1: Advocating for Equity

In theme one, the participating school counselors discussed the various ways in which they fought for educational equity for their MLL students, and how they rejected stereotypes

casted on their MLL students. School counselors have the imperative to support all students, and do so ethically through efforts in leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration, thereby equity and access for all students (ASCA, 2018; 2023), including MLL students. ASCA's position statements call on school counselors to engage in anti-racist practices (ASCA, 2021), as well as remove barriers for students with undocumented status (ASCA, 2019). In particular, scholars explored the necessity for professionals within education to refrain from holding stereotypes regarding MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015), and portrayed that school counselors are in a helpful position to advocate for MLL students at a systemic level, challenging systems from within (Attia et al., 2023). The current research extends this notion, providing a thick, rich description of this MLL-specific advocacy, including challenging other educational professionals who stereotype MLL students.

Multiple scholars have proposed models for decreasing equity and access gaps for MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Arora et al., 2021). This current study goes beyond the conceptual to empirically and specifically details how school counselors ensure that their school counseling programs are equitably accessible to their MLL students, thus supporting their social/emotional, career, and academic needs.

Theme 2: Unique Challenges and Responsibilities Within the MLSC Role

In theme two, the participating school counselors explained the nuances within their unique roles of primarily supporting MLL students. Specifically, the stereotypes and stigma they have experienced from other educational professionals about their roles; how they have advocated for their roles; the wide range of their MLSC roles; the various skills needed in order to effectively support their MLL students; and additional training they had or sought, which helped to prepare them for supporting their students.

In their case study, Davis and colleagues (2023) shared findings that teachers do not fully understand the roles of school counselors. This misunderstanding is expanded upon through the present study, adding that educational professionals are further misinformed regarding the MLSC role specialization. Despite an increase in school counseling positions that specialize in supporting MLL students, to date, the current research is the first of its kind to exclusively explore the experiences of school counselors within these unique roles. As such, results from this subtheme add unique and important information to the literature base.

Scholars have shared the need and desire for pre-service school counselors (Burnham et al., 2009; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Johnson & Cain, 2019; Pérusse et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2022) and practicing school counselors (Attia et al., 2023; Davis et al., 2023) to receive effective training and professional development in supporting MLL students. As shown in the research, school counselors are more confident in their abilities to work with MLL students when having received training specific to their needs (Johnson et al., 2016). Participants in the present study all held roles that primarily supported their schools' MLL students and shared ways in which they increased their confidence in supporting their MLL students, including: attending trainings, passing language examinations, multiple years of experience, building necessary personal skills, and so forth. The present study further explains what previous research indicates: additional school counseling skills and training are necessary in order to effectively support MLL students.

Theme 3: Linguistic Nuances

In theme three, the participating school counselors outlined the multitude of factors they weighed when utilizing a translator or interpreter to communicate with MLL students and families. Additionally, the participants who were bilingual detailed the unique intricacies of

being a bilingual school counselor. Research has shown a vital need for more bilingual professionals in mental health and schools (Harris & Sullivan, 2017; Pope et al. 2022; Smith-Adcock et al., 2006), and that when school counselors are bilingual, they have a higher self-efficacy in working with MLL students (Johnson et al., 2016). Bilingual participants within the present study found their bilingualism beneficial to working with their MLL students and families. However, adding to the literature base, participants described several challenges they navigated because of their bilingualism, including being one of the few bilingual professionals in their schools; being asked to act as a translator for other professionals; not getting paid for their additional services; and having an increased workload. Participants expressed the need for additional bilingual professionals in education, in all languages, which aligns with the current literature base (Harris & Sullivan, 2017; Pope et al. 2022; Smith-Adcock et al., 2006).

Participants in this study highlighted the need for translators/interpreters to ethically support school counselors by providing culturally appropriate translations/interpretations, free of personal beliefs or values. Participants also provided detailed accounts of their experiences advocating for educational materials to be translated in the students' home languages by educational professionals, including translators within their buildings, their school divisions, and various translation services, which parallels the conceptual recommendations of Edirmanasinghe and colleagues (2022).

Theme 4: Collaboration is Crucial

In theme four, school counselors enumerated the multitude of people they worked with to effectively support their MLL students, including administration, parents, students, MLL teachers, their surrounding communities, and so forth. Additionally, participants described the

importance of collaborating with MLL students and families, to support their navigation of the U.S. education system.

Outlined by one of ASCA's (2022) position statements, it is clear that school counselors must facilitate partnerships with schools, families, and their communities, although there is a desire for increased engagement between schools and MLL families (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). The present study builds upon Adelman and Taylor's (2015) prior research, noting the significance of school counselors engaging and communicating with MLL students and families, including the positive impact on MLL students (i.e., improvements in attendance, graduation rates, and emotional support). Additionally, the present investigation demonstrated the frequency, necessity, and collaboration school counselors used with educational partners within the school and the community, which also aligns with the current literature base (Arora et al., 2021; Attia et al., 2023; Burnham et al., 2009; Cook, 2015; Cook et al, 2012; Davis et al., 2023; Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022; Purgason et al., 2023; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Tuttle et al., 2021).

Scholars have described the experiences that MLL students and their families have faced, when entering and making their ways through the U.S. education system, and the vital role that educational professionals (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; España & Herrera, 2020), including school counselors play in supporting their journeys (Attia et al., 2023; Morrison & Bryan, 2014). Similar to the current literature base, participants within this present study highlighted the extensive time and effort they utilized to support MLL students and their families.

