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# Relationship among school counselors' perceptions of poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling competencies : a formula for change makers.

Shaun M. Sowell  
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RELATIONSHIP AMONG SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
POVERTY, COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES, AND MULTICULTURAL  
COUNSELING COMPETENCIES: A FORMULA FOR CHANGE MAKERS

By

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
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Department of Counseling and Human Development  
University of Louisville  
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A Dissertation Approved on

February 1, 2019

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Dr. Theresa A. Rajack-Talley, Committee Member

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Dr. Eileen Estes, Committee Member

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my most inspirational loves, my beautiful baby sister, Delaney, my son, Trajan James, my husband, Brandon “Bubba” Joseph, my dad, James Sowell, and the most beautiful angel above, my mom, Pamela Kay Sowell.

I love you all and work each day to make you proud.

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I would first like to thank my most valuable supporters who helped keep my head above water during this long journey. To Brandon, my husband, my better half, and one of the best people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, I will never forget this journey that we have taken together. The move across the country that catapulted me into this path would have never happened without you. I will never forget all the lived experiences we have shared since I began this program, including you finishing your masters and beginning your PhD journey as well: a proposal, wedding, and new addition to our family showered us with love and excitement over the last six years. But together we have also dealt with some of the largest losses of our lives. With all of this, we still succeed, and for that I will forever be grateful and honored to have you by my side! I cannot wait until we can both sit back and say, “We did it!”

I am beyond words of thanks for my son, Trajan James Tiger Joseph. I am prouder to be your mother than anything I ever have or ever will accomplish. TJ, thank you for picking me and allowing me to be your mother. You have been with me every step of the way towards the end of this journey, including at two-weeks old when we Skyped into one of many of my statistics courses together. You alone have been my driving force to completion; I cannot wait to spend more time just being your mommy! I love you!

Mom and dad, wow, we did it! You never signed up for this commitment, but you've been with me in my heart and mind every step of the way. Without you and your guidance as I've grown, I would be nowhere. Thank you for raising me the way you did and the acceptance you taught. I am passionate about equity and working to eliminate barriers because of you and the way you both view the world—and passed on to me. Life has not always been easy for you both, most recently especially, but you look for good, humor, and positives in most everything you do. Mom, we miss you more than words could ever describe and know you are smiling down and pointing the sun towards us each and every day. Dad, you are a strong man who I hope to match in strength and love shown to Trajan. Thank you for being my parents, making sacrifices, and putting our family first in everything you have ever done. I love you!

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Joe, you are the best brother and I am thankful for the courage, strength, and optimism you show each day. I have worked most of my life to be like you, while also

trying to figure out who I am. The way I see the world has so much of you in it, I hope I make you proud! I love you!

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## ABSTRACT

### RELATIONSHIP AMONG SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY, COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES, AND MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCIES: A FORMULA FOR CHANGE MAKERS

Shaun M. Sowell

February 1, 2019

The relationship among school counselors' attribution of poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, and self-perceived multicultural competence (knowledge and awareness) were examined in this dissertation. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the impact of having lived in low-income environments had on school counselors' beliefs of poverty attribution. Lastly, the impact graduating from a CACREP accredited program had on poverty attribution was explored. The study was based upon a convenience sample of 213 school counselors who were members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and/or members of their representative state school counselor association. Surveys were distributed via message boards through ASCA SCALE and ASCA SCENE, as well as state school counselor membership emails. School counselors were able to participate in this study if they were 18 years or older, had been a school counselor for one or more years, and were currently practicing as a school counselor.

The design of this study was correlational. School counselors' attribution of poverty was measured using the Poverty Attribution Survey (PAS), school counselors'

inherent beliefs about race was measured using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), and multicultural counseling competence was measured with the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS). A demographic survey was included to obtain descriptive information for the participants. Lastly, to control for socially desirable answers on the self-report survey, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was used.

The results of the canonical correlation analyses revealed five canonical variates: *Awareness of Injustice* (school counselors increased scores in multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness held lower perceptions of color-blindness), *Understanding Privilege to Advocate* (with lower levels of colorblindness school counselors attributed poverty to structural factors), *Sociopolitical Awareness* (highly aware of institutional discrimination (CoBRAS) more likely to attribute poverty to structural factors and less likely to attribute poverty to cultural factors), *Malevolent Counselor* (counselors with decreased scores in multicultural knowledge and awareness attributed poverty to individual and cultural factors), and *Somewhat Knowledgeable but in Denial* (counselors with increased multicultural knowledge but decreased awareness attributed poverty to structural factors. Two one-way MANOVAs revealed additional findings: personal experience with low-income living has little to no effect on school counselors' beliefs about poverty and CACREP accreditation exposed a small but meaningful impact on poverty attribution. The results of this dissertation may indicate important information for counselor educators, school counseling programs, and practicing school counselors. Discussion includes implications for the counseling profession and suggestions for future research.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“At issue are the values of a nation that writes off many of its poorest children in deficient urban schools starved of all the riches found in good suburban schools nearby, criminalizes those it has short-changed and cheated, and then willingly expends ten times as much to punish them as it ever sent to teach them when they were still innocent and clean.” (Kozol, 2005).*

Poverty is a serious social problem in the United States and has a direct effect on students’ experiences in schools (Milner IV, 2013). As the number of Americans living in poverty continues to grow (Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), the role of educators must change in order to best serve this growing population of students. Students of color are disproportionately poor. As high as 1 in 3 children of color, versus 1 in 5 White children, are living in poverty (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014). The opportunity gaps of low-income students and students of color has been clearly documented (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Education Trust, 2003; Haycock, 1998). School counselors play a vital role within schools, working with students to identify and

implement in-school interventions that may help students overcome outside-of-school variables (Milner IV, 2013), which can affect their academic, social, and mental well-being.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students living in poverty also face out-of-school obstacles, such as experiences with higher rates of violence, increased levels of stress, poor-quality schools, high rates of drug addiction, and poor-quality healthcare (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Exposure to these adversities can have sustained, negative impacts on the health and well-being of individuals living in such environments (Rankin & Quane, 2002). Despite the challenges of students living in poverty findings consistently show that supportive adult-child relationships can promote social, emotional, and academic adjustment among children and youth exposed to common poverty risk-factors (Domitrovich & Bierman, 2001).

Low-income students not only face risk-factors previously mentioned, they may also face hunger, homelessness, and sickness—and all too often also attend high-poverty schools. High-poverty schools face their own challenges, much of which have to do with limited funding and inexperienced teachers (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Children’s Defense Fund, 2014). Inexperienced teachers usually have not received instruction on how to implement culturally relevant pedagogy needed to work with low-income students and families, often hold lower levels of education and feel less prepared to work with poor students of color from underemployed communities (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Osher et al., 2015). Counselors in high poverty schools may also feel less prepared and less experienced to help their students, students’ families, and the staff

within the building. Additionally, ratios are often most daunting and unforgiving in these settings.

School counselors should understand and be aware of the literature available regarding poverty, racism, education, and outcomes, as well as the role counselors can play within schools to promote education, support, and guidance within their counseling programs. In particular school counselors and counselor educators should be aware of the correlation of race and income, and how people of color are disproportionately poor compared to whites. Additionally, counselor educators should also be aware of challenges that students living in poverty experience, the lack of opportunities available, and the historical and present stigma this population endures. This knowledge can then support how to best educate and prepare future counselors who will work with low-income students. Strong advocacy and social justice components should be present in counselor training programs (CACREP, 2015), as well as allowing counseling students the opportunity to practice these within the counseling program is essential in moving past the classroom walls to advocate within the community. Furthermore, school counselors should be prepared to work with low-income students in order to help advocate for change.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to replicate and improve upon previous counselor-poverty research (Bray & Balkin, 2013; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015), which measured complex constructs and identified relationships between color-blind racial attitudes, counselors' perceptions of why people are poor, and multicultural competence (perceived knowledge and awareness). Building upon Bray and associates' work (Bray &

Balkin, 2013; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015), with counseling students, the outcome of this study will expand knowledge for school counselor practitioners, educators, supervisors, and other educational stakeholders. By replicating work and adding new predictor variables such as school counselors' personal experience with poverty (as measured by qualifying for free and reduced lunch and/or Pell Grant), this study builds upon the poverty, multicultural counseling, and racial attitudes literature in counseling.

### **Research Questions**

To better understand school counselors' efficacy working with students living in poverty, and their general understanding of poverty, the following research questions were explored: (1) What are the relationships between counselors' multicultural knowledge and awareness, color-blind racial attitudes, and their beliefs about poverty? (2) Do school counselors with personal low-income familial experiences have different beliefs about poverty than school counselors who have not had these same experiences? (3) Does attribution of poverty differ for school counselors who graduate from CACREP accredited programs versus non-CACREP accredited programs?

### **Research Design**

To address the research questions proposed, a canonical correlation analysis (CCA) was selected to analyze and explore relationships among school counselors' perceptions of the attribution of poverty, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and color-blind racial attitudes. The canonical correlation analysis allowed the researcher to investigate the relationships between the above-mentioned variables, thus building upon available research and providing suggestions for future research, which is important to both practicing counselors and counseling education programs (Balkin &

Kleist, 2017). Additionally, multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to identify how personal low-income experience and counseling program accreditation (CACREP) related to beliefs about the causes of poverty. Lastly, a multiple regression analysis was performed to identify whether respondents answered in a socially desirable manner on the self-report nature of this research.

### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

One limitation to the study is the use of self-report measures. Self-report surveys are subject to social desirability bias (Arnold & Feldman, 1981). In order to increase the validity of this study participants were asked to complete a scale to measure the degree in which individuals were likely to answer in a socially desirable manner. Another limitation of this study is that canonical correlation analyses only provided relationship between selected variables, so causation between variables cannot be defined. Additionally, the nature of the school counseling profession (e.g., administrative and counseling obligations) and the time required to complete the survey (approximately 20 minutes) may have been overwhelming for respondents and may have limited time spent to answer the individual scales completely or in an intentional manner. Many surveys were thrown out as they were left incomplete. Lastly, this survey was only distributed to members of state and national school counseling associations, which omits the opinions of non-school counseling association members causing issues with homogeneity of subjects.

## Definition of Key Terms

There are many terms used within this study that are relevant within the exploration of literature, exploration of data, and results. For clarification definitions can be found below:

1. *Poverty* is not an easy variable to define, and in many studies this definition is different based on the study and the researcher's purpose of their study (Milner IV, 2013). Often studies show the relationship between poverty and another variable (Miech & Shanahan, 2000) and is used interchangeably with low socio-economic status. Milner IV suggested that *poverty* is not an absolute but a relative term that one that depends on more than the dollar amount set by the federal government. However, for the purpose of this study and to be more encompassing than using a dollar amount alone, the following definition found within Milner IV's (2013) definition will be used: (a) based on the federal government's formula of the poverty line, (b) based on free and reduced lunch formulas that vary from state to state, and (c) based on particular characteristics and situations that people face because of the amount of monetary and related material capital they have.
2. *Advocacy* is defined as, "the belief that, to fight injustices, individual and collective actions that lead toward improving conditions for the benefit of both individuals and groups are necessary" (Bemak & Chung, 2005, pg. 196.) To further build upon this definition, advocacy is also acting or speaking up for students that leads to environmental changes on behalf of the student (House & Martin, 1998; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). The Multicultural and

Social Justice Counseling Competencies were created and supported by the American Counseling Association as a conceptual framework that depicts the new role of the counselor as an advocate (Ratts et al., 2015; 2016).

3. *Color-blind racial ideology (CBRI)* is defined by Neville and colleagues (2013) as a contemporary form of racism and a way for Whites in power to legitimize and the justify racial status quo. CBRI consists of two interrelated domains: denial of racial differences and denial of power (i.e., every person benefits from equal opportunities). Color-blind racial ideology is comprised of four components denial of race, blatant racial issues, institutional racism, and White privilege (Neville et al., 2013). Bonilla-Silva and Foreman (2000) state that color-blind racism allows Whites to appear ‘not racist’, preserve their privileged status, and defend White supremacy.
4. *The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)* notarizes counseling programs they believe have met the highest standards set by the counseling profession. A CACREP accredited counselor education program must fulfill and maintain certain requirements or standards with regard to institutional settings, program mission and objectives, program content, practicum experiences, student selection and advising, faculty qualifications and workload, program governance, instructional support, and self-evaluation (CACREP, 2017).
5. *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* was established by legal scholars during the 1970s as a way to address the effects of race and racism in America (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billing, 1998). CRT illuminates the fact that

racism is normal in American society (Ladson-Billing, 1998). Additionally, Critical Race Theory challenges the way power is constructed in the United States (Crenshaw, Gotanda, & Peller, 1995).

6. *Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)* is a federal program under Food and Nutrition Service, which resides under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The National School Lunch Program supplements free or reduced meals (lunch, breakfast, and milk) to qualifying students. This program began in 1966 due to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. Students are eligible for FRL program based on family size and income. Income eligibility guidelines are based on the federal income poverty guidelines. In 2018 a family of four residing in the contiguous states qualifies if they make \$46,435 or less. In Alaska a family of four qualifies if they make \$58,053 per year.
7. *Multicultural counseling* is a deliberate focus on the many ways culture influence counseling. A commitment to issues of diversity, an emphasis on identifying and acknowledging the differences between the counselor and the client are also important to multicultural counseling. Multicultural counseling is an ever-evolving process of gaining and building upon awareness, knowledge, and skills (Arrendondo, 1999; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).
8. *Multicultural Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC)* is a framework which visually depicts the relationship among the competencies' key constructs: multicultural and social justice praxis, quadrants, domains,

and competencies. Following the multicultural counseling competencies (MCC) developed in 1992 (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), the MSJCC have been influential in helping counselors address the needs of culturally diverse clients and communities (Ratts et al., 2015; 2016).

