

# MEASURING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT, TEACHER, AND STUDENT PROBLEM BEHAVIOR REPORTS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

*This study investigates the relationship between academic achievement and reports of student problem behavior from teachers, parents, and child self-reports. Participants included 108 teachers, 113 parents/caregivers, and 129 students from an urban school in the Northeast region of the United States. Results suggest parent and child reports were closely related on identification of problem behaviors. The authors discuss implications for how school counselors can utilize multiple informants.*

Comprehensive school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012) are intended to be comprehensive in scope, preventative in design, and developmental by nature (Baker, Robichaud, Westforth, Wells, & Schreck, 2009; Clark & Breman, 2009; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008). With increased focus on empirically based interventions to prevent and mitigate risk factors for vulnerable student populations (e.g., English language learners, students from low-income communities), school counselors often seek and receive information from multiple stakeholders about students' behavioral and academic challenges (Nassar-McMillan, Karvonen, Perez, & Abrams, 2009). Stakeholders are key informants who provide input to school counselors and other school leaders to identify and address obstacles and barriers to student success. School counselors continually leverage and use the input of informants, specifically parents/caregivers and teachers, in efforts to positively influence students' educational experience and promote their overall achievement and wellness (Nassar-McMillan et al., 2009). Toward this end, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between multiple reports of student problem behaviors and

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academic achievement. Problem behaviors were defined as any behavior that disrupts the learning experience for the student and/or other students in the classroom (e.g., inability to pay attention during instruction, fighting, loss of temper).

## MULTIPLE INFORMANTS ON CHILDREN'S PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

The use of multiple informants is a popular strategy for school counselors to obtain useful information about students' academic, personal, and social development. Key informant reports are used to gather comparable information across domains, such as how children behave in classrooms versus at lunch or at home. These data are important for school counselors and other school personnel because data from key informant reports often record frequency and severity of problem behaviors (Sladeczek, Elliot, Kratochwill, Robertson-Miaanes, & Stoiber, 2001). The reports are useful data sources that provide a more comprehensive and holistic assessment of students and their respective challenges to success. School counselors use these reports to inform decisions about best courses of action to increase student achievement. For example, before a child is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), multiple informants provide information on a child's behavior in multiple settings; the consistency of the reports can assist in an appropriate diagnosis, thereby leading to an appropriate coordination of services (McConnell et al., 2009). After the diagnosis is clear, steps can be taken at school and home that are geared toward supporting the student academically, socially, and through career exploration.

The following section presents literature on the utility of parent, teacher, and child self-reports on problem behavior. Problem behaviors can disrupt teachers from providing instruction and interrupt learning. Specifically, the review highlights ways the literature has documented similarities and differences in the reports from informants. Documented differences illustrate that informants perceive behavioral patterns unique to the local environment, whereas similarities in informant reports indicate behaviors remain true across contexts. Studies using behavioral scales by multiple informants demonstrated that cross-informant agreement was modest but provided enough information to form tentative agreement on students' overall functioning (Sointu, Savolainen, Lapalainen, & Epstein, 2012).

### Parent Reports of Problem Behavior

Parents appear to be the most commonly used informants by school personnel, including school counselors, when assessing children's problem behaviors (De Los Reyes et al., 2013; Miller, Martinez, Shumka, & Baker, 2014; Tarren-Sweeney, Hazell, & Carr,

2004). However, agreement in the assessment of behavior between parent and child reports can vary. In most studies, parent-child agreement results reflected low to moderate significant correlations (Martin, Ford, Dyer-Friedman, Tang, & Huffman, 2004; Van de Looij-Jansen, Jansen, Jan de Wilde, Donker, & Verhulst, 2010). Parents tended to give children's problem behaviors ratings that were higher and more severe than those given by their children (Handwerk, Larzelere, Soper, & Friman, 1999). This finding can be rationalized by multiple expla-

nations. For example, some parents may over-report or exaggerate the child's problem behavior in comparison to other informant reports, such as a child's self-report (Handwerk et al., 1999; Kolko & Kazdin, 1993).