Theme 5: Mutual Respect and Empathy with MLL Students

In theme five, the participating school counselors shared the importance of building empathic and growth-fostering relationships between themselves and their MLL students.

Additionally, they discussed how those relationships personally impacted them. These findings support the theoretical framework utilized for this study; Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) posits that individuals develop mutually empowering relationships with others, as relationships are the key to growth (Jordan, 2000). The present study aligns with RCT, particularly, the core tenets of (a) relational differentiation and elaboration characterize growth; (b) mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships; (c) in growth-fostering relationships, all people contribute and grow or benefit; development is not a one-way street; (d) therapy relationships are characterized by a special kind of mutuality; and (e) real engagement and therapeutic authenticity are necessary for the development of mutual empathy. Scholars have used RCT as a lens for their conceptual framework for supporting Latinx students and families (Tuttle et al., 2022; Tuttle & Haskins, 2017); the present results are unique and expand previous scholarship, utilizing RCT specific to MLL students and school counselors, through an empirical investigation.

Next, school counselors have a vital role in promoting social/emotional skills (Attia et al., 2023), including resilience, which allegedly enhances student connectedness and relatability with others (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). In a similar vein, participants in the present study achieved student connectedness through their relational building with their MLL students. Furthermore, the participating school counselors shared advice for other school counselors who may enter similar roles, highlighting the importance of forming trusting and therapeutic relationships with their students, which echoes the sentiments of Attia and colleagues (2023).

In their mixed-methods study, Shi and Watkinson (2019) examined the needs of MLL students, finding that their overall sense of school belonging was low, suggesting solutions, such as intentional collaboration and counseling techniques. Relatedly, according to participants in the

present study, they had a direct impact on MLL students' sense of belonging, which they wanted to increase. In fact, from their perspectives, participants indicated that they made intentional efforts to ensure their MLL students knew they were a resource to provide support and care. This finding parallels scholars who heard from MLL students, depicting having impactful relationships with their school counselors, knowing they were available for support and advocacy.

Next, when working with MLL students, it is crucial that school counselors are aware of the context of their immigration, particularly as MLL students and their families immigrate for a myriad of reasons (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; España & Herrera, 2020). Even further, best practices for fostering connections with MLL students includes: creating welcoming and accepting spaces in which students are comfortable sharing their stories and experiences (España & Herrera, 2020); considering the intersection of the cultural practices and identities of their MLL students (ASCA, 2021; España & Herrera, 2020); and remembering that building cultural competence comes in stages (Dogan, 2022). This study builds upon these recommendations, showcasing that school counselors within MLSC positions are cognizant of this imperative, and actively work to ensure they are culturally competent, in order to understand and empathize with their students.

Building growth-fostering, mutually empathic relationships emotionally impacts school counselors. Data on the experiences of school counselors shows that burnout and other negative emotions are common, considering the high and constantly changing emotional environments they are immersed in (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Fye et al., 2020; Kim & Lambie, 2018; Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Limited literature exists on school counselors who primarily support MLL students, and therefore the literature base does not reflect the emotional impact of their

specialized roles. Participants within this study shared the exuberant pride, turmoil, content, heartbreak, and joy they experience daily from the therapeutic relationships they formed with their MLL students. Therefore, this study adds to the existing literature, providing rich, nuanced descriptions of participants' emotional experiences serving MLL students.

Theme 6: Adapting Interventions Specific to MLL Students

This final theme addresses the multiple ways in which school counselors incorporated and adapted their interventions to best support their MLL students. In comparison, other scholars suggested that school counselors implement multiple interventions to meet the varied needs of MLL students (Adelman & Taylor, 2015), including tailored, tiered school counseling interventions (Arora et al., 2020; Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022). Relatedly, Attia et al. (2023) recommended that school counselor training include content for group counseling for MLL students. In addition to these conceptual recommendations, other researchers have demonstrated school counselors implementing interventions to support their MLL students (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018; Vera et al., 2021), addressing social/emotional, academic, and career domains. From the MLL students' viewpoint, scholars have noted that MLL students who participated in school groups, activities, or mental health supports had overall benefits to their well-being (Vera et al., 2021), social skills, school adjustment, and feelings of empowerment (Steen et al., 2018). The current study provides specific examples of school counselor depicted interventions, detailing the positive feedback they received from MLL students, which agrees with the current literature base (Montes & Ramos, 2020; Shi & Steen, 2015; Shi et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2018; Vera et al., 2021).

Finally, participants in the present study discussed their process for scheduling their MLL students. Some participants noted that they schedule students in 'clusters,' 'shelter classes,' or in

classes exclusively for MLL students, such as English. This finding pairs with Vera and colleagues (2021), who gathered feedback, but from the perspective of MLL students, finding that students felt protected and bonded as a community when they were surrounded by their MLL peers. Next, Guillion's (2020) phenomenological investigation also found scheduling MLL students as a key challenge reported by school counselors. The present study provides an extension, describing the MLL scheduling process in more detail, highlighting the time and thought school counselors use in their scheduling decisions (i.e., considerations pertaining to students' current English acquisition levels, the expertise of the teachers within the classes, the amount of MLL students within classes, and more).

Implications for Practice

School counselors are positioned to be advocates for MLL students within their schools, promoting equity and removing barriers to their K-12 education. As such, school counselors must work to ensure MLL students are not an afterthought; MLL student needs must be accounted for when school counselors plan interventions like classroom lessons or groups, when collaborating and consulting with other educational professionals, and more. Additionally, practitioners need to advocate to remove systemic barriers at the division and/or building that prohibit the success of their MLL students (i.e., appropriately awarding credit from schools attended in other countries, ensuring they are connected with necessary resources, and more).