9. *Pell Grant* is a federal grant awarded to low-income undergraduates who have not earned a first bachelor's degree. Awards are based on an equation which looks at family contribution (the amount of money a family "should" be able to spend towards a child's college costs; based on income, family size, and number of people in college) and credits being taken (i.e., full-time versus part-time). During the 2017-2018 school year, the maximum awarded was \$5,920 and the minimum award was \$596. For the 2018-2019 school year the maximum award was \$6,095 and the minimum was \$652. There were approximately 7.8 million recipients in 2015-2016. The average award during that year was \$3,760 and just over 70% of the recipients had family income of less than \$30,000 (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2018).

### **Summary**

School counselors play an important role within schools and communities to advocate for the elimination of injustices they see affecting their student populations and communities. School counselors' education, training, and professional expectations make them advocates ideally positioned to create relationships, collect research, and speak from experiences with stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, families,

administration, schoolboard personnel, and districts) and people with power (i.e., administration, schoolboard personnel, districts, and politicians).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2017, 39.7 million American people lived below the poverty line accounting for 12.3 percent of the national population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Children are the poorest group in America, where over 15 million live in poverty and 6.8 million children live below half the poverty level (extreme poverty). While the United States holds the world's largest economy in 2013 the US held the second highest child poverty rate among 35 advanced economies, only standing ahead of Romania (Children's Defense Fund, 2015). 1 in 3 people who are poor in America are children and poverty is racially disproportionate (Children's Defense Fund, 2014). Children of color are the poorest children in the US, where Black children continue to have the highest poverty rate. Nearly 2 in 5 Black children and nearly 1 in 3 Hispanic children are poor compared to 1 in 8 White children (Children's Defense Fund, 2014).

Many children living in poverty wind up in the public-school system and suffer from hunger, homelessness, sickness, increased levels of stress, and violence (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). As children are dealing with the issues previously stated, they also find themselves attending poor schools with limited access to resources, inexperienced teachers, and lack of preparation to successfully navigate the school system and middle-

class norms and expectations (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Children's Defense Fund, 2015; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Because poor children often attend low-income schools, they receive education administered by teachers with less experience, less education, and less skill compared to schools with low-poverty rates (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Children's Defense Fund, 2014; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Teachers right out of college who find themselves working in poor schools tend to feel unprepared and unqualified to work with children from families living in poverty (Cochran-Smith, 2006). The attrition rate for these educators is between 40% and 50% over the first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Just as new teachers may find employment within high-poverty schools challenging, first time school counselors often encounter similar challenges. Counselors may not feel adequately prepared to work with students living in poverty and may elect to move to schools with lower-poverty rates (Abbate-Vaugh, 2006; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Johnston, 2008). School counseling programs within high-poverty schools may lack the knowledge and experience to appropriately handle situations unique to families living in poverty. Teachers and other staff in these schools may not have counselors prepared to support them in these dilemmas.

### **Counseling People Living in Poverty**

School counselors frequently counsel students who are considered part of the working-class poor and those living in poverty (Bryan, 2005; Gilens, 1999). As these numbers continue to grow, some attention has been placed on these identities, suggesting these students belong to one of the most marginalized and stigmatized groups in the

United States (Children's Defense Fund, 2015; Foss, Generali, & Kress, 2011; Gilens, 1999). The unique needs people in low-income homes confront reflects a unique skills-set required by counselors. While few low-income counseling models exist, Foss and associates' (2011) CARE Model addresses the needs of low-income clients through fostering strong relationships, acknowledging students' realities, removing barriers, and expanding the strengths of the client. An important asset in the CARE model is that it addresses the impacts of poverty on low-income clients from a multiple systems approach (Foss, Generali, & Kress, 2011). Most counseling models view clients from a middle-class and Anglonormative lens (Gonzalez, 205; Javier & Herron, 2002) and most school counselors are white (American School Counselor Association, 2018) and often embrace middle-class values. Models such as CARE are important as many counselors are not prepared to work with low-income students (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Osher et al., 2015).

### **Lack of Research and Poverty-Counseling Discussions**

Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) stated that there has been a limited amount of counseling research addressing poverty and counseling, and even less on poverty and school counseling. Amatea and West-Olatunji conducted a literature search, from 1997 to 2007, in the *Journal of Counseling & Development (JCD)* and found only nine articles emphasizing social class and poverty; however, they found that during the same time period, 90 articles were published about race, culture, ethnicity, national origin or multiculturalism. Additionally, the same review was conducted from 1997 to 2005 in the *Professional School Counseling* journal and findings similar to those in *JCD* were revealed. Although 90 articles discussing race, culture, ethnicity, and so forth is a positive

movement for the counseling profession, the lack of focus on social class being considered may support Lott's (2002) suggestion that labels have been used to designate the poor and to discuss the poor without actually discussing poverty. These labels often distract from the discussion of poverty and instead focus only on discussions of race. Some of these labels identified are racial minority, welfare dependent, working class, inner city, and disadvantaged (Gans, 1995; Lott, 2002; Smith, 2005; Swank, 2005).

Despite the overwhelming statistics of poor children and children of color living in poverty and attending schools in the US, little is discussed within counseling programs and counseling literature about the causes of poverty and best practices of working with students and families living in poverty (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). The infrequent discussions about poverty and class in counseling research directly effects clients and the way in which counselors work with people living in poverty. Lee (2005) identified poverty as one of the "social and structural challenges confronting counselors" (p. 184). School counselors are challenged to advocate for students using social justice reform (Lee, 2005) and serve in a vital role, working at the micro and macro-systemic levels, by bridging family and school and by removing barriers and bridging gaps within schools (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015). The position school counselors are able to take between students, family, school systems, teachers, and administration allows them to share knowledge that others within the educational system may be unaware of.

Because counseling practice, literature, and theory are built upon middle-class values (Liu, 2002; Liu, Solek, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004; Sue, 2001) and counseling students often receive little social class training (Ballinger & Wright, 2007;

Liu, 2002; Bray & Balkin, 2013), research developed to build upon previous poverty studies is important in the counseling field. School counselors can be the voice to identify and share the need for change (Lee, 2005). However, without the knowledge and understanding of how complex constructs relate, school counselors may not fully understand how to be a part of the needed change, especially when working with students living in poverty.

Understanding where school counselors' beliefs about poverty come from is an important process to discuss, as these beliefs can affect the relationship and understanding of poor students' situations. Liu (2002) and Russell (1996) suggested that counselors working with clients from a different social class than their own may lack the knowledge to understand the impact of class, particularly poverty. Much of the literature about poverty comes from theories developed within sociology and social work domains (Hunt, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004; Smith & Stone, 1989) and many counseling students may not know to look within other disciplines to learn about this population. Hunt (1996, 2000) stated that the cause of poverty is usually explained by three main ideas: (a) poverty is caused by individual characteristics of the person; (b) poverty is caused by external structural factors; (c) poverty is caused by bad luck or destiny. In addition, in the research conducted by Bennett, Raiz, and Davis (2016), poverty being caused by bad luck or destiny was removed from their measure (the Poverty Attribution Survey) and replaced by poverty caused by cultural attributions.

In research conducted by Bray and Schommer-Aikins (2015), school counselors who worked with higher levels of students living in poverty were more likely to endorse the belief that poverty is caused by external forces. Also, school counselors with less

years of experience were also more likely to attribute poverty to external forces (Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015). One may propose that counselors who work with more students living in poverty were more likely to be exposed to circumstance of poverty and were better able to see the systemic qualities of poverty; counselors with less time in the field are more likely to have recently been in school and benefited from current counselor education programs with a focus on multiculturalism and diversity (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2006).

### **Historical Beliefs about Poverty**

Historically, poor people have been defined as the “deserving poor” or the “undeserving poor” to differentiate poor people based on notions of merit. This principle has been a part of history due to the idea that resources are finite, powerful elites would need to “decide” who deserves access to these limited resources and who does not (Katz, 1990; Piven & Cloward, 1993). Dating back to before the twentieth century, the responsibility of helping the poor was defined as helping neighbors not strangers (holding strong cultural preference). This belief became hard to follow, as many people left their parish, town, or counties to search for work, and it became increasingly difficult to identify who was a neighbor and who was a stranger (Katz, 1990). As “helping thy neighbor” became a harder framework to follow, people began searching for other criterion for identifying and defining who should be helped and who should not. In 1821, Josiah Quincy divided the poor, in his poor laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, into two groups. He insisted that there were the impotent poor (elderly, sick, infants) and the able-bodied poor (paupers, alcoholics, lazy). Society rarely argued with helping the impotent, but the able-body poor were seen as being undeserving of help and resources.

This led to the idea of the pauper system where being poor is part of misfortune, but being a pauper is believed to be caused by “willful error, of shameful indolence, of vicious habits” (Katz, 1990, p. 13). This language was used originally to classify the poor, but quickly became a way for those in power to discriminate and decide who deserved available resources and who did not. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the unworthy poor had become a part of popular society and were looked upon as a moral condition or personal failure based upon life choices that had been made (Katz, 1990; Piven & Cloward, 1993).

These same beliefs about the deserving and undeserving poor survived the Great Depression, even as unemployment reached disastrous levels. While more people were poor, the idea of relief was contested and often felt judgmental and demeaning (Katz, 1990; Piven & Cloward, 1993). By World War II, as work became more available and the economy began to settle, poverty received very little attention. However, at this time public assistance programs showed that moral classifications of the poor were still present. At this time needing assistance became known in America as a sign of individual failure (Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004; Katz, 1990; Weiner, 1995).

In the 1960s and 1970s, attention was once again placed on the poor and those living in poverty. Instead of focusing on the individual, politicians and intellectuals focused on a “culture of poverty.” The culture of poverty was attributed to “those whose behaviors and values converted their poverty into an enclosed and self-perpetuating world of dependence” (Katz, 1990, p. 16). This culture of poverty was used to characterize the poor, specifically that: (a) the poor did not participate or integrate into the major institutions of the larger society, (b) the poor disregarded the law and held a

disinterest in education, (c) poverty was passed from generation to generation, and (d) poverty caused the children of the poor to miss out on childhood—to grow up too fast and take part in things like initiation of sex and unwed pregnancy (Bullock, 2008; Katz, 1989).

The use and misuse of Oscar Lewis' (1959) term the “culture of poverty” led to the poor being blamed for their condition because they were viewed as having unhealthy values and making poor decisions (Rajack-Talley, 2016). These beliefs are more likely to be used with people of color particularly women of color (Bullock, 2008; Katz, 1989), the urban poor, and people receiving welfare benefits (Gans, 1995; Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004; Quadagno, 1994). Popular phrases like *underclass*, *trailer trash*, or *Cadillac queen* may be used to describe present day undeserving poor (Bullock, 2008), where these labels attend not only to poverty but race as well.

Feagin (2014; 1975) found that middle-class White Protestants and White Catholics, and those with moderate levels of education, blamed poverty on individual factor and behaviors. African Americans, low-income earners, and those with less education believed structural factors were to blame for poverty. Women were more likely to favor a structural or systemic explanation of poverty, while men were more inclined to favor an individualistic explanation of poverty. Further, liberals and welfare recipients believed structural causes of poverty more than conservatives and non-welfare recipients who favored individual causes (Bullock, 1999; Hunt, 1996; Kluegel & Smith, 2017).

### **Poverty and Inequity in Education**

Low-income schools and the students who attend these institutions have a number of barriers they face over low low-income schools. For example, urban schools are often

underfunded which leads to insufficient/mismanagement of resources, which can then affect the number of qualified teachers, professional development opportunities, teacher turnover rates, and time to create teacher-student relationships (Gossman, Beaupre, & Rossi, 2001; Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Educational disadvantage can come from teachers, administrators, and staff members' stereotypes about class, race, ethnicity, and intelligence of students, perpetuating inequities within society (Hauser-Cram, Selcuk, & Stipek, 2003; Lott, 2001; Bullock, 2008). This Pygmalion effect may lower the expectations of certain students and, in response, create an achieved self-fulfilling prophecy—further widening the opportunity gap between marginalized students and their White middle-class peers (Ferguson, 2003; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rosenthal, 2003).

Deficit models, derived from the culture of poverty theory, suggest that poor whites and ethnic minorities do not endorse values, such as respect for education. Beliefs and theories like this put the onus on the individual to improve their condition and not the system the individual lives within. This point of thought in combination with structural disparities that poor and marginalized students face (i.e., overcrowding, teacher turnover, high student-teacher ratios, limited resources) deepens the disadvantages of poor students (Gossman et al., 2001; Hochschild, 2003; Kozol, 2005; Murray & Malmgren, 2005). The greater disadvantages are seen at schools with more than 50% minorities or 70% poor students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Additional statistics that further depict the importance of supporting poor students include: high school completion rates, where poor students are shown to leave high school before graduation four times the rate of their peers in high-income families (National Center for Education Statistics,

2006); significant differences on standardized test scores between race-ethnicity and class lines (McLoyd 1998; Suzuki & Aronson, 2005); and of all undergraduate students only 26% are from low-income families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). With these examples, education further echoes the racist and classist stereotypes that White middle-class students are more deserving of resources than poor and minority students (Bullock, 2008).

### **Racial Discrimination, Racism, and Poverty**

It is impossible to discuss poverty without also discussing race and racism in the United States (Bullock, 2008; Quadagno, 1994). Race is synonymous with non-white and is often used as a synonym for disadvantaged (Lin & Harris, 2010). Racial discrimination “refers to unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity” (Pager, 2010, p. 21). Additionally, the National Research Council defines the unequal or differential treatment and differential effects in this two part definition: “(1) differential treatment on the basis of race that disadvantages a racial group and (2) treatment on the basis of inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group (differential effect)” (Blank, Dabaady and Citro, 2004, p. 39; Pager, 2010, p. 22). Racism grants privilege and power to one group while oppressing other groups (Thompson & Neville, 1999). Racism affects both Whites and minorities, however in very different ways. Racism is complex and has shifted in this complexity through impact of social and economic factors (Thompson & Neville, 1999). Since the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin has become illegal (Pager, 2010). Additionally, due to this, racism has shifted in its appearance and persisted in a more covert manner.