Although some research supported the idea that parents over-report problem behaviors, a body of literature does report the contrary. Galper, Wigfield, and Seefeldt (1997) sampled 155 children who participated in a Head Start program and 124 parents of those children and found the parents generally underestimated their children's problem behaviors. A study with second through fifth grade elementary school students and their parents showed similar results (Johnson, 2011). Results from the study by Handwerk, Larzelere, Soper, and Friman (1999) found parents more likely on "five out of eight Child Behavior Checklists (CBCL) syndrome scales" (p. 20) to report higher levels of problems than any other caretaker. The differences in agreement between parent and child about behavioral problems also vary in relation to the type of behavior (Salbach-Andrae, Klinkowski, Lenz, & Lehmkuehl,

2009). Van der Meer, Dixon, and Rose (2008) studied reports of 379 parent-child pairs and found discrepancies in the reports, based on identifying either internalized or externalized behavior issues. Findings in this area were mixed, with some studies showing that parents tended to overestimate problem behaviors (Handwerk et al., 1999; Kolko & Kazdin, 1993) and others finding that parents underestimated problem behaviors (Johnson, 2011; Van Roy, Groholt, Heyerdahl, & Clench-Aas, 2010; Vassi et al., 2008). A primary limitation in many of the

KEY INFORMANT REPORTS ARE USED TO GATHER COMPARABLE INFORMATION ACROSS DOMAINS, SUCH AS HOW CHILDREN BEHAVE IN CLASSROOMS VERSUS AT LUNCH OR AT HOME.

studies was related to improving reliability by using larger groups, limited generalizability, and limited diversity among participants (Van der Meer et al., 2008). Even considering these limitations, the literature documented the reliance on parents as reporters of problem behaviors to help school counselors and other school personnel attend to such issues. In a study by Amatea, Thompson, Rankin-Clemons, and Ettinger (2010), school counselors implemented a family-based intervention to provide parents with skills to change their child's disruptive behavior before escalating to peer rejection

other research findings suggest that children underreport their behavioral problems (Kolko et al., 1993). Goodman (2001) found that this trend could be related to children being more sensitive to events in their life, which might lead to children *catastrophizing* the events when self-reporting.

Handwerk and colleagues (1999) found that children's age can affect the self-report and the level of discrepancy between a parent, teacher, and child when attempting to identify internalized problems. Reports from adolescents between the ages of 11-14 and 15-18 showed differences be-

## AGREEMENT IN THE ASSESSMENT OF BEHAVIOR BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD REPORTS CAN VARY.

and eventual academic failure. Teacher reports were compared to parent reports by the school counselors at each level of the 6-month intervention, with results showing decreased aggression and reactivity. Parents were instrumental in the success of the intervention (Amatea et al., 2010).

### Student Self-Reports of Problem Behavior

Assessing and identifying problem behavior is the first step in establishing action plans detailing the places and times to monitor student behavior more closely (Grothaus, 2013). Student self-reports offer a reflective perspective of the student's experience. School counselors rely on student self-reports as one part of a wider data source to provide a detailed account of factors that may be influencing problem behavior. Self-report measures, such as the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001), have been used in previous research related to multiple informants of children's behavior (Van der Meer et al., 2008; Van Roy et al., 2010). Several studies have found that children report more problem and difficult behaviors than their parents or guardians (Johnson, 2011; Van Roy et al., 2010; Vassi et al., 2008). However,

tween the age groups when using an internalizing scale (Handwerk et al., 1999). Johnson (2011) suggested the differences could be due to peer and/or parent influence. These various influencing variables (i.e., age, peer and/or parental influence) all demonstrate the need for school counselors to develop services that are developmentally appropriate. Children's self-reports can be a valuable tool to help school counselors understand their students' lived experiences. Self-reports allow children to communicate internal and external stressors.

School counselors who align their practice with the ASCA National Model provide guidance lessons and individual and group counseling, and collect data as part of these activities. For example, school counselors can collect data on behavior through observations during guidance lessons and self-report data on behavior during individual counseling. Individual student planning (ISP) interventions, such as daily behavioral report cards for at-risk students, are another source of data collected by school counselors (ASCA, 2012; Martens & Andreen, 2013). These activities provide valuable data sources that are critical in collectively determining a plan of action.

### Teacher Reports of Problem Behavior

School counselors also count on teachers to be reliable informants of child behaviors. The collaborative nature of the school counselor-teacher relationship facilitates their partnering to address problem behaviors (Cholewa, Smith-Adcock, & Amatea, 2010). An analysis of four effective programs demonstrated commonalities of engaging the parents and teachers instead of counseling the student individually (Cholewa et al., 2010). The programs found it more valuable to use reports from multiple informants.