School counselors in the present study desired professional development tailored to school counselors, and more pointedly, that addresses working with their MLL students. State and national associations as well as school divisions must provide relevant, timely school counseling professional development, and school counselors must communicate their professional development needs.

Participants within this study described the wrap-around support they provided to their MLL students, oftentimes collaborating with a myriad of professionals (i.e., nurses, teachers, administration, community members, translators/interpreters, etc.). Especially important is the collaboration with MLL students and their families. Given that the U.S. education system is nuanced and challenging to acclimate to, extensive time and resources must be provided to help MLL students and families navigate this system. Practicing school counselors must consider the imperative of collaboration to more holistically support their MLL students.

Next, MLL students have rich stories and backgrounds, and school counselors should take time to support them: understanding their backgrounds, forming therapeutic relationships, and being versed in trauma-informed practices. At the same time, participants in this study shared vulnerable accounts of the emotional impact of their MLSC roles. To navigate this emotional impact, practitioners can consider self-care, such as: setting healthy boundaries, participating in personal counseling, avoiding burnout, among others.

Finally, practicing school counselors must move away from using terms such as 'ESL' and 'ELL' and use the strengths-based term 'multilingual learners' (MLL). Having consistent languaging will help to set a supportive tone, encouraging discussions with other educational professionals about the terminology transition, providing a platform for deeper understanding of MLL students' strengths.

Implications for Preparation

Although pre-service school counseling graduate preparation for supporting MLL students is growing, more preparation is needed. Preparation programs could consider including trauma-informed counseling, tailoring interventions to be accessible and relevant for MLL students, advocacy concerns related to MLL students, to name a few. Although specific training

on this population is not delineated as a requirement by CACREP, given the growing number of MLL youth, CACREP and other accrediting bodies may consider requirements for serving MLL students. Relatedly, school counselor preparation programs must intentionally incorporate information on MLL students across the curriculum, such as in case examples, as part of experiential learning, etcetera.

It is evident that we need more multilingual professionals in education, and more specifically, in school counseling positions. Counseling preparation programs have begun to address this need by providing bilingual counseling certifications (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021). However, more programs and certifications are needed to prepare school counselors to provide counseling services in multiple languages. Additionally, as of current, Spanish is the only language represented in these certification programs, leaving the need for programs to include other languages represented in the U.S.

Implications for Advocacy

Although ASCA has many position statements, there lacks an ASCA position statement specifically for MLL students. Thus, there remains a need for ASCA to outline how school counselors support MLL learners, reinforcing consistent, intentional advocacy efforts to remove systemic barriers and create equitable access to education for MLL students.

Additional advocacy efforts need to be addressed at the federal and state education departments, to examine, interrupt, and remove systemic and policy level hindrances to MLL success. Such as, presently, MLL students are expected to assimilate to U.S. education systems, despite having multiple barriers, including: taking and passing standardized tests offered only in English; having greater barriers for pursuing post-secondary education (i.e., receiving federal financial aid), and so forth. The path to MLL student graduation needs to be critically examined,

with an emphasis on viewing their multilingualism as a strength to continue to develop, rather than forcing assimilation.

As noted by several participants in this study, the role of a school counselor who primarily supports their school's MLL student population can be demanding and over-extending. Although the recommended ratio for school counselors-to-students is 1:250, the national average from 2021-2022 was 1:408 (ASCA, 2022). State and national level associations should continue advocacy efforts to reduce ratios overall, and more specifically, reinforce lower ratios for school counselors who primarily support their schools' MLL student populations.

Finally, according to this study, multilingual school counselors provided additional student services beyond the scope of their job (i.e., translation services), but oftentimes did not receive financial compensation for these additional time and efforts. Employers across educational fields must acknowledge professionals' multilingualism as an additional skill, and award compensation and disperse workload appropriately.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the present investigation is an important step in filling a much-needed research gap, there remains a need for future research on supporting MLL students in K-12 education. First, school counselors are integral in supporting MLL learners, often as one of the only access points MLL students have for mental health care. Hence, in the future, scholars should examine how to best train pre-service and practicing school counselors to be advocates for MLL students. Specifically, studies could include quantitative investigations exploring the impact that MLL-focused school counselor positions have on the success of MLL students in K-12 schools (i.e., social/emotional, academic, and career outcomes).

Next, to increase generalization of MLSC research, future quantitative studies should include larger, more representative samples. Additionally, mixed-method studies could provide a comprehensive view of this impact, incorporating numerical data points (i.e., grades, graduation rates, attendance, etc.) and rich descriptions from MLL students, families, and other educational partners. Further, future research could build off on this qualitative investigation and any future quantitative studies to develop an instrument detailing the roles and responsibilities for supporting MLL students.

Finally, the U.S. Department of Education, under the leadership of the Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona, set forth new initiatives, including a greater prioritization of MLL students. Among those initiatives are "Creating Pathways for Global Engagement," with a goal of providing every student a pathway to multilingualism. This federal initiative includes grants; utilizing these grants, school counseling scholars can be on the forefront of investigating MLL learners within schools.

Research Limitations

This study must be understood in the context of its limitations. First, this study described the lived experiences of a sample of school counselors who primarily support their school's multilingual learning student population. As a practicing school counselor who primarily supports my school's MLL student population, there is a possibility for my biases to have impacted the data collection and/or analysis (i.e., I see first-hand my students' experiences while navigating our school, and I could provide a personal account of my experiences in supporting MLL students). To mitigate this possible limitation, I engaged in bracketing my biases and assumptions, and a range of other trustworthiness strategies: reflexivity journaling, the use of an external coder, and the use of an external auditor.