In the past, intentional racism, or old-fashioned racism, included legalized segregation in schools, housing, and public institutions (McConahay & Hough, 1976). While these practices have been outlawed through legislation, Bonilla-Silva (2014, 2002, 2001) and Neville and associates (2006; 2000) suggest modern racism is as deliberate and harmful as its predecessor. Modern racism promotes the understanding that prejudice against minorities is socially unacceptable and restraint from more overt forms of racism is necessary. However, this does not eliminate racism from present society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; 2002; 2001; Neville et al., 2006; 2000). Modern racism is less direct and allows individuals to maintain a non-racist self-image (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). Modern racism allows individuals to view racism as problems in the past, suggest minorities are too aggressive when they demand rights they are not entitled to, and believe that minorities are given unfair advantages, which are not deserved (McConahay, 1986; Neville et al., 2000; Ridley, 2005; Utsey, Ponterotto, Porter, 2008). Some individuals who subscribe to modern racism believe that “racism is bad” and suggest that inequities in our society are empirically founded and irreversible facts, rather than acknowledging systemic and inherent racism found in American society (McConahay, 1986). Bonilla-Silva (2002) argues that color-blind racism in language has a “peculiar style characterized by slipperiness, apparent nonracialism, and ambivalence” (p. 41).

While not all who have experienced racial discrimination are poor, and not all who are poor have experienced racial discrimination, there is enough evidence to believe racial bias and discrimination can contribute to blocked opportunities and economic marginality in many ways (Pager, 2010). Pager states that the extent to which employment or lending market discrimination transpires, minority groups will experience

greater economic hardship than Whites. Within segregation, racism and White privilege are amplified and racial inequities are pervasive (Moore, 2010). Systematic discrimination, past and present, construct living environments where poor minority children grow up in neighborhoods that differ drastically from their White counterparts (Pager, 2010). For example, research shows that almost 30 percent of poor Black children grow up in high poverty communities whereas only 3 percent of White children do (Jargowsky, 2009; 2002; 1999). This concentration of poverty can have additional, lasting effects on individuals, such as increased frequency of exposure to harmful environmental factors like underfunded schools, limited employment opportunities, crime, inadequate housing options, and limited exposure and access to the social capital middle class individuals have (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Aber, 1997; Kneebone & Holmes, 2016; Kneebone & Nadeau, 2015; Massey & Denton, 1993). These examples illustrate how discrimination and racism interact with poverty, in a systematic and purposeful manner.

### **The School to Prison Pipeline**

While it is not the central focus of this dissertation, the school to prison pipeline is worthy of mention. The school to prison pipeline is a term used to address the growing epidemic of tracking students of color, especially Black and Brown students, out of the educational system and into the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Darenboung, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Heitzeg, 2009; Skiba et al., 2011). Students are primarily tracked out of schools via zero tolerance policies (Heitzeg, 2009), where students are severely punished (i.e., suspension, expulsion, arrested) for breaking minor school rules. Low income

students report more severe consequences for school discipline than high income students (Skiba, 2000). Additionally, when the relationship of socioeconomic status and disproportionate discipline has been explored, race makes a significant contribution to disproportionate disciplinary outcomes (Skiba et al., 2011). African American and Latino males are disproportionately targeted and represented in exclusionary discipline (Darensbough et al., 2010). Regardless of the specific statistics, the school to prison pipeline impacts the poor, students with disabilities, and students of color at disproportionate rates when compared to other groups (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Darensboug, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Heitzeg, 2009; Skiba et al., 2011). For many students going to school is synonymous with going to jail (Heitzeg, 2009).

Research suggests that schools and educators may play a large role in the discrepancy between race and class and the school to prison pipeline. Skiba and associates (2011) suggested teachers make differential judgements about both achievement and behavior based on student characteristics, including race. Fortunately, Christle's research team (2005) asserts that schools and educators can offer protective factors and positive influences that may overcome the negative impact of poverty and race on the students' behaviors and punishments. Darenbourg's research team (2010) further stipulates that mental health professionals within schools hold unique skills and education which may assist in decreasing African American males' experiences with exclusionary discipline practices.

## **Intersections with Race and Class**

Intersectionality is often described in feminist literature as the navigation of multiple identities (i.e., female, Asian, low-income) (Bullock, 2010). So often research uses identities as labels and are studied in isolation. Complex social constructs like race and poverty are impossible to isolate (Bullock). “Intersectionality refers to the idea that plural social categories create more than just identity alternatives and more than just additive effects” (Soss & Schram, 2010, p. 311). Ultimately, experiences become more meaningful in combination but can also complicate generalizations about groups (Soss & Schram).

Approximately 90% of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are Black women and 90% of incarcerated adults are Black males (Soss & Schram, 2010). These statistics, along with welfare policies and mass incarceration have consequential effects on the Black community including the reshaping of gender relations defined by race and class. Income inequalities are greater among African Americans than white Americans (Hochschild, 1995). Class also intersects racial disparities. For example, Black individuals living in poverty find themselves excluded from Black middle-class groups (Soss & Schram, 2010).

## **Multiculturalism**

In order for school counselors to provide effective services to a changing population of students multicultural training and awareness is necessary (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Often, educators who support a multicultural approach to education suggest major societal level goals are to reduce prejudice and discrimination against oppressed groups, to work toward equal opportunities and justice for all, and to distribute

equal power among members of different cultural groups (Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Jay, 2003). Banks (1993) adds that multicultural education provides counseling students with important knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in a diverse society.

Multicultural education and multicultural counseling have definitions few advocates of change could disagree with; however, this educational reform is missing important concepts, action and attention to power and oppression. For multiculturalism to benefit marginalized groups, educators must be comfortable with transformative knowledge and the threat this knowledge poses to dominant groups of power, specifically Whites (Jay, 2003). If the discussion of multiculturalism (education, practice, and counseling) does not discuss race and power, it has very little ability to produce change. When this happens the use of the term “multiculturalism” often becomes synonymous with the word race (Jay, 2003). While at its core, multicultural education is supported by educators of color and (White allies) as a vehicle for positive change within education and society, if used without challenging power and racism only Whites will benefit (Jay, 2003). For example, multiculturalism as a term can often be used by people with power to “negotiate the oppositional voices of multiculturalist and multicultural educators, securing for themselves a continued position of leadership” ultimately keeping with status quo (Storey, 1998, p. 128). Jay (2003) posits that using Critical Race Theory to examine the multicultural phenomena challenges us to not only identify and analyze aspects of education that sustain marginalized position for students of color but to take an active role for change. This previous statement is one of many that calls attention to the tension between Critical Race Theory (CRT) and multiculturalism. Whereas

multiculturalism may seek to discuss cultural differences, CRT focuses attention, in part, on the realities lived by Black individuals through counternarrative storytelling.

### **Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies**

Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) stated that the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) were established out of a need to provide guidelines for ethical education and practice from multicultural perspectives. Counseling is considered cross-cultural and occurs in contexts that are influenced by various sociopolitical and historical worldviews (Arredondo, 1999). The Multicultural Counseling Competencies were revised in 2015 and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) were created. The MSJCC built upon the MCC and generated a framework for practicing counselors and counselor educators to implement multicultural and social justice competencies into counseling theories, practices, and research (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Social class was not explicitly expressed in these works; however, poverty can be tied to sociopolitical and historical contexts, and living in poverty can affect the worldview of clients. Additionally, the MSJCC does focus on marginalized groups and privilege, and the importance of how these variables can have an effect on counseling relationships.

The MSJCC calls for an increase in counselors, researchers, and educators' actions, skills, knowledge, and awareness in order to best serve the diverse populations counselors work with. The following aspects of the MSJCC are important to lessen harm and level the understanding and importance of cultural variables between clients and counselors when working toward a counseling relationship: (a) understanding how complex diversity and multiculturalism can be on the counseling relationship; (b)

recognizing the negative influence oppression has on mental health and well-being; (c) understanding individuals in the context of their social environment; and (d) integrating social justice advocacy into the various counseling modalities (e.g., individual, family, group) (Ratts et al., 2016).

Without the MSJCC framework, counselors may be less likely to evaluate their multicultural competency and the profession would have no means to guide counselors in an ethical manner when addressing clients' dilemmas. Because much of counseling practice and theory are dominated by middle-class values and assumptions, (Liu, 2002; Liu et al., 2004; Sue, 2001, Sue et al., 1992) the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies become an important aspect in the working alliance between counselors and clients or, in this case, students. The MSJCC help guide counselors and remind them to be self-aware, to alleviate bias and racism, and support empathy and understanding within the counseling context. While the MCC paved the way for the creation of the MSJCC, both have had major impact on counselors, counselor educators, and counseling researchers' ability to understand the importance of viewing clients as individuals, who should be counseled in a holistic manner. These competencies provide awareness and a reminder that the individual is part of a larger social and political system. Research continuously points to the importance of being aware that race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, religion, and disability identities have influence upon mental health outcomes and health disparities (Conron, Mimiaga, & Landers, 2010; Hankivsky et al., 2010; Institute of Medicine, 2011).

## **Color-Blind Racial Ideology**

Neville, Spanierman and Doan (2006) explain color-blind racial ideology as a “dominant racially based framework that individuals, groups, and systems consciously or unconsciously use to justify the racial status quo or to explain away racial inequalities in the United States” (p. 276). Color-blind racism is the central ideology of the post-civil rights era (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, 2002). Bonilla-Silva (2002) suggests there are five linguistic style components of color-blind racism: (1) whites’ avoidance of direct racial language, (2) the central rhetorical strategies or “semantic moves” used by whites to safely express their racial views, (3) the role of projection, (4) the role of diminutives, and (5) how incursions into forbidden issues produce almost total incoherence among many whites (pg. 41).

When counselors deny, distort, minimize race and racism they may minimize the potential influence of racism and systematic factors on the therapeutic process (American Psychological Association, 2003; Burkard & Knox, 2004; Neville, et al., 2006; Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001; Thompson & Jenal, 1994). This, in turn, can isolate racial minorities in the counseling relationship (Neville, et al., 2006). To best serve students, school counselors must be willing to acknowledge race and how race may affect students’ reality and worldview. Results from the work completed by Neville et al. (2006) show that mental health workers who indicated greater levels of color-blind attitudes related to lower self-reported multicultural counseling awareness and knowledge. Further findings support the association between higher color-blind racial attitudes and lower multicultural case conceptualization ability (Neville et al., 2006).

## **Counselors' Personal Experience with Poverty**

Little has been published on the findings of school counselors' personal experience with poverty. Wong (2017) suggested that one may not fully understand poverty unless one has lived through it. An important note, not all counselors come from middle-class backgrounds; however, counselors often adopt and identify with middle-class values developed during their time in college and graduate school and over the course of their lives (Bray & Balkin, 2013). Additionally, Bray and Balkin (2013) suggested that for future research counselors' personal experience with poverty should be considered as a variable of constructs in relation to counselors' beliefs about poverty.

## **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged as an outgrowth and response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to adequately address race and racism in America (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; DeCuir & Dixon; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The five tenets of CRT are: (1) racism is ordinary and deeply embedded in US society; (2) counter storytelling; (3) Whiteness as property; (4) interest convergence; and (5) critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Delgado (1995) shares that CRT was born when Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman began writing about race in response to the slow pace of racial reform. CRT uses counterstorytelling to describe that racism is alive and well in American society and advances the contention that Whites have benefited most from civil rights legislation (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; DeCuir & Dixon; Ladson-Billings, 1998; West, 1992). Scholars theorize racism as systemic and deeply engrained, in a normalizing manner, within society (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Morrison (1992), who critiques Whiteness, states

that race is always present and Roediger (1991) adds that the problem with this is “whites reach the conclusion that their whiteness is meaningful (p. 6). Lawrence (1987) states that perpetrators of oppression does not view oppression as oppression. These perpetrators are discussed by Delgado (1995) as the dominant group who justifies its power with stories, explanations, and an ethnocentric construction of reality to maintain privilege. Racism is so much a part of our society therefore scholars and advocates must work to untangle the practices to expose racism in its various settings, including education (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Ladson-Billings (1998) uses Critical Race Theory to critique education and the intersection of race and citizenship. CRT has been used to identify and address educational inequities, educational reform, and educational legal victories (i.e., *Brown v. Board of Education*) (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings advances that education (and educators) plays a dynamic role in either reproducing or interrupting current racist, discriminatory practices. White students have been the beneficiaries, almost exclusively, of access to high quality, rigorous curriculum (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Currently, Black students (and other students of color) face inequities in curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. School funding is of utmost concern when assessing inequities and racism in education. Students of color suffer in schools due to systematic funding disparities and structural racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Because most states look to fund schools through property taxes, children who are born into poverty often cannot escape the feeling of monetary let down even while at school. These educational disparities are a result of race-based systemic policies, which reproduce and exacerbate the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT offers a

theoretical framework for analyzing the relationship between power, ideology, and group-level differences in beliefs about how resources should be distributed (Bullock, 2010).

### **The Importance of Understanding Poverty for School Counselors**

In Bray and Balkin's (2013) work, counseling students were used to determine the relationships between beliefs concerning the causes of poverty, racial attitudes, and multicultural competency. Results showed that students who believed people living in poverty were to blame for their situation (individual factors) reported lower levels of multicultural competency, higher color-blind racial attitudes, and lower multicultural social desirability scores. In contrast, students who believed poverty is caused by societal factors reported lower color-blind racial attitudes, lower multicultural competency, and higher multicultural social desirability (Bray & Balkin, 2013).

Results like those stated above support previous research which states students are best served by professionals who are multiculturally competent (Arredondo, 1999), are willing to continually learn the complex reasons people are poor (Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015), and self-report low levels of color-blind racial ideology (Neville et al., 2006). The connection between school counselors' beliefs concerning the causes of poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, multicultural competency, and personal experience with poverty is important in the discussion of school counselors' best practices when working with low-income students.

School counselors bring special skills to schools and often serve in schools where they are likely to have contact with students and families living in poverty (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015; Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005).