More research is needed for school counselors to better understand the valuable role teachers and other informants have in understanding children's behavior in schools. In order to successfully meet the needs of all children, school counselors and all adults in the child's life need to collaborate (Kafnberger & O'Rourke-Trigiani, 2013). Since behavior problems vary across settings (Wrobel & Lachar, 1998), feedback from multiple informants allows for a more comprehensive plan of action. Teachers are invaluable as informants to school counselors because they assess a child's behavior comparatively to similar aged peers in a structured setting (Shernoff, Hill, Danis, Leventhal, & Wakschlag, 2014). School counselors and teachers are also in the same environment, which provides the opportunity to co-observe behaviors and co-develop plans of action. Co-observation is important, researchers have suggested, because teachers may be more sensitive after time to disruptive behavior and over-report (Efstratopoulou, Janssen, & Simons, 2012).

### Problem Behavior and Achievement

Research has documented a relationship between student problem behaviors and student achievement (Wanzek, Roberts, & Al Otaiba, 2013). In a meta-analysis of available research on learner characteristics that influence the treatment effectiveness of early literacy interventions, problem behavior was listed in the top three as appear-

ing to predict poor outcomes (Nelson, Benner, & Gonzalez, 2003). In a study by Bulotsky-Shearer, Fernandez, Dominguez, and Rouse (2011), problem behavior in structured tasks predicted lower academic outcomes, motivation, attention, and persistence in academically focused tasks. In the same study, problem behavior in the presence of same-aged students predicted student underachievement and an underlying loss of self-control (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2011). Along similar lines, hyperactivity and poor peer relationships were also shown to negatively correlate to a measure of academic achievement (Johnson, 2014).

## CONJOINT BEHAVIORAL CONSULTATION (CBC)

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) is a service delivery model that focuses on meeting children's developmental needs, addressing their concerns, and promoting their academic success through collaborative partnerships between primary caregiver(s), educators, and service providers (Sheridan, Eagle, & Doll, 2006). Student/client needs are identified and addressed through a data-driven approach and the collaboration of key stakeholders (i.e., service providers, caregivers, educators). The model is unique because it combines the use of collaborative problem-solving efforts, with the assistance of a consultant (Sheridan, Ryoo, Garbacz, Kunz, & Chumney, 2013). Considering the relationships school counselors build with students in and out of the classroom and their consistent interactions with various stakeholders, they can function effectively in the consultant role to address problem behaviors (ASCA, 2012).

Research involving school counselors' use of the CBC model is limited, with many studies relying on teachers as consultants (Garbacz et al.,

## STUDENT SELF-REPORTS OFFER A REFLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE.

2008; Sheridan et al., 2013); however, conjoint behavioral consultation is often—and inadvertently—conducted by school counselors. With school counselors acting as the central figure of a collaborative, data-collecting, decision-making team, the CBC model can be an effective strategy for delivering evidence-based treatments to students with diverse learning needs and behavioral problems (Wilkinson, 2005a). Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of this direct and indirect consultation model of a mental health practitioner in collaboration with others to serve children with a wide range of behavioral, social, and emotional problems (Auster, Feeney-Kettler, & Kratochwill, 2006; Colton & Sheridan, 1998; Sheridan, Warnes, et al., 2009; Wilkinson, 2005b).

## SUMMARY

Although research suggests differences in the reports of multiple informants about children's problem behavior, school counselors can be confident that gathering data from multiple informants can assist in assessing children's problem behaviors and supporting their achievement and development (Van de Looij-Jansen et al., 2010; Van der Meer et al., 2008). Each informant's report can provide valuable, subjective insight into a child's behavior (Firmin, Proemmel, & Hwang, 2005). Intentionally seeking different types of data about students' performance (e.g., self-reports, student grades, daily attendance reports, achievement test results, etc.) from multiple sources (e.g. parents, teachers, students, etc.) in varied settings (e.g., social spaces, academic spaces, counseling spaces, etc.) provides school counselors opportunities to confirm similarities and investigate inconsistencies in students' behavior. In a study by Kim, Deater-Deckard,

Mullineaux, and Allen (2010), informant effects (i.e., the influence of informant perspectives on observations and subsequent reports) were more influential than context effects when observing behavior. Informant effects can potentially be identified and reduced by increasing the role of the school counselor as a mediator when reviewing multiple informant reports.