Next, in regard to demographics, this study included one male participant, participants who identified as Hispanic/Latinx or White, and no participants on the West coast. While this study did not seek to be representative of larger populations, future studies could replicate this study with different demographics, to determine replicability.

References

Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2015). Immigrant children and youth in the USA: Facilitating equity of opportunity at school. *Education Sciences*, 5(4), 323-344. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci5040323

American School Counselor Association (2012). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd edition). Author.

American School Counselor Association (2021). *The school counselor and anti-racist practices*. Retrieved from: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Anti-Racist-Practices American School Counselor Association (2021b). *The school counselor and cultural diversity*. Retrieved from: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Cultural-Diversity

American School Counselor Association (2022). *Student-to-school-counselor ratios 2021-2022*. Retrieved from: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios

American School Counselor Association (2023). *The role of the school counselor.* Retrieved from: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ee8b2e1b-d021-4575-982c-c84402cb2cd2/Role-Statement.pdf

Arora, P. G., Alvarez, K., Huang, C., & Wang, C. (2021). A three-tiered model for addressing the mental health needs of immigrant-origin youth in schools. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 23, 151-162. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-020-01048-9

Attia, M., Staton, A. R., Evans, A., & Tang, S. (2023). Supporting Immigrant Students in

    Schools: A Qualitative Investigation. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 9(1),

    34-49. https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2023.2168361

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The

    Condition of Education 2011. NCES 2011-033. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

Baily, C. D. R. (2017). *Investigating the mental health needs of unaccompanied immigrant*

    children in removal proceedings: A mixed methods study. (Doctoral dissertation,

    Columbia University). https://doi.org/10.7916/D8TM7GSF

Bardhoshi, G., Schweinle, A., & Duncan, K. (2014). Understanding the Impact of School Factors

    on School Counselor Burnout: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Professional Counselor*, 4(5),

    426-443. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1063202

Betancourt, T. S., Frounfelker, R., Mishra, T., Hussein, A., & Falzarano, R. (2015). Addressing

    health disparities in the mental health of refugee children and adolescents through

    community-based participatory research: A study in 2 communities. *American Journal of*

    Public Health, 105(S3), S475-S482.

    https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302504

Blackmore, R., Gray, K. M., Boyle, J. A., Fazel, M., Ranasinha, S., Fitzgerald, G., Misso, M., &

    Gibson-Helm, M. (2020). Systematic review and meta-analysis: The Prevalence of

    mental illness in child and adolescent refugees and asylum seekers. *Journal of the*

    American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 59(6), 705–714.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2019.11.011

Burnham, J. J., Mantero, M., & Hooper, L. M. (2009). Experiential training: Connecting school

    counselors-in-training, English as a second language (ESL) teachers, and ESL students.

Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 37(1), 2-14.

https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2009.tb00087.x

Cabrera, N., Alonso, A., Chen, Y., Ghosh, R. (2022). Latinx Families' Strengths and Resilience

Contribute to Their Well-Being. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic

Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/latinx-

families-strengths-and-resiliencecontribute-to-their-well-being

Calderón, M., Slavin, R., & Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective Instruction for English Learners. *The

Future of Children*, 21(1), 103–127. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41229013

Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwantoro, S. (2005). The new

demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Urban Institute (NJ1). Retrieved from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED490924.pdf

Cardona, M. (2023, January 24). Remarks by U.S. secretary of education Miguel Cardona on

raise the bar: Lead the world. Remarks by U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

on Raise the Bar: Lead the World | U.S. Department of Education.

https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/remarks-us-secretary-education-miguel-cardona-

raise-bar-lead-world

Carey J., Harrington K., Martin I., Hoffman D. (2012). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes

of the implementation of ASCA National Model school counseling programs in rural and

suburban Nebraska high schools. Professional School Counseling, 16(2), 100–107.

https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600202

Carrell S. E., Carrell S. A. (2006). Do lower student to counselor ratios reduce school

disciplinary problems? The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy, 5(1), 1463–

1463. https://doi.org/10.2202/1538-0645.1463

Child Trends. (2012) Child Trends analysis of 2012 American Community Survey data. *Language spoken at home*. See http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=dual-language-learners

Cohodes, E. M., Kribakaran, S., Odriozola, P., Bakirci, S., McCauley, S., Hodges, H. R., Sisk, L.M., Zacharek, S. J. & Gee, D. G. (2021). Migration-related trauma and mental health among migrant children emigrating from Mexico and Central America to the United States: Effects on developmental neurobiology and implications for policy. *Developmental Psychobiology*, 63(6), e22158. https://doi.org/10.1002/dev.22158

Cook, A. L. (2015). Building Connections to Literacy Learning among English Language Learners: Exploring the Role of School Counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 13(9), n9. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1066329

Cook, A., Pérusse, R., & Rojas, E. D. (2012). Increasing academic achievement and college-going rates for Latina/o English language learners: A survey of school counselor interventions. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 4(2), 2. https://doi.org/10.7729/42.0023

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th edition). Sage.