As previously stated, the structure of the school counseling position allows the school counselor to play a vital role in working economically disenfranchised children (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) organize skills they believe would positively benefit those working in high-poverty schools into four roles: educators, consultants, confidential knowledge holders, and advisors/advocacy.

The first role is taking on the role of educating others within the school. The multicultural education that school counselors should receive in their counselor education programs may go beyond what other educators within schools may have been trained upon (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Through this education, an understanding of constructs that lead to poverty, and knowledge about how living in poverty can affect students puts the counselor in an opportune place to educate others within the school. Advocating that teachers, staff, and administration understand and become aware of some of these complexities and the privilege and power they hold can make a difference in the educational and mental health outcomes of students in our schools.

The second role is as a consultant within the school. The training that school counselors receive allows them to see the world through different perspectives. When school counselors use this knowledge, they can consult with teachers, staff, or administration about issues regarding students and families living in poverty and help these educators view these students from an alternative perspective.

The third role pertains to specific knowledge the counselor holds about students and their families. Some of this knowledge may be confidential; however, the school counselor is often in a position to share information that may better help other educators in the building understand students and families better and point out potential strengths

and resources that the family may have. Additionally, school counselors should reflect and assess their own erroneous and biased ideas about poverty.

The fourth and final role allows the counselor to serve in an advisory or advocacy position. In this role school counselors are involved in blocking of blaming behaviors, redirecting problem solving, and managing group problem solving (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). These leadership roles are in agreement with the roles suggested by the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2012).

For counselors to be able to follow through with the role suggestions by Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) school counselors would need to be aware of their biases and understand their beliefs about poverty, understand the importance of self-awareness on topics like race and social class, and understand where their experience with poverty (lack of or lived experience) can affect their beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge when working with students who are poor.

### **Using this Research to Inform School Counselors**

The literature provided has suggested a link between complex constructs (e.g., beliefs about poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and personal experience with poverty) and how these beliefs may affect counseling outcomes with low-income students (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bray & Balkin, 2013; Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015; Neville et al., 2006). The literature also stated that many of our students within the school system live in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2015) and that these children live with a multitude of concerns caused from their social class status (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Children's Defense Fund, 2015; Cochran & Smith, 2006; Peske & Haycock, 2006). The role(s) school counselor

play within the school (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007) is vital in the support, understanding, and systematic changes that should happen within our schools and our school systems.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the relationship between school counselors' beliefs about poverty, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and color-blind racial attitudes. An additional purpose of this study was to explore the impact of personal, low-income experiences have on the attribution of poverty. In order to build upon limited research regarding school counselors and working with students living in poverty, the following research questions were explored.

- What is the extent of the relationships among counselors' multicultural competency, color-blind racial attitudes, and their beliefs about poverty?
- To what extent do school counselors with personal low-income experiences have different beliefs about poverty than school counselors who have not had these same experiences?
- To what extent does graduation from CACREP accredited programs versus non-CACREP accredited programs differ regarding multicultural counseling competency, color-blind racial attitudes, and beliefs about poverty?

## **Research Design**

**Examining counselors' multicultural competency, color-blind racial attitudes, and their beliefs about poverty.** A canonical correlation analysis (CCA) was performed to analyze school counselors' perceptions of the attribution of poverty, school counselors' multicultural counseling competency, and color-blind racial attitudes. The CCA was selected as this allowed the researcher to explore the relationships between two or more variables (Thompson, 2000). Not only did this analysis allow the researcher to break down the association between two or more variables, it also allowed for prediction of variance between variables to be examined (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). The data were evaluated for linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity and assumptions were tested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). This analysis will allow the researcher to investigate the relationships between the above-mentioned variables, thus building upon available research and providing suggestions for future research, which is important to both practicing counselors and counseling education programs (Balkin & Kleist, 2017).

Three different measures and three different canonical correlations were used to explore the first research question. The first canonical correlation analysis was performed between the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (with three subscales: Unawareness of Privilege, Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues) and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (with two subscales: Knowledge and Awareness). The second CCA was performed between the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (with three subscales: Unawareness of Privilege, Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues) and the Poverty Attributions Scale (with three subscales: Individual, Cultural, and

Structural). And the last canonical correlation analysis was performed between the Poverty Attributions Scale (with three subscales: Individual, Cultural, and Structural) and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (with two subscales: Knowledge and Awareness).

**Examining the extent to which school counselors with personal low-income experiences have different beliefs about poverty than school counselors who have not had these same experiences.** The second research question looked at the relationship between school counselors' personal experience of living in lower-income homes and what they most attribute poverty to (i.e., Poverty Attribution Scale: individual, cultural, or structural factors). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of living in lower-income families had on PAS outcomes. A MONOVA was the selected analysis as the researcher was considering two groups of participants (those who had personal experience of living in lower income homes, versus those who had not) and several dependent variables (individual, cultural, or structural) simultaneously (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). For this question, the predictor variable was school counselors' experience with poverty and the criterion variable was attributions of poverty (i.e., individual, structural, or cultural). Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables were reported and assumptions for normality and homogeneity of covariances were reviewed.

**Examining the extent to which graduates from CACREP versus non-CACREP accredited programs differ regarding multicultural counseling competency, color-blind racial attitudes, and beliefs about poverty differ for school counselors.** In the third research question, the author used a MANOVA and analyzed the

relationships between graduating from a CACREP (two groups: CACREP graduates versus non-CACREP graduates) with the outcomes on the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale, the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, and the Poverty Attribution Scale. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables were reported and assumptions for normality and homogeneity of covariances were reviewed.

The way this research study was developed left the results open to threats of internal and external validity. While the author tried to minimize the effects, these are considered limitations to the analysis. First, the constructs studied (i.e., beliefs about causes of poverty, multicultural competency, racial attitudes) are complex and while all reliability estimates are acceptable, the measures are still measures and cannot identify exact relationships. Through the analysis, the author was able to observe the percent of variance accounted for between measures, but that may leave a great amount of unknown variance possibly caused by other variables not accounted for in this study. Because of the sensitive nature of the questions asked, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was used to minimize participants answering in a societally appropriate manner about poverty, racism, or multicultural counseling competence, rather than being honest. In addition, the self-report measures used for the present research study adds to the limitations based on the truthfulness of the person completing the measures. Additionally, the number of measures being used, and the time required to complete all of the information being asked of school counselors might have been too time consuming for these professionals to complete the survey or put ample thought into their answers. The time school counselors had to complete this survey definitely affected total numbers of data as many surveys were not able to be used. Seventy-seven surveys were removed

from the analysis as they were submitted incomplete. Lastly, the sample for the study was selected from only members of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) and state school counseling associations, so while the demographics of the group may be generalizable to the larger population of school counselors, the opinions of non-ASCA and non-statewide school counseling association members were not represented.

### **Participants**

Convenience sampling was used to select participants in hope that generalizable information about school counselors could be gathered (Balkin & Kleist, 2017). An a priori power analysis was conducted and estimated that 189 participants were needed to identify statistical significance with a moderate effect size and an alpha level of .05. Participants were solicited through multiple means. Originally, the author had hoped to work with ASCA to email current members; however, ASCA would not share email addresses for their members. Once this was realized, the ASCA website was used to reach members. There were two places to post research requests, the first was the ASCA SCALE, American School Counseling Association School Counseling Analysis, Leadership, and Evaluation (<https://scale-research.org/>). The SCALE is dedicated to school counselors and school counselor focused researchers and focused on facilitating and disseminating both research projects and completed research. ASCA SCENE (<http://scene.schoolcounselor.org/home>) is the second place the researcher posted research information and a link to her online survey. ASCA SCENE is an online networking community where ASCA members are able to post questions, post resources, ask for help, connect, and share documents. This dissertation research request was posted

on both ASCA SCALE and ASCA SCENE on three different occasions, the original post and then two subsequent follow-ups.

While responses were coming in from posting through the ASCA website, they were slow. To help build a more robust sample size, each state school counseling association was emailed individually to introduce this dissertation research topic and ask that the association email the request or post the request to their website. All states were contacted via email through their current president, executive director, or website administrator. Only three states did not have standalone school counseling association websites (Kansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee). Instead of contacting these school counseling associations' president, executive director or website administrator, the researcher contacted their state counseling associations and asked that this research request be shared with school counseling members via email.

Participants were eligible for this research study if they were older than 18, had been a school counselor for more than one year, and were currently serving as a school counselor. This criterion was explicitly stated in the email recruitment letter and the preamble (unsigned consent form). Participation was completely voluntary.

## **Measures**

Participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and four additional instruments. The Poverty Attribution Scale developed by Bennett, Raiz, and Davis (2016) was used to measure how, or to what, school counselors mostly attribute poverty. The Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Assessment Scale created by Ponterotto (1997) was used to measure perceived multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness. Neville et al.'s (2000) Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale was used to

measure color-blind racial attitudes. Lastly, in order to control for socially desirable answers on the self-report survey, participants were asked to complete Crowne and Marlowe's (1960) Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale.

**Poverty Attribution Survey.** The Poverty Attribution Survey (PAS) measures perceptions on the attribution of poverty and was developed upon theory and findings of social work research (Bennett, Raiz, & Davis, 2016). The Poverty Attribution Survey consisted of 28 Likert-type items ranging from 1-*Strongly Agree* to 6-*Strongly Disagree*. PAS measures three distinct attributions of poverty: individual, structural, and cultural.

Bennett et al. (2016) suggested to use the PAS due to the inclusion of cultural attributions of poverty, which is a new addition from past research questionnaires. While this instrument was originally developed to further the understanding of poverty attributions of social workers and social work students, Bennett et al. (2016) suggested that others, like paraprofessionals or administrative assistants, may also benefit from this as these employees came into contact with clients and families in social work offices. Based on this statement, the use of the PAS by helping professionals, like school counselors, should generate important knowledge to further the understanding of poverty within the school-counselor-student-and-family dynamic.

Each question on the PAS is based on the root question "Poverty is the result of..." (Bennett, 2010, p. 1). The Individual scale consists of 13 items and sample statements include "an anti-work mentality" and "an unwillingness to work at the competitive level that is necessary to make it in the world" (p. 1). The Structural scale consists of 11 items and sample statements include "inequalities which don't give all people an equal chance" and "a capitalist society in which the wealth of some is

contingent on the poverty of others” (p. 1). And lastly, the Cultural scale includes sample statements like “a culture which perpetuates poor work habits, welfare dependence, and laziness” and “living in a family with a parent(s) who has a poor work ethic” (p. 1). The lowest score between the three subscales (individual, structural, cultural) indicates where the respondent attributes poverty. For example, if the respondent scored a 5.23 on the individual scale, a 5.78 on the cultural scale, and a 2.27 on the structural scale, this person would identify structural causes of poverty.

Using Cronbach’s alpha, Bennett and associates (2016) calculated reliability estimates for scores on each PAS subscale. Scores on the individual attribution scale had a high level of internal consistency at .94. Scores on the 11-item version of the structural attribution scale had good internal consistency at .88. And scores on the nine-item version of the cultural attribution scale, also had good internal consistency at .85. The Cronbach’s alpha scores for the PAS based on the participating school counselor population are reported similarly to Bennett and colleagues’ findings. The scores on the individual attribution scale had a high level of internal consistency at .96. Scores on the structural attribution scale had good internal consistency at .86. Scores on the cultural attribution scale had good internal consistency at .87.

**Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale.** The Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS; Ponterotto, 1997) was used to measure multicultural counseling competency. This self-reported measure includes two subscales: Knowledge and Awareness. The MCKAS is a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-*Not at All True* to 7-*Totally True*. Questions are grouped, selected questions are reverse scored, and a mean score were calculated from subscale scores.

The Knowledge scale is comprised of 20 questions, none of which are reversed scored. Sample items from this scale include “I check up on my minority/cultural counseling skills by monitoring my functioning – via consultation, supervision, and continuing education” and “I am aware some research indicates that minority clients receive “less preferred” forms of counseling treatment than majority clients” (Ponterotto, 1997, p. 6). The Awareness scale has 12 items (10 of which are reverse coded). Sample items from the Awareness scale include “I believe all clients should maintain direct eye contact during counseling”, which is reversed coded (p. 6) and “I am aware that being born a White person in this society carries with it certain advantages (p. 9).

Higher scores demonstrate greater perceived multicultural competencies in the specific scale (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002; Ponterotto & Potere, 2003). Neville, Spanierman, and Doan (2006) expressed that the MCKAS’ reliability estimates are “acceptable” and ranged from .78 (Awareness) to .92 (Knowledge). While considered outdated and a limitation to reliability (Balkin & Juhnke, 2014; Balkin & Kleist, 2017), Neville et al. (2006) stated that MCKAS demonstrated content, construct, and criterion-related validity. For the purpose of this research, I used more current terminology and referred to validity as evidence based on test content, evidence based on response processes, evidence based on internal structure, and evidence based on relationships to other variables (Balkin & Juhnke, 2014; Balkin & Kleist, 2017). The Cronbach’s alpha scores for the participants in this dissertation ranged from .81 (Awareness) to .92 (Knowledge).

**Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale.** The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000; Neville et al., 2006) assesses

individuals' color-blind racial beliefs through self-reporting. The three subscales examined in the CoBRAS include: unawareness of racial privilege, unawareness of institutional discrimination, and unawareness to blatant racial issues (Neville et al., 2000). This 26-item survey gets rated upon a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-*strongly disagree* to 6-*strongly agree*. Subscale scores and total scores were calculated by first reverse coding selected questions and then calculating the sum.

The Unawareness of Racial Privilege subscale consists of seven items (six of which were reverse coded). Sample questions from this subscale include statements like “everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich” and “racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.”, which is reversed scored (Neville et al., 2000, p. 62). The Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination subscale consists of seven items (only one question was reverse coded). Sample questions from this subscale include “it is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian” and “due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality”, which is reversed scored (p. 62). Lastly, the Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues subscale consists of six items (three questions were reversed scored). Sample questions from this subscale includes statements such as “racism is a major problem in the U.S.”, which is reversed scored, and “racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today” (p. 62).