The twofold rationale for the current study was developed based on CBC. The study was designed to:

- Build on previous studies about the role and utility of multiple informants and contribute to the existing literature by investigating the relationship between parent-child-teacher reports on problem behavior with an elementary school sample.
- Measure any relationship between problem behavior and academic achievement, as indicated by reading comprehension scores.

The comprehensive delivery of school counseling services that supports students' social, emotional, and academic growth (ASCA, 2012) is only accomplished through effective collaborative relationships. In order to measure the relationship between parent, teacher, and child reports of problem behavior, and how those reports may predict academic achievement, the authors developed the following research questions.

- What is the agreement between parent, child, and teacher report of problem behaviors?
- Is the relationship between parent, child, and teacher report of problem behaviors different based on grade level?
- Do parent, child, and teacher reports of problem behavior predict a measure of academic achievement above and beyond grade level, as indicated by reading comprehension test performance?

## METHOD

This study investigated the relationship between reports of student problem behavior from teacher, parent, and student self-report. It also explored the relationship between problem behavior reports and academic achievement.

### Participants

A sample of 108 teachers, 113 parents/caregivers, and 129 elementary school students from an urban, public elementary school in a Northeastern U.S. city participated in this study. Demographic information on teachers and parents/caregivers was not collected formally; however, based on observations, the majority (> 50%) of the teachers appeared to be female and White American. Students were identified for the study and later matched by their teacher's classroom and their parent.

## TEACHERS ARE INVALUABLE . . . BECAUSE THEY ASSESS A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR COMPARATIVELY TO SIMILAR AGED PEERS IN A STRUCTURED SETTING

The pool of teachers and parents were linked to student participants by name in a matched pair experimental design. The student participants were from a mid-sized city and were in grades 1 ( $n = 12$ ), 2 ( $n = 17$ ), 3 ( $n = 23$ ), 4 ( $n = 31$ ), 5 ( $n = 29$ ), and 6 ( $n = 17$ ). The student sample was mainly composed of students of color (76.1% African American; 19.4% Latino; 7% White; 3.7% missing demographic information), with a fairly equal gender distribution (male 53.7%; female 46.3%). More than 50% of the student sample participated in the free or reduced lunch program.

### Procedure

Data were collected from participants during the 2009-10 academic school year. Student participants were engaging in a larger, ongoing study of after-school programs in the Northeast region of the United States in which all students who

were a part of this study were eligible to participate ( $N = 154$ ). Children who participated in the larger study were identified as being at high risk for truancy and school failure as reported by teacher, clergy, school counselor, principal, and/or law enforcement nomination. The parents/caregivers of student participants were invited to participate in this study in the beginning of the 2009-10 academic year. Twenty-five of the eligible parents specifically declined or did not complete a survey.

Student participants filled out three forms: Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, Meltzer, & Bailey, 1998), the GORT-4 Reading Comprehension measure (Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001), and a demographic questionnaire using paper and pencil during after-school hours in a group format with minor assistance from administrators. Student participants were asked to report the following

demographic information: gender (i.e., 1-male; 2-female), grade, and race/ethnicity (i.e., 1-African-American; 2-Hispanic/Latino; 3-White).

The researchers conducted home visits, during which parents/caregivers completed the Parent Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (P-SDQ; Goodman, 2001; Goodman et al., 1998). Data from parents/caregivers were generally collected from one parent (usually mother, or father if he was sole parent). Teacher data was collected during a teacher planning period in which a researcher visited teacher classrooms. Teachers completed the Duke Fast Track Teacher Assessment of Behaviors (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group [CPPRG], 1995).

### Instruments

**Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).** The SDQ (Goodman et al., 1998, 2001) is a 25-item scale that

compiles a score intended to assess a child's mental health. The five-item *Conduct Problem* subscale was used in this study to measure youth self-report of behaviors. This subscale asks students to indicate their agreement to specific statements on a three-item Likert scale (2 = *certainly true*; 1 = *somewhat true*; 0 = *not true*) about their behavior over the past 6 months. The statements include: "I get very angry and often lose my temper," or "I fight a lot." Goodman, Meltzer, and Bailey (2003) found moderately acceptable internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha = .60$ ) for the Conduct Problem subscale. Prior research found the SDQ to be comparable or better than the Child Behavior Checklist in detecting behavior disorders (Goodman & Scott, 1999). The scale is scored by adding up the items and the range is 0-10. Prior study (Mellor, 2004) showed that, with younger children (i.e., 11 years old and younger), the mean score was 1.7 ( $SD = 1.7$ ) with an alpha of .66 for the self-report version. The parent version mean score was 1.5 ( $SD = 1.6$ ) with an alpha of .67 on the Conduct Problem subscale.