Davis, L., Harward, K., & Yazzie, A. (2023). Counselor–Teacher Collaboration in Multilingual Learner Contexts: A Qualitative Case Study Investigating Counselor–Teacher Partnerships. *Professional School Counseling*, 27(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231177624

Doctors Without Borders. (2020). No way out: The humanitarian crisis for migrants and asylum seekers trapped between the United States, Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central

America.
https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/default/files/documents/Doctors%20Withou
t%20Borders_No%20Way%20Out%20Report.pdf

Donohue, P., Parzych, J. L., Chiu, M. M., Goldberg, K., & Nguyen, K. (2022). The impacts of
school counselor ratios on student outcomes: A multistate study. Professional School
Counseling, 26(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X221137283

Edirmanasinghe, N. A., Attia, M., Brant-Rajahn, S., & Staton, A. R. (2022). Working with
Immigrant Children in Schools: Applying a Multi-Tiered Approach. *Journal of Child and
Adolescent Counseling*, 8(2), 59-71. https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2022.2074771

Ellis, B. H., Miller, A. B., Abdi, S., Barrett, C., Blood, E. A., & Betancourt, T. S. (2013). Multi-
tier mental health program for refugee youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical
Psychology*, 81(1), 129–140. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029844

España, C., & Herrera, L. Y. (2020). En comunidad: Lessons for centering the voices and
experiences of bilingual Latinx students. Heinemann.

Fallon, L. M., Veiga, M., & Sugai, G. (2021). Strengthening MTSS for behavior (MTSS-B) to
promote racial equity. *School Psychology Review*, 1-16.
https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1972333

Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and
refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. The
Lancet, 379(9812), 266-282. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60051-2

Fisher-Borne, M., Cain, J. M., & Martin, S. L. (2015). From mastery to accountability: Cultural
humility as an alternative to cultural competence. *Social Work Education*, 34(2), 165-
181. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2014.977244

Friedman, A. (2015, May 10). America's lacking language skills. The Atlantic. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/filling-americas-language-education-potholes/392876/

Fye, H. J., Cook, R. M., Baltrinic, E. R., & Baylin, A. (2020). Examining Individual and Organizational Factors of School Counselor Burnout. *Professional Counselor*, 10(2), 235-250. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1259796

Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.

Goodman-Scott, E., & Cholewa, B. (2023). Research design: Qualitative approaches. In B. Zyromski & C. Dimmitt (Eds.), *School counseling research: Advancing the professional evidence base* (1st ed., 192-236). Oxford University Press.

Goodman-Scott E., Sink C., Cholewa B., Burgess M. (2018). An ecological view of school counselor ratios and student academic outcomes: A national investigation. Journal of Counseling and Development, 96(4), 388–398. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12221

Guillion, A. L. (2020). *The Lived Experiences of Non-Spanish Speaking High School Counselors Who Work with a Large Hispanic English Language Learner Student Population* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Holy Cross).

Harris, B., & Sullivan, A. L. (2017). A framework for bilingual school consultation to facilitate multitier systems of support for English language learners. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 27(3), 367-392. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2017.1307758

Hays, D. G., & Singh, A. A. (2023). *Qualitative research in education and social sciences* (2nd ed.). Cognella Academic Publishing.

Hernández, D. J. (2004). Demographic change and the life circumstances of immigrant families. *The Future of Children*, 17-47. https://doi.org/10.2307/1602792

Hernández, D. J., Denton, N. A., & Macartney, S. E. (2008). Children in Immigrant Families: Looking to America's Future. Social Policy Report. Volume 22, Number 3. *Society for Research in Child Development*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521704

Interiano-Shiverdecker, C., Robertson, D., Zambrano, E., Morgan, A., & Cantu Contreras, J. (2021). Development and implementation of a bilingual counseling certificate program. *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling*, 3(3), 3. https://doi.org/10.7290/tsc030303

Johnson, L., & Cain, A. (2019). Preparing School Counselors in Training to Implement English as a Second Language (ESL) Strategies during Classroom Lessons. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13(1), 9. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1203837

Johnson, L. V., Ziomek-Daigle, J., Haskins, N. H., & Paisley, P. O. (2016). An investigation of school counselor self-efficacy with English language learners. *Professional School Counseling*, 20(1), 1096-2409. https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-20.1.44

Jordan, J. V. (2000). The role of mutual empathy in relational/cultural therapy. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *56*(8), 1005-1016. https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(200008)56:8%3C1005::AID-JCLP2%3E3.0.CO;2-L

Jordan, J. V. (2001). A relational-cultural model: Healing through mutual empathy. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, *65*, 92-103. https://doi.org/10.1521/bumc.65.1.92.18707

Jordan, J. V. (2017). Relational–cultural theory: The power of connection to transform our lives. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, *56*(3), 228-243. https://doi.org/10.1002/johc.12055

Jordan, J. V., Kaplan, A. G., Stiver, I. P., Surrey, J. L., & Miller, J. B. (1991). *Women's growth in connection: Writings from the Stone Center*. Guilford Press.

Kim, N., & Lambie, G. W. (2018). Burnout and implications for professional school counselors. *Professional Counselor*, 8(3), 277-294. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1198902

Lapan R., Gysbers N., Stanley B., Pierce M. (2012). Missouri professional school counselors: Ratios matter, especially in high-poverty schools. Professional School Counseling, 16(2), 108–116. https://doi.org/10.5330/psc.n.2012-16.108

Macedo, D. (2019). Rupturing the yoke of colonialism in foreign language education. *Decolonizing foreign language education. The misteaching of English and other imperial languages*, 1-49.

McCabe, A., Bornstein, M. H., Guerra, A. W., Kuchirko, Y., Paéz, M., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Cates, C. B., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Melzi, G., Song, L., Golinkoff, R., Hoff, E., & Mendelsohn, A. (2013). Multilingual children: Beyond myths and toward best practices. *Society for Research in Child Development.* Social Policy Report, 27(4), 1-21. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED595539

McClellan, B. E. (1999). Moral education in America: Schools and the shaping of character from colonial times to the present. Teachers College Press.