Higher scores suggest greater levels of color-blindness, denial, unawareness, and greater racial prejudice and intolerance (Neville et al., 2000). Neville and associates examined the test and found a split-half reliability estimate of .72 and an acceptable

Cronbach's alpha ranged from .70 (Blatant Racial Issues) to .86 (CoBRAS total) (Bray & Balkin, 2013). The CoBRAS positively related to other measures of racial attitudes and measures of the belief in a just world. The CoBRAS specified that the greater levels of color-blind racial attitudes are related to higher levels of racial prejudice and a belief that society is just and fair (Neville et al., 2000). The reliability for estimates for the scores in this dissertation sample were good. The Cronbach's alpha ranged from .81 (Blatant Racial Issues) to .90 (CoBRAS total).

**Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale.** To help control for the impending effects of self-report bias, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) was used. Sadowsky (1996) recommended to use a scale of social desirability whenever measures are used to address complex topics, such as racism, multicultural competence, and attribution of poverty (to accompany the PAS, CoBRAS, and MCKAS). The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale is a 33-item, true or false, questionnaire. Answers are given a +1 or +0 depending upon if the question was considered one which people may answer true or false in a socially desirable manner. For example, question one asks, "Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates". If the answer was true 1 was added to the total score. Lower total scores (0-8) suggest respondents answer in a socially undesirable manner most of the time, average scores (9-19) suggest respondents answer in social desirable manners half of the time (may conform to social rules and conventions in an average manner), and high scores (20-33) indicate respondents are highly concerned with social approval and answer in a social desirable manner most of the time (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The Kuder-Richardson formula 20 reliability scores for the Marlowe-Crowne

Social Desirability were good at .88 (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Reynolds, 1982). Using Kuder-Richardson formula 20 reliability estimates for this sample were good at .81.

**Demographic survey.** The author of the current study created a demographic questionnaire that asked participants about their gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, race, number of years of experience as a school counselor, to identify whether their school is private or public, the level of students they counsel (i.e., elementary, secondary, K-12), the percentage of students who receive free and reduced lunch (FRLP) at their current school, the number of years they worked at that site, and whether they graduated from a CACREP accredited program (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). Included in the demographic questionnaire were questions about personal experience with poverty. For the purpose of this study, personal experience with poverty was quantified by asking participants to indicate whether they received free and/or reduced lunch during their K-12 education and/or if they of received the Pell Grant as an undergraduate student. Lower-income personal experience questions were asked to compare experience with how groups (those with experience and those without low-income experience) attribute poverty.

### **Data Collection**

Participants were contacted via email or through online message boards. The recruitment of participants lasted approximately four months before enough participants were established to move on with analyses. Participants were given a brief summary of why the research study was being conducted (email recruitment letter), they were given access to the IRB approval document, as well as the preamble (unsigned consent form). Included in the email recruitment letter was directions of how to find the survey. The link

directed participants to the survey which was securely stored in at [www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com) (all forms are included in the appendices). Applicants were asked to participate on a voluntary basis if they met the following considerations: they had been a school counselor for one or more years, they were currently working as a school counselor, and they were at least 18 years old. These stipulations can be found in the email recruitment letter and three separate questions were asked about these criteria on the demographic survey.

The author invited participants (via the preamble (Appendix A)) to consider being a part of this research study and explained that there were no known risks for participation, the estimated time required to complete the survey, how many school counselors were required, the voluntary and confidential nature of this study, and who to contact in the event there were questions, concerns, or complaints. Participants who did not complete all of the measures used were removed from the analysis. A copy of the demographic questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

### **Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were calculated. Demographic information of the participants was examined.

**Research Question 1.** Canonical correlation analysis was conducted to review the relationships of the instruments used for this study. Pituch and Stevens (2016) suggest this analysis is appropriate when researchers wish to examine two variables parsimoniously to describe the number and nature of mutually independent relationships between two sets. Thompson (1991) adds that CCA is especially useful with two sets of variables, each consisting of at least two variables. Relationships between variables are

examined through the use of pairs of linear combinations that are uncorrelated (Pituch & Stevens, 2016), which means the variables have no mutual relationship. The researcher hypothesized that the variables used in this study would have relationships between one another and the CCA can bring attention to this relationship by calculating the variance and correlation between variables.

Canonical correlation analysis uses variable reduction schemes that are linear combinations (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). Canonical variates are the first pairs of the linear combination and account for most the shared variance between the sets of variables. These associations between variables are named or labeled to express the newly found relationship between sets of variables. This analysis begins by finding two linear combinations (the canonical variates) that have the maximum possible Pearson correlation (Pituch & Stevens, 2016; Thompson, 1991). “The maximized correlation for the scores on two linear composites...is called the *largest canonical correlation*” (Pituch & Stevens, 2016, p. 619). The next step of the procedure searches for the next largest pair of linear combinations that are uncorrelated to the first pair and this is the second canonical correlation (Pituch & Stevens, 2016).

A strong canonical correlation exists at .70 and above. A moderate canonical correlation begins at .50 and a weak canonical correlation is .30 (Pituch and Stevens, 2016). Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest a cutoff correlation at .30 should be used. So, for this study correlations falling below .30 will not be examined further. An alpha level of .05 was utilized and assumptions for normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were evaluated through distributions of scatterplots.

**Research Question 2 and 3.** Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze two groups of participants on several dependent variables simultaneously. The focus of this analysis are the cases where the variables are correlated and share basic conceptual meaning (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). Pituch and Stevens (2016) suggested that this analysis be run in research like this as the variables being examined (i.e., living in low-income homes or graduating from a CACREP accredited institution) should have an effect on the dependent variables (i.e., beliefs about poverty, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and color-blind racial attitudes). There are three basic assumptions of MANOVA. The first assumption is independence. The second assumption is normality, which means the scores in each group are normally distributed. And the third is sphericity, which measures the homogeneity of covariance (Balkin, 2004; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). Additionally, by studying the multiple constructs above, I am able to examine relationships and draw more complex understanding of the phenomenon presented in this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the relationships between counselors' multicultural knowledge and awareness, color-blind racial attitudes, and their beliefs about poverty?
2. Do school counselors with personal low-income familial experiences have different beliefs about poverty than school counselors who have not had these same experiences?
3. Does attribution of poverty differ for school counselors who graduate from CACREP accredited programs versus non-CACREP accredited programs

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Demographic information collected and used for this research project included participant's gender, race, age, and location by region of the United States. The results for these demographics are reported in Table 1. Additionally, participants were asked about their experiences living in lower-income homes (i.e., receiving the Pell Grant as an undergraduate student and/or receiving free or reduced lunch as an elementary through high school student) and whether or not they graduated from a program accredited by the

Council for Accreditation of counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Information regarding these questions is presented in Table 2.

The subscales from the Poverty Attributions Scale (PAS; Bennett et al., 2016), the subscales from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000), the subscales from the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS; Ponterotto & Potere, 2003), and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) were used as variables in the analysis. The three subscales of poverty attribution from the PAS included the Individual (PASind) scale, the Cultural (PAScul) scale, and the Structural (PASstr) scale. The three racial attituded scale from the CoBRAS included Unawareness of Privilege (CoPriv) scale, the Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (CoID) scale, and the Unawareness of Blatant Racism (CoBR). The two subscales from the MCKAS include the Knowledge (Know) and Awareness (Awar) scales. The final scale used was the total Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD). The descriptive statistics for each subscale are presented in Table 3.

Table 1.  
*Descriptive Statistics for Gender, Race, Age, Sexual Identity, Region*

Item <sup>a</sup>	Category	Percent	
Gender	Female ( $n = 191$ )	89.7%	
	Male ( $n = 21$ )	9.9%	
	Non-Binary or Third Gender	0.5%	
Race	White or Caucasian	90.1%	
	Multiple Races	3.3%	
	Black or African American	3.3%	
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1.4%	
	Hispanic or Latina	0.9%	
	Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander	0.5	
	Age, $M = 43$ , $SD = 11$	20 to 25	1.9%
		26 to 35	31.5%
36 to 45		25.4%	
46 to 55		24.9%	
55 and up		16.4%	
Region	West	14.1%	
	Midwest	41.8%	
	South	16%	
	Northeast	28.2	

<sup>a</sup> $n = 213$

Table 2.  
*Descriptive Statistics for Free and Reduced Lunch, Pell Grant, and CACREP Accreditation*

Item <sup>a</sup>	Category	Percent
Free and Reduced Lunch ( $n = 206$ )	Yes, received FRL	16.9%
	No, did not receive FRL	79.8%
Pell Grant Award ( $n = 197$ )	Yes, received Pell Grant	37.1%
	No, did not receive Pell Grant	79.8%
Accreditation ( $n = 187$ )	CACREP Accredited	66.2%
	Non-CACREP Accredited	21.6%

Table 3.

*Descriptive Statistics for Scales and Subscales*

Scale/Subscale <sup>a</sup>	M	SD
PAS:		
Individual (PASind)	4.18	1.08
Cultural (PAScul)	3.70	.92
Structural (PASstr)	2.81	.80
CoBRAS:		
Unawareness of Privilege (CoPriv)	20.44	8.04
Institutional Discrimination (CoID)	18.15	6.54
Unawareness of Blatant Racism (CoBR)	10.95	4.81
MCKAS		
Knowledge (Know)	4.97	.93
Awareness (Awar)	5.82	.78
Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability (MCSD)	17.29	5.74

<sup>a</sup>*n* = 213

**Statistical Analysis**

**Research Question 1.** Three separate canonical correlations were run to examine the relationships between the main variables of this study: school counselors' beliefs about poverty, colorblind racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling awareness and knowledge. An alpha level of .01 was applied. Cutoff correlations of .30 were used for interpretation of the canonical variates (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Assumptions for

normality, linearity, and homoscedascity were evaluated through distributions of scatterplots; assumptions were met, and no multivariate outliers were detected.

***First canonical correlation: CoBRAS and MCKAS (awareness of injustice).*** A statistically significant relationship was found between the CoBRAS subscales and the MCKAS subscales. The first canonical root was significant,  $\lambda = .44$ ,  $F(6, 416) = 34.68$ ,  $p < .05$ , accounting for 55% ( $r_c = .74$ ) of the overlapping variance. The second canonical root was not significant,  $\lambda = .98$ ,  $F(2, 209) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .327$ , accounting for about 1% ( $r_c = .01$ ) of the overlapping variance. Therefore, only the first canonical variate was interpreted.

The first canonical variate included scores on all three subscales of the CoBRAS, Unawareness of Racial Privilege (-.83), Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (-.77), and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (-.98) and the subscales on the MCKAS: Knowledge (.79) and Awareness (.92). School counselors who are more multiculturally aware and knowledgeable are more likely to be aware of privilege, institutional discrimination, and racism. With the most change being accounted for with blatant racial issues (CoBR). This canonical variate was labeled *awareness of injustice*. Shown in Table 4 are the correlations and standardized canonical variate coefficients for the CoBRAS subscales and the MCKAS subscales as they relate to the first canonical variate.

Table 4.

*Correlations and Standardized Canonical Variate Coefficients on the CoBRAS and MCKAS for the First Canonical Variate*

Scale	COR	COE
Color Blind Racial Attitudes		
Unawareness of Racial Privilege	<b>-.83</b>	-.16
Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination	<b>-.77</b>	-.19
Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues	<b>-.98</b>	-.74
Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness		
Knowledge	<b>.79</b>	.46
Awareness	<b>.92</b>	.70

*Note.* Correlations  $\geq .30$  are in boldface. COR = correlations to the canonical variate. COE = standardized canonical variate coefficient.

*Second canonical correlation: CoBRAS and PAS (understanding privilege to advocate and sociopolitical awareness).* Two statistically significant relationships were found between the CoBRAS subscales and the PAS subscales. The first canonical root was significant,  $\lambda = .24$ ,  $F(9, 503) = 34.68$ ,  $p < .05$ , accounting for 73% ( $r_c = .86$ ) of the overlapping variance. The second canonical root was significant,  $\lambda = .93$ ,  $F(4, 416) = 3.79$ ,  $p < .05$ , accounting for 6% ( $r_c = .25$ ) of the remaining overlapping variance. The third canonical root was not significant,  $\lambda = .99$ ,  $F(1, 209) = 1.56$ ,  $p = .213$ , accounting for less than 1% ( $r_c = .086$ ) of the overlapping variance. Therefore, only the first two canonical variates were interpreted.

The first canonical variate included scores on all three subscales of the CoBRAS, Unawareness of Racial Privilege (-.96), Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (-.81), and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (-.86) and the three subscales on the PAS: Individual (.86), Cultural (.72) and Structural (-.86). School counselors with greater awareness of racial privilege, institution discrimination, and blatant racial issues were more likely to attribute poverty to structural variables rather than individual or cultural variables. This canonical variate was labeled *understanding privilege to advocate*.

The second canonical variate included scores on one subscales of the CoBRAS, Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (-.58) and two of the subscales on the PAS: Cultural (.69) and Structural (-.30). School counselors with a greater awareness of institutional discrimination were more likely to attribute poverty to structural factors and less likely to attribute poverty to cultural reasons. This canonical variate was labeled *sociopolitical awareness*. Shown in Table 5 are the correlations and standardized canonical variate coefficients for the CoBRAS subscales and the PAS subscales as they relate to the first and second canonical variates.

Table 5.

*Correlations and Standardized Canonical Variate Coefficients on the CoBRAS and PAS for the First and Second Canonical Variates.*

Scale	<u>First Root</u>		<u>Second Root</u>	
	COR	COE	COR	COE
<b>Color Blind Racial Attitudes</b>				
Unawareness of Racial Privilege	<b>-.96</b>	-.62	.19	1.06
Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination	<b>-.81</b>	-.20	<b>-.58</b>	-1.37
Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues	<b>-.86</b>	-.27	-.01	.09
<b>Poverty Attribution Scale</b>				
Individual	<b>.86</b>	.55	.28	-.75
Cultural	<b>.72</b>	.03	<b>.69</b>	1.53
Structural	<b>-.86</b>	-.53	<b>.30</b>	.53

*Note.* Correlations  $\geq .30$  are in boldface. COR = correlations to the canonical variate. COE = standardized canonical variate coefficient.