The SDQ parent version (Goodman, 2001) is similar to the child version with a shift from first-person statements to third-person statements. This study used the five-item Conduct Problem subscale in which the informant rates a child's behavior over the past 6 months using a 3-point, Likert-type scale. Prior research found the parent version to be reliable and show inter-informant reliability with child reports (Mellor, 2004).

**Duke Fast Track Teacher Survey (DFTS).** The Duke Fast Track Teacher Survey (CPPRG, 1995) is a 10-item instrument that assesses shifts in a child's behavior and academic performance over the course of a school year. The scale was created specifically for the Fast Track Project and asked teachers to rate children's specific abilities (e.g., ability to calm oneself when excited or upset) over the course of the school year. Responses are coded on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 to +3, and correspondingly with varia-

tions from much worse, somewhat worse, a little worse, or no change, to a little improved, somewhat improved, or much improved. The two distinct subscales have good internal consistency reliabilities: *Academics* (alpha = .89; two items) and *Prosocial Behavior* (alpha = .95; eight items). The mean score for the Academics subscale was 1.59 ( $SD = 1.02$ ) and for the Prosocial Behavior subscale was 1.02 ( $SD = .96$ ) with a normative sample of third graders. A score closer to the minimum of -3 represents a child experiencing more difficulties. The DFT teacher survey also showed good reliability (alpha = .88; 10 items).

**GORT-4 Grays Oral Reading Test.** The GORT can measure reading fluency, reading rate, reading accuracy, and oral reading comprehension (Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001). The test consists of 14 developmentally sequenced reading passages with five comprehension questions. The reading comprehension score is calculated by the number of correct responses to the five reading comprehension questions.

### Data Analysis

All analyses were performed using SPSS version 18.0. Means and standard deviations were examined to understand group differences. ANOVAs were conducted to investigate changes in scores for parent, teacher, and youth reports of behaviors. Pearson's correlations were calculated to explore the relationship between parent, teacher, and student total scores on each subscale. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if parent, teacher, and student reports of problem behavior are predictors of achievement. Kappa measure of agreement also was used to determine agreement rate between parent, teacher, and child report of behavior.

## RESULTS

The relationship between parent reports of problem behaviors (measured by the SDQ parent), child reports of problem behaviors (measured by the SDQ), and teacher reports of problem

behaviors (measured by the DFT) were investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The results showed a small, positive correlation between parent and student reports,  $r = .251$ ,  $n = 85$ ,  $p < .05$ , with reports of behavior moving in the same direction. There were no significant correlations between parent-teacher reports or teacher-student reports.

## THE CBC MODEL CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR DELIVERING EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENTS TO STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS.

The second half of this research question asked if the relationship between parent, child, and teacher reports of behaviors were different based on grade level. Grade level in school was recoded into two groups with group one as first through third graders ( $n = 52$ ) and group two as fourth through sixth graders ( $n = 77$ ). Independent sample  $t$  tests were conducted and results showed that parents ( $M = 2.800$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ), teachers ( $M = 14.48$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ), and students ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ) in group one reported more problem behaviors than participants in group two; however, these were not statistically significant differences.

### Agreement Between Reports of Problem Behavior

Data were split in two groups based on mean scores in order to determine the Kappa measure of agreement. Dummy coding to develop two variables was created and variables were represented by zero and one. Zero (0) represented negative behavior and one (1) represented an absence of negative behavior. The scores were split based on the mean scores that represented negative and the absence of negative behavior. The groups were: Teacher (0-14.13 recoded as 0 and 14.14-20.00

recoded as 1), in which the mean scores under 14.13 represented negative behavior and scores above 14.14 represented an absence of negative behavior; Parent (2.76-10.00 recoded as 0 and 0-2.75 recoded as 1), in which the mean scores between 2.76 and 10 represented negative behavior and mean scores between 0 and 2.75 represented an absence of negative behavior; Child (2.66-10.00 recoded as 0 and 0-2.65 recoded as 1), in which the mean scores between 2.66 and 10 represented negative behavior and mean