Montes, A. A., & Ramos, E. (2020). Group Counseling for English Language Learners to Promote Academic Navigational Capital. *Professional School Counseling*, 24(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20979566

Morrison, S., & Bryan, J. (2014). Addressing the challenges and needs of English-speaking Caribbean immigrant students: Guidelines for school counselors. *International Journal*

*for the Advancement of Counsellin*g, 36(4), 440–449. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-014-9218-z

Mullen, P. R., & Gutierrez, D. (2016). Burnout, Stress and Direct Student Services Among School Counselors. *Professional Counselor*, 6(4), 344-359. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1124058

Murphey, D. (2014). The academic achievement of english language learners: Data for the US and each of the states. Research Brief. Publication# 2014-62. *Child Trends*.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). English Learners in Public Schools. *Condition of Education.* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved June 6, 2023, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved June, 6, 2023, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cge.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA), (2007). www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/faq/08leps.html.

O'Connor, K., Thomas-Duckwitz, C., & Núñez-Mchiri, G. G. (2015). No safe haven here: Mental health assessment of women and children held in U.S. immigration detention. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. https://scholarworks.utep.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=soc_anth_papers

Office of Civil Rights. (2015). Dear colleague letter: English learner students and limited English proficient parents. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf

Oldroyd, J. C., Kabir, A., Dzakpasu, F. Q., Mahmud, H., Rana, J., & Islam, R. M. (2022). The experiences of children and adolescents undergoing forced separation from their parents during migration: A systematic review. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 30(3), 888-898. https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13595

Pérusse, R., Poynton, T., Parzych, J., & Goodnough, G. (2015). Changes Over Time in Masters Level School Counselor Education Programs. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 7(3). http://dx.doi.org/10.7729/73.1072

Pew Research Center. (2013). Tabulation of 2010-2018 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

Pope, A. L., Sunal, Z., Gantt, A. C., Zimmerman, B., Corey, A. K., Nuosce, M., & Araujo, L. (2022). A qualitative examination of bi/multilingual counselor training and experiences. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 100(1), 27-38. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12407

Purgason, L. L., Johnson, G., Vallecillo, O., Covington, C., Parker, R. H., & Airhart-Larraga, S. (2023). English as a Second Language Teachers' Perspectives on Interprofessional Collaboration with School Counselors: Supporting Emergent Bilingual Students. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2023.2240304

Revens, K. E., Gutierrez, D., Paul, R., Reynolds, A. D., Price, R., & DeHaven, M. J. (2021). Social support and religiosity as contributing factors to resilience and mental wellbeing in Latino immigrants: A community-based participatory research study. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 23, 904-916. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10903-021-01179-7

Rojas-Flores, L., Clements, M. L., Hwang Koo, J., & London, J. (2017). Trauma and psychological distress in Latino citizen children following parental detention and

deportation. P*sychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 9(3), 352–361. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000177

Shi, Q., Cournoyer, C., Randolph, A., Scheffenacker, M., & Brown, J. (2022). Experiential learning of school counselors-in-training to work with english learners. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 12, 132-147. https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2022.12.1.10

Shi, Q., Phillips, K., Moody, D., & Cordova, T. (2023). Adapted Strong Kids Curriculum for English Language Learners During COVID-19. *Professional School Counseling*, *27*(1a). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231160752

Shi, Q., & Steen, S. (2012). Using the Achieving Success Everyday (ASE) Group Model to Promote Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement for English as a Second Language (ESL) Students. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1201600108

Shi, Q., & Watkinson, J. (2019). English language learners and school belonging: Implications for school counselor practice. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1b). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19834442

Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., Garner, A. S., McGuinn, L., Pascoe, J., & Wood, D. L. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), e232-e246. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-2663

Smith-Adcock, S., Daniels, M. H., Min Lee, S., Arley Villalba, J., & Arce Indelicato, N. (2006). Culturally responsive school counseling for Hispanic/Latino students and families: The need for bilingual school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0601000104

Snyder, S., Staehr Fenner, D., Smith, S. & Singh, J. (2023, March). *Terminology to describe multilingual learners: Labels and their implications*. SupportEd.

Steen, S., Liu, X., Shi, Q., Rose, J., & Merino, G. (2018). Promoting school adjustment for English-language learners through group work. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X18777096

Suárez-Orozco, C., Onaga, M., & de Lardemelle, C. (2010). Promoting academic engagement among immigrant adolescents through school-family-community collaboration. *Professional School Counseling*, 14(1), 15–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1001400103

The Education Trust. (2023). *Who we are*. Retrieved June 10, 2023. https://edtrust.org/who-we-are/

Tuttle, M., Harrison, J., Johnson, L. V., & Mecadon-Mann, M. (2021). What's in a word?: School counselor and ESOL teacher perceptions and attitudes about collaboration. *Journal of School Counseling*, 19(22), n22. http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v19n22.pdf

Tuttle, M., & Haskins, N. (2017). "A Different Way": The Experiences of Latinx Parents with School Counselors. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*, 9(2), 95–111. https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.9.2.95-111

Tuttle, M., Haskins, N. H., Mecadon-Mann, M., & Windham, H. D. (2022). Relational Cultural Theory: School Counselors Building Partnerships with Latinx Parents and Caregivers. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 8(3), 115-127. https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2022.2102395

Tuttle, M., Johnson, L. V., Schmitt, E., & Todd, C. (2017). Fostering resilience: Preparing school counselors in training to support English language learners. *Ideas and research you can use: VISTAS Online 2017*. Retrieved from https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article_427ace2bf16116603abcacff0000bee5e7.pdf?sfvrsn=e4d84b2c_4

United States Census Bureau. (2019). Selected housing characteristics, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

United States Census Bureau. (2023). Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850- 2000.