***Third canonical correlation: PAS and MCKAS (malevolent helper and somewhat knowledgeable but in denial).*** Two statistically significant relationships were found between the PAS subscales and the MCKAS subscales. The first canonical root was significant,  $\lambda = .49$ ,  $F(6, 416) = 29.60$ ,  $p < .05$ , accounting for 49% ( $r_c = .70$ ) of the overlapping variance. The second canonical root was significant,  $\lambda = .96$ ,  $F(2, 209) = 3.88$ ,  $p < .05$ , accounting for 3.5% ( $r_c = .19$ ) of the remaining overlapping variance.

The first canonical variate included scores on all three subscales of the PAS: Individual (-.96), Cultural (-.82) and Structural (.72) and the MCKAS subscales: Knowledge (-.82) and Awareness (-.89). School counselors with beliefs that poverty can

be explained by individual and cultural factors showed lower knowledge and awareness in multicultural counseling competence. This canonical variate was labeled *malevolent helper*.

The second canonical variate included scores on one of the subscales of the PAS: Structural (-.64) and the MCKAS subscales: Knowledge (.57) and Awareness (-.46). School counselors with beliefs that poverty can be explained by structural factors self-reported higher scores in knowledge, while reporting lower scores in self-reported awareness. This canonical variate was labeled *somewhat knowledgeable but in denial*. Shown in Table 6 are the correlations and standardized canonical variate coefficients for the PAS subscales and the MCKAS as they relate to the first and second canonical variate.

Table 6.

*Correlations and Standardized Canonical Variate Coefficients on the PAS and MCKAS for the First and Second Canonical Variates*

Scale	<u>First Root</u>		<u>Second Root</u>	
	COR	COE	COR	COE
Poverty Attribution Scale				
Individual	<b>-.96</b>	-.72	-.29	-1.3
Cultural	<b>-.82</b>	-.08	-.08	.65
Structural	<b>.72</b>	.33	<b>-.64</b>	-1.04
Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness				
Knowledge	<b>-.82</b>	-.52	<b>.57</b>	1.01
Awareness	<b>-.88</b>	-.64	<b>-.46</b>	-.93

*Note.* Correlations  $\geq .30$  are in boldface. COR = correlations to the canonical variate. COE = standardized canonical variate coefficient.

**Research Question 2.** A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of personal low-income experiences (having qualified for free or reduced lunch and/or the Pell Grant) on the three Poverty Attribution subscales: Individual, Cultural, and Structural. An alpha level of 0.5 was utilized. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables across study group are in Table 7. Assumptions for normality ( $W > .01$ ) and homogeneity of covariances (Box's  $M = 6.242, p = .408$ ) were met. No statistically significant effect was identified between low-income personal experience of and the three dependent variables,  $\lambda = .994, F(3, 208) = .45, p = .72$ . Approximately .6% of the

variance in the model was accounted for in the combined dependent variables across study groups, yielding almost no effect.

Table 7.

*Descriptive Statistics of Personal Experience with Poverty Attributions Subscales.*

PAS Subscales	Personal Experience	Mean	SD	N
Individual	No	4.20	1.10	127
	Yes	4.15	1.06	85
Cultural	No	3.73	.90	127
	Yes	3.64	.96	85
Structural	No	2.79	.80	127
	Yes	2.87	.79	85

**Research Question 3.** A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of graduating from a CACREP accredited counseling program on the three Poverty Attribution subscales: Individual, Cultural, and Structural. An alpha level of 0.5 was utilized. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables across study group are in Table 8. Assumptions for normality ( $W > .01$ ) and homogeneity of covariances (Box's  $M = 10.35, p = .121$ ) were met. A statistically significant effect was identified between CACREP accreditation and the three dependent variables,  $\lambda = .903, F(3, 183) = 6.53, p < .001$ . Approximately 9.7% of the variance in the model was accounted for in the combined dependent variables across study groups, yielding a small to moderate effect. CACREP accreditation made a small to moderate difference in poverty attribution compared to non-CACREP accreditation.

Table 8.

*Descriptive Statistics of Personal Experience with Poverty Attributions Subscales.*

PAS Subscales	Accreditation	Mean	SD	N
Individual	Yes	4.05	1.10	141
	No	4.76	.96	46
Cultural	Yes	3.59	.90	141
	No	4.18	.92	46
Structural	Yes	2.86	.79	141
	No	2.43	.71	46

**Social desirability.** A multiple regression analysis was conducted on Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability (SD) scores based on subscores on the PAS (Individual (PASind), Cultural (PAScul), Structural (PASstr)), the CoBRAS (Unawareness of Privilege (CBPriv), Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (CBID), Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (CBBRI)), and MCKAS (Knowledge (Know), Awareness (Awar)). Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 9. Scatterplots were analyzed, and no curvilinear relationships between the criterion variable and the predictor variables or heteroscedascity were evident.

There was a statistically significant relationship between social desirability and the subscales from the PAS, CoBRAS, and MCKAS,  $F(8, 115) = 3.87, p < .001$ . A small to moderate effect size was noted with approximately 13% of the variance accounted for in the model,  $R^2 = .132$ . Social desirability was a statistically significant predictor of

Unawareness of Privilege (see Table 10) uniquely accounting for approximately 4% of the variance. Thus, social desirability is not influencing the scores to a great degree in this model. Given the sample size of  $n = 213$ , statistical significance would be detected for small effect sizes,  $R^2 > .09$ .

Table 9.

*Descriptive Statistics Multiple Regression Social Desirability*

	M	SD	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SD	17.29	5.74	.81	—	-.16	-.25	.34 *	.18	.28	-.21	-.19	.22
2. Know	4.97	.93	.92		—	.48	-.48	-.41	-.59	.52	.47	-.48
3. Awar	5.82	.78	.81			—	-.57	-.55	-.66	.62	.52	-.39
4. CBPriv	20.44	8.04	.89				—	.69	.74	-.69	-.56	.73
5. CBID	18.15	6.54	.89					—	.65	-.63	-.60	.56
6. CBBRI	10.95	4.81	.81						—	-.66	-.54	.62
7. PASind	4.18	1.08	.94							—	.84	-.49
8. PAScul	3.70	.92	.85								—	-.39
9. PASstr	2.81	.80	.88									—

Note. SD = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale; Know = MCKAS Knowledge; Awar = MCKAS Awareness; CBPriv = CoBRAS Unawareness of Privilege; CBID = CoBRAS Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination; CBBRI = CoBRAS Blatant Racial Issues; PASind = PAS Individual; PAScul = PAS Cultural; PASstr = PAS Structural  
 \*p < .05

Table 10.

*Multiple Regression Results for Social Desirability.*

Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	sr <sup>2</sup>
PASind	.89	.77	.17	1.14	.258	.005
PAScul	-.67	.78	-.11	-.85	.394	.003
PASstr	-.34	.73	-.05	-.46	.646	.001
CoPriv	.28	.09	.39	3.04	.003	.039
CoID	-.11	.09	-.13	-1.29	.200	.007
CoBR	.12	.14	.10	.84	.402	.003
Know	.13	.53	.02	.24	.81	.000
Awar	-.78	.69	-.11	-1.13	.26	.005

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of this dissertation study was to (a) explore the relation between school counselors' perception of the cause of poverty, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and color-blind racial attitudes, (b) examine school counselors' personal experiences with lower-income living and whether that had any impact on the factor(s) they attribute poverty to, and (c) determine if graduates from CACREP accredited programs view the causes of poverty differently from other graduates from non-CACREP accredited programs. Personal experience with low-income living status was operationalized as any person who had qualified for free and reduced lunch (P-12) and/or qualified for Pell Grant (with their first baccalaureate degree). The researcher's interest in how counselors view poverty in regard to beliefs and knowledge about working with diverse students inspired this research and the decision to examine multiple constructs (race, multicultural counseling, experience, counseling program accreditation).

The analysis of the data collected in the current study resulted in five canonical variates. The description for the first canonical variate is the *awareness of injustice*. The

awareness of injustice condition describes participants who are high in multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness and have lower perceptions of color-blindness. These participants are highly aware of racism, privilege, and institutional discrimination. They are aware of important aspects of counseling diverse students and believe racism is a problem and should be discussed to bring awareness to this problem.

The description for the second canonical variate is *understanding privilege to advocate*. The understanding privilege to advocate condition describes participants who are high in multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness and less likely to blame poverty on the individual. Instead counselors with this condition are more likely to attribute poverty to structural factors. These participants are more highly aware of cultural differences and the importance of these within counseling relationships. These counselors view poverty as a problem caused by society through discrimination against minorities and the poor.

The description for the third canonical variate is *sociopolitical awareness*. The sociopolitical awareness circumstance describes counselors who are highly aware of institutional discrimination and likely to attribute poverty to structural factors and less likely to attribute poverty to cultural factors. These participants understand why programs, such as affirmative action, are necessary to help create equity and that poor Americans are taken advantage of by the wealthy in our society. Additionally, these participants are likely to understand that being poor is not developed through poor working habits or laziness but built from larger societal inequities.

The description for the fourth canonical variate is *malevolent helper*. The malevolent helper condition describes participants with beliefs that poverty can be

attributed to both individual and cultural factors; additionally, these participants also hold lower perceptions of multicultural knowledge and awareness. These professionals may be less aware that being born a racial minority in this society brings with it certain challenges that White people do not have to face. Moreover, these same counselors are more likely to view poverty as a result of lacking motivations, laziness, poor work ethic, and holding preference for living off of society.

The description of the fifth and final canonical variate is *somewhat knowledgeable but in denial*. Somewhat knowledgeable but in denial professionals self-report higher multicultural knowledge and lower multicultural awareness and believe poverty can be explained by structural factors. These professionals understand that poverty can be attributed to economic, educational, and other societal structures, yet may not completely be aware that being born White in America has advantages.

The examination of how personal experiences of living in low-income homes may or may not affect school counselors' attribution of poverty yielded limited but meaningful information. Additionally, the results of whether or not graduating from a CACREP accreditation institution had an impact on how school counselors viewed the attribution of poverty yielded small but possibly meaningful findings. Both research question two and three allow for interesting discussion and a push for further research.

### **Relationship Between PAS, MCKAS, CoBRAS**

Results indicated that relationships between poverty attribution, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and color-blind racial attitudes exist and can be shared with counselor preparation programs, school counseling practice, and further research. School counselors were asked to complete a survey that included the Poverty

Attribution Survey (PAS), the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS), and the Marlowe-Crowne Social-Desirability Scale. The dissertation findings are discussed along with literature findings below.

**Awareness of injustice.** School counselors who were high in multicultural knowledge and awareness had lower color-blindness and were more aware that privilege, institutional discrimination, and racism exist. This canonical variate, or the awareness of injustice, demonstrated a strong negative relationship between counselors who self-reported higher multicultural knowledge and awareness and denied the global belief that this is a just world. While in the inverse, Neville and colleagues (2006) stated that mental health workers who indicated greater levels of color-blind racial attitudes related to lower self-reported multicultural counseling awareness and knowledge. Additionally, Neville and associates (2000) suggested that higher color-blind racial attitudes allow one to believe that individuals are rewarded based on merit alone. Thus, this construct acknowledges the importance of multicultural counseling awareness and knowledge, because as this construct rises, color-blind racial attitudes fall. This study empirically supported previous works (Neville et al., 2006, 2000) that link multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness with color-blind racial ideology.

**Understanding privilege to advocate.** Counselors who were high in multicultural knowledge and awareness were less likely to attribute poverty to individual factors. There was a strong positive relationship between counselors who endorsed the belief that poverty is caused not by the individual but, by structural factors were high in multicultural knowledge and awareness. The study of attributions of poverty is important

in helping professions as attributions influence whether help will be given (Bennet et al., 2016). When counselors are aware and knowledgeable about multicultural differences and similarities, they are able to conclude individual characteristics are not the reason people are poor. Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) found similar findings when examining multicultural training, racial attitudes, and attributions of poverty among graduate students. These researchers stated that less multicultural training program led counseling students to more often select individual factors as explanations of poverty.

**Sociopolitical awareness.** Counselors with high awareness of institutional discrimination (CoBRAS subscale) were more likely to attribute poverty to structural factors. Counseling is a cross-cultural phenomenon which occurs in contexts that are influenced by sociopolitical and historical views the counselor and client bring to the relationship (Arredondo, 1999; Sue et al., 1992). Neville and colleagues (2000) stated that an awareness and understanding of color-blind racial attitudes was related to lower levels of racial prejudice and a belief that society is just and fair. The sociopolitical awareness lends professionals with this characteristic to be aware of social and historical concepts that bind institutional discrimination to structural factors causing and perpetuating poverty. So, as one is aware of institutional discrimination, one would also be aware of how institutional discrimination fits within systemic discrimination and how that could/does affect income levels. Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) stated that structural/systematic circumstances do not provide equal alternatives for all people. The American trend is to attribute poverty to individual cases, but this group of counselors would suggest this may be the trend but not the rule (Bennett et al., 2016).

**Malevolent helper.** School counselors who reported lower levels of multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness were more likely to believe poverty is caused by individuals and cultural factors. These results produced a strong positive relationship for the MCKAS subscales, knowledge and awareness and the PAS subscale, individual and cultural factors. Cozzarelli and colleagues (2001) found that people who attribute being poor to the individual level were more likely to not only blame them but also hold more negative attitudes towards them. The malevolent helper school counselor shows little cultural awareness, which Fuertes and associates (2000) believe is harmful in building successful alliances with students. Constantine and associates (2001) built upon this idea and stated that school counselors need to be knowledgeable and self-aware to meet the mental health needs of culturally diverse students. Malevolent helper school counselors may be more likely to have negative views of the poor (and other marginalized groups) and believe negative stereotypes about them (Bennett et al., 2016; Cozzarelli et al., 2001).