scores between 0 and 2.65 represented an absence of negative behavior. Once the groups were formed, the authors calculated the Kappa measure of agreement and findings showed poor agreement between child and teacher (Kappa measure of agreement value of .028,  $p = .768$ , 31.9% sensitivity value and 31.1% specificity value). Teacher and parent showed poor agreement (Kappa measure of agreement value of .049,  $p = .657$ , 52.2% sensitivity value and 42.9% specificity value). Parent and child reports showed poor agreement (Kappa measure of agreement value of .046,  $p < .05$ , 58.3% sensitivity value and 47.5% specificity value).

### Relationship Between Problem Behavior and Academic Achievement

The authors used hierarchical multiple regression to assess the ability of parent, teacher, and child reports of behavior to predict a measure of academic achievement (e.g., reading comprehension) while controlling for grade level. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Grade level was entered at Step 1, explaining 19.6% of the variance in reading comprehension. After entry of

parent, teacher, and student reports of behavior at Step 2, the total variance explained by the entire model was 21.9%,  $F(6, 74) = 3.46$ ,  $P < .005$ . The additional measures explained an additional 2.3% of the variance in reading comprehension scores. In the final model, grade level was the only statistically significant variable, with a beta value of .459 ( $p < .001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

One finding from this study suggested that, as parent reports of problem child behavior increased, so did student reports, with a weak positive correlation. Moreover, grade level was the determining factor for the differences in reading comprehension scores. Teacher reports were found not to correlate with student or parent reports of problem behavior. This finding suggests that teacher reports are unreliable, as suspected, and highlights the need for school counselors to serve as liaison between parents, teachers, and students. Furthermore, multiple informant inconsistencies were not grade-related; the results showed poor agreement between parent reports, teacher reports, and student reports overall.

**THIS FINDING SUGGESTS THAT TEACHER REPORTS ARE UNRELIABLE, AS SUSPECTED, AND HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO SERVE AS LIAISON BETWEEN PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS.**

The primary goals of this investigation were to build on previous studies of multiple informants, to examine the relationship of parent-teacher-child agreement on problem behavior, and to investigate how that agreement influences academic achievement, as evidenced by reading comprehension scores. The Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) Model informs and builds on the research connecting the use of multiple informants when

reporting on behavior and academic achievement (Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006).

Adding to the existing knowledge on multiple informants, findings showed that only parent and child reports of problem behavior were related to each other in this sample of urban elementary students. Authors conducted additional analysis specifically focusing on whether age of the self-report participant affected relationships with other reports of behavior. Findings showed that younger children, specifically children in first through third grades, were rated higher on behavior problems by parents, teachers, and self-reports. These findings are mirrored in findings by Handwerk et al. (1999), who also found differences in reports of behavior based on age. According to Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, and Edwards (2006), parents and teachers were more likely to report similar perceptions on various child attributes using the CBC model.

Although some of the differences in this study were not statistically significant, the authors acknowledge that younger children may be perceived as having more problem behavior than older children. Explanations for this trend might include the observation that younger children appear to be more active and have a harder time

following directions. Spira and Fischel (2005) found that children who have behavioral difficulties, such as impulse control or hyperactivity, are not as likely to learn and to retain valuable information and experiences in school. Research also suggests that younger children are more likely to have poor self-control and management issues, which tends to become more developed as children age (Campbell, 1995; Spira & Fischel, 2005).

Measuring agreement between reports of problem behavior found poor agreement among all reports and only parent and child were statistically significant. These findings are contradictory to findings from other studies that show the self-report of student problem behaviors tend to have higher agreement with teachers rather than parents (Kolko & Kazdim, 1993). However, findings from this study are in line with studies that have found parent-child agreement often reflects significant results in a range from low to moderate (Handwerk et al., 1999; Van de Looij-Jansen et al., 2010).