United States Department of Education. (2012). National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey", 2011-12 v.1a; "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey", 2011-12 v.1a.

United States Department of Education. (2001). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. P.L.107–110. Washington, DC.

United States Department of Education. (n.d.). About ED: Overview and mission statement. https://www2.ed.gov/about/landing.jhtml?src=ft

United States Department of Education. (n.d.). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/essa

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2014). Children on the run: Unaccompanied children leaving Central America and Mexico and the need for international protection. Author. http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/children-onthe-run.html?query=children%20on%20the%20run

Van Roekel, D. (2008). English language learners face unique challenges. *An NEA Policy Brief. National Education Association*.

Vera, E., Heineke, A., Daskalova, P., Schultes, A. K., Pantoja-Patiño, J., Duncan, B., Yanuaria, C., & Furtado, C. (2021). Emergent bilingual high school students' social and emotional experiences. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(10), 1932-1961. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22559

Watkinson, J. S., Shi, Q., Slezak, H., & Litvin, R. (2022). Preparing future school counselors to work with english language learners. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 16(1). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/jcps/vol16/iss1/6

WIDA. (n.d.). WIDA Mission- From ELL to MLL. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from https://wida.wisc.edu/

Zehr, M. A., (2007, February 20). *Immigrant students vs. English-language learner?*. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/education/immigrant-student-vs-english-language-learner/2007/02

Zetino, Y. L., Galicia, B. E., & Venta, A. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences, resilience, and emotional problems in Latinx immigrant youth. *Psychiatry Research*, 293, 113450. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113450

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Physical Address
4111 Monarch Way, Suite 203
Norfolk, Virginia 23508
Mailing Address
Office of Research
1 Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
Phone(757) 683-3460
Fax(757) 683-5902

DATE: July 13, 2023

TO: Brandon Butler
FROM: Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee

PROJECT TITLE: [2005755-3] The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact John Baaki at (757) 683-5491 or jbaaki@odu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee's records.

APPENDIX B

Sample Recruitment Email

Hello _____,

I hope you are doing well. My name is Chelsea Hilliard and I am a high school counselor and doctoral student in Virginia.

I am exploring the experiences of school counselors' who are the designated school counselors for their school's multilingual learning (also referred to as English-language learning) student population. I received your name from a presentation you gave at a national/state/regional conference. I am reaching out to learn more about your experiences.

Are you interested in participating in a 1-hour interview with me as part of this study? If interested, I can provide you with more background information. Also, if you are willing to share your experiences, please share with me your availability to chat in the coming weeks. Thank you so much for your consideration, leadership, and all you do to support students.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Hilliard, M.S.
School Counselor - Jamestown High School (VA)
Doctoral Student - Old Dominion University

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Document

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

<u>**PROJECT TITLE:**</u> The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors

<u>**INTRODUCTION**</u>
The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research (The Experiences of Multilingual Learning-Focused School Counselors), and to record the consent of those who say YES. Research will be conducted virtually through the Zoom platform.

<u>**RESEARCHERS**</u>
Chelsea Hilliard, Investigator, Doctoral Student, MSEd in School Counseling, Old Dominion University, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Department of Counseling and Human Services; Emily Goodman-Scott, PhD, Principal Investigator, Old Dominion University, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Department of Counseling and Human Services

<u>**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY**</u>
Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of school counseling and multilingual learners (English-language learning students). None of them have explained the experiences of school counselors who are designated as the sole school counselor for their school's multilingual learning population.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving the research of practicing school counselors. You will engage in a screening questionnaire, at least one 1-hour interview, and will be asked to read through your interview transcription to check for clarity and make any explanations necessary. If you say YES, then your participation will last for approximately 3 hours total through online means (i.e. email and Zoom). Approximately 12 other similar subjects will be participating in this study.

<u>**INCLUSIONARY CRITERIA**</u>
You should have completed the screening questionnaire. To the best of your knowledge, you should be (a) located in the United States and (b) practicing school counselors who are currently or in the last two years, were the designated school counselor for the multilingual learning student population in their school.

<u>**RISKS AND BENEFITS**</u>
RISKS:If you decide to participate in this study, then you may face a risk of unwanted and unforeseen personal reactions to the information you share.The researcher tried to reduce these risks by providing the study's information upfront. And, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS:The main benefit to you for participating in this study is the opportunity to share your thoughts to a confidential source.

<u>**COSTS AND PAYMENTS**</u>

The researchers want your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. Yet they recognize that your participation may pose some inconvenience such as a time commitment. The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION
If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The researchers will take reasonable steps to keep private information, such as questionnaires, recorded interviews, and transcriptions, confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from all identifiable private information collected. All data will be kept in a confidential, privacy protected folder, and all data will be destroyed within 2 years of its collection. Include one of the following statements in this section. Identifiers might be removed and the de-identified information used for future research without additional informed consent from the subject.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY
If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact the responsible investigator (Chelsea Hilliard, 559-270-6840), Dr. Dr. John Baaki, DCEPS Human Subject Review Committee chair jbaaki@odu.edu; 757-683-5491 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Chelsea Hilliard 559-270-6840
Dr. Emily Goodman-Scott

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. John Baaki, DCEPS Human Subject Review Committee chair jbaaki@odu.edu; 757-683-5491.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

APPENDIX D

Demographic Survey: Designated School Counselors for Multilingual Learners

For purposes of this study, "Multilingual Learners" is synonymous with "English-

language

Learners (ELL)", "ESOL", and other variations.