**Somewhat knowledgeable but in denial.** These school counseling professionals self-reported higher multicultural knowledge and lower multicultural awareness and believed poverty can be explained by structural factors. The results indicated a negative relationship for the MCKAS subscales, knowledge (which increases) and awareness (which decreases) and the PAS subscale, structural factors. These results suggest that school counselors in this study show an overall trend that as self-report multicultural knowledge rises, self-report multicultural awareness falls, while the belief structural factors attribute to poverty rise. These results are somewhat consistent with the results found in Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) in which participants self-reported higher multicultural competency were more likely to attribute poverty to structural causes.

## **Personal Experiences with Lower-Income Living and the PAS**

The relationship between school counselors' personal experiences with low-income living and PAS results was compared to the PAS results of school counselors who did not identify as having personal experiences with living in a lower income household. While very little research has examined low-income experiences of school counselors, or any helping professional for that matter, Wong (2017) stated that it is very difficult to understand poverty unless one has lived through it. While the findings in this dissertation did not show strong impacts between the two groups (those with personal experience and those without), one suggestion may be that school counseling programs are training school counselors to be aware and sensitive to marginalized groups. Abreu and Atkinson (2001) suggested that the multicultural training in counseling programs may increase counselor awareness to external problems faced by clients.

Almost 90% of school counselors who participated in this research were white women and almost 80% of them reported having no experience living in low-income homes (as defined by this dissertation study). While we know the population of low-income students continues to grow (Bray & Schommer-Aikins, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016) and poverty disproportionately affects students of color (Children's Defense Fund, 2015) further examination of this relationship should be addressed. With that said, the results from this dissertation study show that the majority of school counselors attribute poverty to structural factors which supports findings by Bennet and associates (2016) and Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005). Additionally, these findings contradict the data that Americans attribute poverty to individual factors (Sennett &

Cobb, 1972; Smith and Stone, 1989), especially that of White Americans (Hunt, 2000, 2004).

### **CACREP Accreditation and the PAS**

The beliefs about poverty attributions between graduates and non-graduates of CACREP accredited programs were examined. A small but meaningful and possibly significant effect was identified between the two groups (CACREP versus non-CACREP). Both groups of counselors identified structural factors as the main cause of poverty. CACREP accreditation sets expectations that social and diversity exploration are visible in CACREP accredited programs. More specifically, CACREP supports multicultural counseling competencies, exploration of power and privilege for both clients and counselors, and strategies for both identifying and elimination barriers (Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs, 2016). These are important requirements for CACREP programs and may make the difference between the two groups. The discussion of multicultural topics, such as income level, in all programs is essential for the development of school counselors. The introduction of counseling and social justice advocacy competencies, as well as the development of measures like the ones used in this dissertation, provide developmental and evaluative guidelines to enhance counselor's education and practice. The CACREP accredited group accounts for 10 percent of the variance accounted for in this model, and while the findings are small they are still interesting and merit further examination.

### **Social Desirability**

While social desirability was present in some of the answers selected by participating counselors, the effect was small and not meaningful in the overall outcome.

While this was the case for the current dissertation, prior research looking at multicultural counseling competency scales and social desirability found differing results. Constatine and Ladany (2000), found that higher Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scores were significantly related to higher self-report ratings on the MAKSS knowledge subscale and the MCI relationship subscale. These authors further assessed that multicultural counseling competence measures may be influenced by the need for respondents to answer in socially desirable manners (2000). In Toporek and Pope-Davis' (2005) study exploring the relationship between multisubcultural training, racial attitudes, and attribution of poverty suggested participants who were less concerned with social desirability (and less sensitive cognitive racial attitudes) were more likely to subscribe to individual attributions of poverty. Lastly, Bray and Balkin (2013) indicated that lower multicultural social desirability related with low multicultural counseling competency, unawareness of privilege and racism, and individual attributions of poverty. Bray and Balkin also suggested that higher multicultural social desirability related to counselors who scored lower in color-blind racism, multicultural counseling competency, and believed poverty is caused by societal factors.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this dissertation study included (a) self-report measures, (b) homogeneity of the participants, (c) the amount of time required to complete the survey, and (d) the correlational nature of the analysis used. Additionally, (e) the manner in which the researcher requested information about personal experiences with low-income living may not have truly captured these experiences. Participants with the median age of 43 were asked to think back many years to P-12 school years and the first few years of

their undergraduate degree program. To further build upon this limitation, requirements to qualify for free or reduced lunch or Pell Grant are set by income levels and federal aid equations as decided by the federal government. Depending on the year, some participants may have qualified, while they may not have other years. This could have led participants to inaccurately report the qualifications for being considered “low-income”. The last limitation (f) is the removal of “I do not remember” or “I do not know” from the analysis of personal experience of living in low-income homes and CACREP accreditation. While removal of these categories was necessary to run the analysis, the removal did not allow for an examination of effects for that particular group of counselors.

### **Implications to Counseling**

There is a gap in the literature reviewing school counseling and low-income students. The findings from this dissertation support that future research should be conducted not only on the beliefs about poverty from school counselors, but also a consideration to review current work being done in schools with high populations of lower-income students. A strong case has been made that school counselors should be working from an advocacy perspective (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bemak & Chung, 2005) but additionally from a framework that focuses on working with students living in poverty. With the CARE model, Foss and associates (2011) laid the foundation for a possible framework that can be used within schools. Students and school communities could benefit from an intentional and structured approach of working with low-income students and families. This model should be clear so that poverty does not mean students should be treated from a deficit model, but from an understanding that

these students potentially experience factors inside and outside of school much differently than middle-class peers (Milner IV, 2013). Future research should address the dearth of frameworks of poverty within schools. And should emphasize the intersections of race and culture with poverty within schools. This framework should address the role of the school counselor.

Reviewing the intersection of beliefs about poverty attribution, color-blind racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness in a relational manner is insightful but does not allow robust discussion about causes or true feelings and experiences. More causal analysis would be beneficial to both practicing counselors and counselor education programs. Additionally, working closely with school counselors in the field to examine concerns, issues, and realities of working with low-income students would build upon the gap in poverty literature. Attention and future research should focus in on the demographics of school counselors (predominantly White women) and the demographics of the students in our schools. Insight into the relationship/counselor alliance, bias, barriers, and student perspectives should be considered.

Another recommendation is to consider similar sample sizes for comparison data between White female school counselors and non-White female school counselors. The sample used in this dissertation study did not allow for comparison data with similar sample sizes as over 90% of the participants were White female counselors ( $N = 191$ ). White privilege and how that affects the counselor-student dynamic in relation to work with non-white low-income students. Additionally, looking outside school counselor associations may be another unique manner to compare data between members and non-

members. Not all practicing counselors elect to maintain memberships to ASCA or their state association, which could allow for attractive comparison data.

Future research should allow for qualitative exploration about school counselors' work with low-income students. Exploring day-to-day experiences of counselors working with low-income students would help fill gaps in the literature and increase knowledge on this topic. To further build upon this research investigations about counselor self-reflection, self-awareness, and life-long learning should be reviewed. While counseling programs, both CACREP and non-CACREP, seem to adequately teach concepts revolving around multiculturalism, insight to what that looks like outside of programs is intriguing (i.e., not only knowledge but actual counselor behavior). Additionally, school counselors and counselor education programs can benefit from future research revolving around whether school counselors feel prepared to work with this ever-growing demographic of students and families. This analysis would allow for data collection to promote and support changes within school counseling programs.

The findings shared from this dissertation could inform practitioners to consider the connections between poverty attribution, color-blind racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness (and skills). The relations between these constructs identify conditions in which school counselors can assess their own beliefs and identify what that means in relation to working with low-income students. Practitioners' awareness of these constructs is an important starting place, as action cannot happen without awareness. Understanding the importance of counselors' self-awareness once they leave graduate programs is essential. Life-long learning and self-reflection are important tools to challenging bias and developing understanding of diverse students.

The majority of school counselors in this dissertation study selected structural variables as attributing most to poverty. These counselors viewed poverty as a result of historical and sociopolitical experiences. They were more inclined to avoid ideas that people who are poor hold anti-work, lacking motivation, loose morals, and laziness towards employment. These professionals favored the ideas that people would work and provide for their families if they were given a fair chance, were not discriminated against, and were given opportunities. Because school counselors are challenged to be leaders within the school system, the researcher challenges these counselors to not only continue doing this work but to take it upon themselves to challenge people within the educational system and their school when statements are made about low-income students or students of color, their families, and their community. Additionally, this sample of counselors' awareness of blatant racial issues in our society was evidenced in their support of thoughts like racism is a major problem in the U.S., racial minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S., and it is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities (Neville et al., 2000).

Practitioners are encouraged to be familiar with research like this dissertation and the impact this research can make to their comprehensive school plan. Counselors are supposed to be a part of the change, in part by interrupting inaccurate beliefs about people, specifically students and their families. Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) suggested that because of school counselors' unique training they are ideal professionals to help make change within schools. Along with the ASCA National Model (2012) and the National Center for Transforming School Counselor (2003), Amatea and West-

Olatunji suggest counselors emerge as leaders within the school system. These leadership roles may be to (a) become the cultural bridge between teachers and students and being prepared to block blaming, (b) partner with teachers to help build lessons and activities that are relevant to students, and (c) team with teachers to help create a more welcoming, family-friendly, school climate (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007).

Because many teachers and other educators are not prepared to work with students from marginalized populations (Osher et al., 2015), counselors should be prepared to help support and educate these professionals. Supporting these individuals through consultation, emotional support, and hard discussions may useful. Counselors can also hold professional development activities for the entire staff. Suggesting that building relationships (much like in counseling) may help eliminate a lot of issues within classrooms. Being creative with professional development topics and bringing in community members to help educate peers and work to establish a school culture filled with more empathy, understanding, knowledge, and awareness should be goals of all counselors. If teachers are more understanding of the population they teach, possibly more change could happen within the classroom.

Lastly, school counselors should be prepared to bridge all stakeholders. This includes students, parents, community members, teachers, administration, and other schools. To best serve all, counselors should stay involved and devote time for self-assessment. As an individual, self-reflection is a must. School counselors should be aware of what is happening in the community in order to create supports and explanations to all stakeholders. One way to complete this task is to get involved with outside agencies

within the community. Advocating this importance to administration could be ground breaking, as schools should not and do not work in vacuums outside of the larger society.

Through the examination of this dissertation study it appears counseling programs are doing a satisfactory job educating future counselors and recruiting individuals with prior knowledge or experiences that equate to understanding diverse populations. However, one should consider that status quo is never good enough. Traditionally, preparation and training for school counselors as advocates has been inadequate (Bemack & Chung, 2005). Bemack and Chung state that in typical school counseling programs, social change, social reform, and school reform are not typically discussed at all. While CACREP is a leader to set standards for counseling programs, this research study suggests other differently accredited programs have factors built in for effectively training the majority of future counselors. The small effect CACREP programs has on graduates from these programs is something to be highlighted and definitely researched in the future. More meaningful insight to CACREP versus non-CACREP programs is important.

Accreditation or other standards proposed by counseling programs (this includes missions) can only ensure so much. Counseling programs must ensure they hire qualified, knowledgeable, and passionate instructors who feel strongly about equity. The infusion of multicultural training to all coursework is more holistic and eliminates the view of multiculturalism as a topic of counseling (Abreau & Atkinson, 2001) versus counseling being seen as a multicultural experience leading to multicultural relationships (Sue et al., 1992).

Counseling programs need to continue educating future school counselors to understand that variables such as class, race, ethnicity, culture, sex, gender, religion, and ability are not topics that act alone, but intersect within individuals and the systems where they work and live. Power and privilege and what that means to the counseling relationship should continue to be addressed. Poverty and class discussions should be added to curriculum, as this intersects with other topics of inclusion/exclusion. Counselors should not graduate from counseling programs having never had deep discussions about class and how sociopolitical and historical events play roles in these populations living status. Ratts and associates' (2015; 2016) multicultural and social justice counseling competencies should take center stage in counseling curriculum. Just as counseling professionals are mainly White (American School Counselor Association, 2018), all too often, so are the majority of counselor educators. Counseling programs should continue to recruit and support faculty from traditionally marginalized populations (CACREP, 2016), as a more diverse group of leaders will only continue to support the goal of fostering an education rich in exploration of different experiences, views, and understandings of the world (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). Additionally, counseling programs should work in an interdisciplinary approach (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004) in order to highlight essential findings in other academic areas pertaining to topics of poverty, racism, and multiculturalism.

The results in this dissertation study have demonstrated the relation between racial attitudes, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness and poverty attribution. The findings suggest that knowledge and awareness are related to the way people are viewed from both a racial and class perspective. While many of the counselors

in the study viewed poverty as a systemic issue and acknowledged that racism is still an issue of concern, there were individual counselors with very different views. While these counselors may not have been a majority, and are considered a minority in this study, they still work with students and families on a daily basis. These counselors scored very low in multicultural awareness and knowledge, high in color-blind racial attitudes, and looked at poverty from an individualistic perspective. While one can celebrate that most of the counselors representative in this study surveyed in a positive manner, the sheer existence of the others is troubling.

While not all *malevolent helper* school counselors consciously act upon these beliefs, subconsciously they may. School counselors should be held to a high standard and counselors who exhibit *awareness of injustice, sociopolitical awareness, and understanding privilege to advocate* should take it upon themselves to educate and advocate for students from traditionally marginalized populations (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Additionally, these counselors should understand that school counselors are only judged by our weakest link. This means when counselors in schools or districts show they are culturally ignorant, counseling leaders should do something (i.e., educate or consult). This may mean having tough discussions, serving as an educator, or letting administration know. This is a form of advocacy for the profession and for students and supported through ACA and ASCA (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2017; Ratts et al., 2015, 2016).