Additional results found that parent, child, and teacher reports of behavior were not good predictors of reading comprehension scores. Grade level was the best predictor of reading comprehension scores with participants in higher grades performing better on this measure. Determining if problem behavior directly and negatively impacts academic achievement is difficult, but in an important comparative study of 15 elementary schools by Polirstok and Gottlieb (2006), the number of children reading at or above grade level at the three schools that received the professional development program (Positive Behavior Intervention Training) improved five percentage points, from 28.8% to 32.3%, while the other schools' scores declined from 39.2% to 37.7%. Showing similar results in another study, following the CBC approach, more positive collaborations between the school and families can produce improvements within various academic content areas (Sheridan, Glover, Kwon, & Garbacz, 2009). Little research exists on the correlation of parent, child, and teacher reports of behavior and the child's academic success, especially within specific academic areas, hence the reason for this research study. It appears that research tends to support and focus on the use of multiple informants for emotional and behavioral factors without connecting it to academics. Further investigation of the relationship between informant reports and academic achievement stands to be a fruitful and important area for future research.

## LIMITATIONS

Several limitations could have affected the outcome of this research study. First, the Kappa measure of agreement is a conservative measure that attempts to adjust for guessing or estimating. It also calls for collapsing data, which may have resulted in a loss of valuable information, or masking variability. Also, the data from the SDQ subscales for conduct problems indicated that no participants were at the extreme end of the conduct problem scale. This information suggests that social desirability may have been an influence, because the extreme could be a possible indicator of severe conduct problems.

A second limitation of this study is the lack of variability and diversity of the sample. The sample used for the study was not inclusive of geographic diversity among participants, although some previously published research on similar topics has had smaller and less diverse samples (Firmin et al., 2005; Purvis & Tannock, 1997). The selection process was a third limitation. To be eligible for participation, participants had to be present on the day the survey was administered. Even with these acknowledged limitations, this research can directly inform programs designed for K-12 students. Action research investigations are limited in the results' generalizability and significance; however, the value of the inquiry and its findings are in the practicality of the research and the direct connection the research has with practitioners.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

When providing direct and indirect services to and for students, school counselors can benefit from the use of multiple informants in the assessment of students' needs (ASCA, 2012). The strategic use of multiple informants

can be of great benefit because of the expertise and perspectives between the collaborators (Wilkinson, 2006). All sources of information about a child's behavior, from a parent, child, or teacher, can be considered valuable in the effort to provide children with comprehensive services that are informed by data (Johnson, 2011).

Collaboration methods, such as CBC, allow parents, teachers, and school counselors to communicate and provide connected, meaningful, supportive school-home relationships that can assist in the design and administration of prevention and intervention efforts for students (Sheridan, Eagle, & Doll, 2006; Sheridan, Clarke, Marti, Burt, & Rohik, 2005). School counselors also should consider that levels of agreement/disagreement between multiple informants can be influenced at times by factors such as stress, parental acceptance, family dysfunction, child acceptance, and family control (Kolko et al., 1993). School counselors can assess the information given from one informant, but use the similarities and differences to validate or challenge information from other informants.

such as the exploration of the CBC model can help school counselors with the use of multiple informants to assist in problem solving while helping establish connections between the home and school (Wilkinson, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

This investigation demonstrates the school counselor's role as mediator and data interpreter of multiple informant reports. Since discrepancies among parents, teachers, and children do exist, school counselors can play a part in promoting and supporting the collaboration and communication between all three informants (Trusty, Mellin, & Herbert, 2008). With inconsistencies decreasing the reliability and predictability of problem behaviors and the subsequent impact on academic achievement, it is the school counselor who, using best practices, can find the truth within the multiple reports. School counselors' ability to use data to inform their practice in the delivery of services assists in administering quality comprehensive school counseling pro-

## CHILDREN IN FIRST THROUGH THIRD GRADES WERE RATED HIGHER ON BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS BY PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND SELF-REPORTS.

The need exists for additional research on the use multiple informants and how the practice of using multiple informants can benefit the delivery of school counseling services. In particular, the field needs research that sheds light on the influential factors behind inconsistencies of reports on problem behavior and research that pinpoints whether or not problem behaviors affect academic achievement. Research can also help school counselors understand whether correlations exist between parent, child, and teacher reports and expectations placed on children (Firmin et al., 2005). School counselors are in constant receipt of student data. Techniques and strategies

grams. Comprehensive programs incorporate data from important stakeholders representative of the best interest of the students and of the broader school community. Studies that investigate the relationship between perceptions of problem behavior and its potential influence on academic achievement are important contributions to the school counseling knowledge base, as school counselor educators and professional school counselors continue to support students in their personal, career, and academic development. ■

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