Please respond to the following questions.

1. First and Last Name(s) *

2. Please check all that apply to you.
   - I am located within the United States.
   - I am a practicing school counselor who is currently (or in the last two years), was the designated school counselor for the multilingual learning student population in my school.

3. How many years have/did you work as the school counselor for your multilingual learner population?

4. What state(s) did you work as the school counselor for your school's multilingual learner population?

5. What grade levels did you serve when you were the school counselor for your school's multilingual learner population? (Click all that apply)
   - Elementary
   - Middle
   - High
   - Other: (write in)

6. What gender do you identify with? (Click all that apply)
   - Nonbinary
   - Female
   - Male
   - Pangender
   - Agender
   - Prefer not to say
   - Other: (write in)

7. Please select your age range:

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or above

8. Please select the race(s)/ethnicities you identify with? (Click all that apply)
- Asian
- American Indian orAlaskan Native
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a/x/e
- Multiracial
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer not to say
- Other: (write in)

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

(adapted from Goodman-Scott & Cholewa, 2023)

Interviewer's name:

    Participant's pseudonym:

    Participants' assigned ID:

    Interview date:

    Interview start and stop time:

    Interview location/type (e.g., phone, in-person, video web-conferencing, etc.):

    Interviewer completed field notes (to describe facts, context, logistics, etc.):

    Interview completed reflexive journal (to describe reactions/biases/experiences):

    Date of interview transcription:

    Date(s) transcription sent to participant (initial and reminder):

    Date participant confirmed member checking:

    Follow up questions needed for subsequent interview:

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me about school counselors supporting multilingual learning students. I know you must be busy as a practicing school counselor, so I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me.

Before we get started, I would like to confirm that you are comfortable with the informed consent document you signed, and ask if you have have any questions for me? [answer participant questions and reference informed consent as needed].

This interview should last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed. If at any time you would like to stop this interview or not answer a question, you are free to do so and will not incur any penalty. I will take all necessary precautions to protect your anonymity,

including the division, school, and students you may reference. After the interview is transcribed, I will blind any identifying information and email the transcribed interview back to you to see if you would like to change, clarify, or add anything.

Please feel free to change the name you have listed on your Zoom screen to reflect a pseudoym that you would like me to use.

Before I begin recording, do you have any questions for me?

<div align="center">

Qualitative Interview Questions

</div>

<u>Interview Questions</u>

1. Tell me about your experiences as a school counselor.

    a. Possible probe: Tell me about how you became your school's multilingual learning population's school counselor.

        i. What was the relationship between your multilingual learner population and your decision to become their school counselor?

    b. Possible probe: Tell me about your school's demographics in relation to the multilingual learner population.

    c. Possible probe: Tell me about your duties in relation to your designation as the multilingual learner population's school counselor.

2. If there was a school counselor in a position similar to yours in terms of being designated the school counselor for the multilingual learner population, what advice would you give to them?

Conclusion: Is there anything else that you would like to share that I did not ask or that you feel is important to share?

After asking all interview questions:

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today to help me better understand the experiences of school counselors supporting multilingual learning students. This interview will be transcribed and I will email it to you. Please read over it and let me know if you would like to change, clarify, or add any information.
[Turn off the recording]

Thank you again for helping me to better understand school counselor antiracist social justice practices. This interview will be transcribed over the next several weeks and I will email it back to you, in case you would like to change, clarify, or add any information. Also, if I have any additional questions at a later time would you be willing to have a brief conversation?
Turn off the recording device when the call ends.

Reserve 30 minutes to do the following:

- Save both audio and video files (primary and back-up),

- Schedule a time to complete the interview transcription

- Complete field notes

- Complete reflexive journal

- Complete any additional steps noted on this Interview Protocol sheet

CHELSEA HILLIARD

Phone: (559) 270-6840   312 Hosier Street
Ccart004@odu.edu   Newport News, VA 23601

EDUCATION

PhD	Old Dominion University, Counselor Education and Supervision	May 2024
MS	Old Dominion University, School Counseling	Dec 2020
BS	Old Dominion University, Psychology	Aug 2018
AS	Tidewater Community College, Social Science	Dec 2014

COUNSELING EXPERIENCE

School Counselor, Williamsburg, VA   2020 to Present
Jamestown High School, 9th through 12th
Caseload of 300 students. Designated counselor for multilingual learning students.

LICENSES

School Counseling License, Virginia, License PPS-0608331   Since Dec 2020
Resident in Counseling, Virginia, License 0707015157   Since Aug 2022

GRANTS

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Research Grant, $5,250   Aug 2023
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Research Grant, $1,000   Jan 2023
American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Research Grant, $10,000   Jul 2022

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Virginia Department of Education, School Counseling Specialist Intern   May '23 to Aug '23
Emerging Leader, Southern Association for Counselor Educators (SACES)   2022 to 2024

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
COUN 601, COUN 868, COUN 669, COUN 631, COUN 679

PUBLICATIONS

Publications Accepted

Pope, A., & **Hilliard, C**. (2024) Promoting counselor trainees' clinical skill development using virtual reality simulations. *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling, 6*(1), 1–12.

Levy, I. P., Edirmanasinghe, N., Ieva, K., & **Hilliard, C**. (2023). Youth participatory action research as school counseling praxis: A scoping review. *Professional School Counseling*, *27*(1a), https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X231153347