Advocacy for low-income students and students of color within our schools and the larger community is not only important, it should be viewed as a requirement for school counselors (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bemack & Chung, 2005, 2009; Ratts

et al., 2015, 2016). Advocacy in this manner can be understood through policy changes seen on the school, local, state, and federal levels. School counselors are called to action to assess injustices in their school, examine who these injustices most affect, explore the community in a wider sense, conduct research on historical and sociopolitical issues that may be at play, and voice those findings through data collected (Bemack & Chung, 2008). Looking for barriers on individual and group levels is a great place to start (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bemack & Chung, 2005, 2009). Being the nice counselor or someone who stands on the sideline, trying to help one child at a time, is no longer an option for school counselors (Bemack & Chung, 2009). Finding ways to advocate for our students in the manner described above should be the norm for school counselors. Being comfortable challenging others and challenging ourselves is something we must experience. Possibly this needs to start in graduate school training programs. School counselors should find their reason and move away from simply addressing individual student needs to addressing larger systemic issues (Bemack & Chung, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

Practicing school counselors from across regions of the United States participated in this dissertation study. In an effort to explore the relationship between school counselors' beliefs about poverty attribution, racial color-blind attitudes, and multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, this dissertation study examined results from the PAS, CoBRAS, and MCKAS. The findings of the dissertation suggest relationships between the three constructs, ultimately identifying that as knowledge and awareness increase, school counselors are likely to attribute poverty to societal/structural influences and report lower levels of color-blind racial attitudes. As knowledge and

awareness fall, counselors hold higher levels of color-blind racial attitudes and suggest poverty is caused by more individual and cultural factors. One unique finding suggests that as counselor multicultural counseling knowledge rises but awareness drops, poverty can be attributed to structural factors.

Aside from families, schools may be one of the first institutional systems students living in poverty come into contact with. This is where students may first be treated unequally and unfairly, or treated differently because of their socioeconomic status, free or reduced lunch status, ability to participate in school activities, and/or parent's ability to be involved. Society treats people in poverty differently, maybe not solely due to their income status, but maybe due to the fact that because they are poor, they may have different norms, family make-ups, priorities, or goals in life (i.e., family not attending school events). School counselors have the education, personal insight, and skills to make a difference with this population of students and their families. The awareness and understanding of the constructs discussed in this dissertation are a stepping stone to ensure school counselors continue to work on self-awareness and understand how their beliefs may affect the student-counselor-family relationships, which could ultimately affect students' success in schools.

As school demographics continue to become more diverse and, sadly, filled with higher numbers of students living in poverty, school counselors and counselor educators must begin to identify and understand the relationships between complex constructs such as, beliefs about poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, multicultural counseling competencies, and personal experience with poverty. Additionally, school counselors should be aware of how these beliefs may affect counseling outcomes with poor students.

Students living in poverty are at risk for many different reasons; unfortunately, schools are not always equipped to work with them. As the number of students living in poverty continues to grow, there is no better time than now to dive into research to help build upon poverty literature in hopes to make actual changes within our schools, communities, and most importantly our students. Suggestions for additional research have been provided.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Appendix A

### Online Preamble Unsigned Consent Form

#### SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY: RESEARCH TO SUPPORT BEING A MEMBER OF CHANGE

April 9, 2018

Dear Professional School Counselor:

You are being invited to participate in a research study by answering questions in the attached survey in order to better understand and identify relationships between school counselors' racial attitudes, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and perceptions of poverty. This study is conducted by Dr. Ahmad Washington, the principal investigator, and Shaun Sowell, doctoral candidate and co-investigator from the University of Louisville. There are no known risks for your participation in this research study. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The information you provide will allow the researchers to replicate and improve upon previous poverty research. Your completed survey will be stored at the University of Louisville, on a secure and password protected computer. The survey will take approximately 35 minutes to complete. It is expected that approximately 200 school counselors will participate in the study.

Individuals from the Department of Counseling and Human Development, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPPO), and other regulatory agencies may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By answering survey questions you agree to take part in this research study. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact: Shaun Sowell at 907-347-2145.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You can discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the research staff, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the

University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this research study.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shaun Sowell".

Shaun Sowell

## APPENDIX B

## Appendix B

### Email Recruitment Letter

Dear School Counselor!

My name is Shaun Sowell, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at the University of Louisville (Louisville, Kentucky). I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study if you are a current school counselor who has worked as a school counselor professional for more than 1 year.

My research is looking to build upon prior research and knowledge to better understand and identify relationships between school counselors' racial attitudes, multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness, and perceptions of poverty.

As a participant, you will be asked to answer questions about poverty, color-blind racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling competence. A short demographic questionnaire is also included. Your total time commitment will be approximately 20 minutes. You are eligible to participate if you are (a) currently a school counselor, (b) served as a school counselor for at least one or more years, and (c) be 18 years or older.

If you would like to participate in this research study please visit the following link to read the unsigned informed consent (preamble) and take the survey:

[https://louisvilleeducation.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3PGTVexFEts5zv](https://louisvilleeducation.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PGTVexFEts5zv)

Please contact Shaun Sowell at 907-347-2145 or [shaun.sowell@louisville.edu](mailto:shaun.sowell@louisville.edu) if you have any questions. You may also contact my dissertation co-chair, Dr. Ahmad Washington at [ahmad.washington@louisville.edu](mailto:ahmad.washington@louisville.edu).

Thank you for your consideration,

Shaun Sowell

***Shaun Sowell, M.Ed.***  
Doctoral Candidate  
Counselor Education and Supervision  
College of Education  
University of Louisville  
[shaun.sowell@louisville.edu](mailto:shaun.sowell@louisville.edu)  
907.347.2145

## APPENDIX C

# Appendix C

## IRB Approval



Human Subjects Protection Program Office  
 MedCenter One – Suite 200  
 501 E. Broadway  
 Louisville, KY 40202-1798  
 Office: 502.852.5188 Fax: 502.852.2164

**DATE:** April 16, 2018  
**TO:** Ahmad R Washington, PhD  
**FROM:** The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board  
**IRB NUMBER:** 18.0151  
**STUDY TITLE:** School Counselors' Perceptions of Poverty: Research to Support Being a Member of Change  
**REFERENCE #:** 655646  
**IRB STAFF CONTACT:** Jackie Powell, CIP  
 852-4101

This study was reviewed on 04/16/2018 by the Vice Chair of the Institutional Review Board and approved through the Expedited Review Procedure, according to 45 CFR 46.110(b), since this study falls under Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

This study was also approved through 45 CFR 46.116 (C), which means that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed informed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either:

- That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or
- That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

The following items have been approved:

Submission Components			
Form Name	Version	Outcome	
Submit for Initial Review	Version 1.0	Approved as Submitted	
Review Response Submission Form	Version 1.0	Approved as Submitted	
IRB Study Application	Version 1.1	Approved as Submitted	
Study Document			
Title	Version #	Version Date	Outcome
Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale	Version 1.0	04/09/2018	Approved
Demographic Questionnaire	Version 1.0	02/14/2018	Approved
Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale	Version 1.0	02/14/2018	Approved
Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale	Version 1.0	02/14/2018	Approved
Poverty Attribution Scale	Version 1.0	02/14/2018	Approved
Dissertation Proposal	Version 1.0	02/14/2018	Approved
Email Recruitment Letter	Version 1.6	03/10/2018	Approved

## APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please complete the following questionnaire to the best of your ability.

**WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?:**

FEMALE

MALE

NON-BINARY/THIRD GENDER

PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE:

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PREFER NOT TO SAY

**AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RACE (you may select multiple boxes for multiple races):**

AMERICAN INDIAN or ALASKA NATIVE

ASIAN

BLACK or AFRICAN AMERICAN

NATIVE HAWAIIAN or PACIFIC ISLANDER

WHITE

HISPANIC or LATINX

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**REGION YOU LIVE:**

WEST

MIDWEST

SOUTH

NORTHEAST

**HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN A SCHOOL COUNSELOR?:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**FOR THE MAJORITY OF YOUR CAREER WHICH KIND OF SCHOOL HAVE YOU SPENT THE MOST TIME IN?:**

PUBLIC SCHOOL

PRIVATE SCHOOL

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN AT YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL?:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**IS YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL:**

PUBLIC SCHOOL

PRIVATE SCHOOL

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT LEVEL OF STUDENTS DO YOU CURRENTLY COUNSEL? (please select as many as needed):**

K-6

K-8

K-12

7-8

9-12

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**IS YOUR SCHOOL A TITLE-I INSTITUTION?**

YES

NO

I DON'T KNOW

**WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR STUDENTS RECIVE FREE & REDUCED LUNCH?:**

\_\_\_\_\_ %

I DON'T KNOW

**DID YOU GRADUATE FROM A CACREP ACCREDITED GRADUATE COUNSELING PROGRAM? IF YOU ARE UNSURE, PLEASE LIST YOUR UNIVERSITY NAME AND THE YEAR YOU GRADUATED:**

YES

NO

INSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR OF GRADUATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**DID YOU RECEIVE FREE & REDUCED LUNCH AS A CHILD/STUDENT?**

YES

NO

I DON'T REMEMBER

**DID YOU RECEIVE PELL GRANT AS AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT?**

YES

NO

I DID NOT COMPLETE A FAFSA

I DON'T REMEMBER

## CURRICULUM VITA

**Shaun M. Sowell**

University of Louisville  
College of Education & Human Development  
Department of Counseling & Human Development  
shaun.sowell@louisville.edu

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### **Education**

**Ph.D. Candidate**, University of Louisville, May 2019  
Counselor Education and Supervision, Department of Counseling & Human Development

**Master of Education**, University of Alaska Fairbanks, May 2009  
Counselor Education, School Counseling Concentration

**Bachelor of Arts**, University of Alaska Fairbanks, August 2005  
Justice Administration, Psychology Minor

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### **Credentials**

State of Kentucky CA-1 Certification, School Counseling K-12, January 2016 – Present  
State of Alaska Type C Certification, Guidance and Counseling K-12, August 2009 – Present

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### **Professional Experience**

**Assistant Professor**, August 2018 – Present  
Department of Psychology, Western Washington University

**Academic Counselor, Sr.**, October 2012 – Present  
School of Nursing; University of Louisville

**Secondary School Counselor**, August 2009 – July 2012  
Eielson Jr/Sr High School, Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska; Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

**Career and Technical Counselor**, May 2009 – August 2009  
Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, Alaska; Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

**High School Counseling Intern**, July 2008 – May 2009

Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, Alaska; Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

**Elementary School Counseling Intern**, January 2008 – May 2008

Nordale Elementary School, Fairbanks, Alaska; Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

**Graduate Teaching/Research Assistant**, August 2007 – January 2009

School of Education; University of Alaska Fairbanks

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## Teaching Experience

**Assistant Professor, August 2018 – Present**

Western Washington University, Psychology Department

Courses: Individual Counseling Techniques, Practicum, Internship, Career Counseling

Department Chair: Jim Graham, Ph.D.

**Practitioner Instructor, Fall 2016 – Present**

Wake Forest University, Department of Counseling

Course: Practicum

Supervisor: Tammy Cashwell, Ph.D.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, Spring 2017**

University of Louisville, Department of Counseling & Human Development

Course: Theories and Techniques of School Counseling

Supervisor: Ahmad Washington, Ph.D.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, Fall 2015**

University of Louisville, Department of Counseling & Human Development

Course: School Counseling Practicum and Internship

Supervisor: Ahmad Washington, Ph.D.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, Summer 2015**

University of Louisville, Department of Counseling & Human Development

Course: Group Process and Practice

Supervisor: Eileen Estes, Ph.D. and Richard Balkin, Ph.D.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant, Spring 2014**

University of Louisville, Department of Counseling & Human Development

Course: Theories and Techniques of Counseling and Psychotherapy

Supervisor: Nancy Cunningham, Ph.D.

**Instructor, Fall 2012 – Present**

University of Louisville, School of Nursing

Course: Nursing 101 (freshmen orientation course)

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## Supervision Experience

**Faculty Student Supervisor (Practicum and Internship Instructor)**, Winter – Present

Western Washington University, Department of Psychology; Dept. Chair: Jim Graham, Ph.D.

**Doctoral Student Supervisor (Practicum Instructor)**, Fall 2016 – Present  
Wake Forest University, Department of Counseling; Supervisors: Tammy Cashwell, Ph.D.

**Doctoral Student Supervisor**, Fall 2013 – Fall 2015  
University of Louisville, Department of Counseling & Human Development  
Supervisors: Richard Balkin, Ph.D., 2014-2015 and Nancy Cunningham, Ph.D., 2013-2014

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## **Publications**

Balkin, R. S., Perepiczka, M., **Sowell, S. M.**, Cumi, K., & Gnilka, P. (2015). The Forgiveness-Reconciliation Model: An empirically supported process for humanistic counseling. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*.

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## **Presentations**

**Sowell, S. M.** (2019, March). Working with low-income students: How perceptions of poverty, racial attitudes, and multicultural counseling knowledge and awareness relate. Presented at the national Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference, Columbus, OH.

**Sowell, S. M.**, Hunter, Q., Richey, K., & Baxter, C. (2019, March). I know I'm making impact, but how do I measure that? Easily evaluating school counselor success using SCRD. Presented at the national Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference, Columbus, OH.

Gruman, D., & **Sowell, S. M.** (2019, March). Training school counselor supervisors. Presented at the annual conference of the Washington School Counselor Association, Seattle, WA.

**Sowell, S. M.**, Gosnell, K., & Hunter, Q. (2017, February). A road map: The roles and responsibility of school counselors in the assessment and counseling of suicidal adolescents. Presented at the annual conference of the Kentucky School Counselor Association, Lexington, KY.

**Sowell, S. M.**, Gosnell, K., & Hunter, Q. (2017, February). School counseling interns don't come with a manual? Tips and tools to enhance your comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program. Presented at the annual conference of the Kentucky School Counselor Association, Lexington, KY.

Balkin, R.S., **Sowell, S. M.**, Gosnell, K., & Hunter, Q. (2016, November). Assessment and counseling of adolescent suicidality. Presented at the annual conference of the Kentucky Counseling Association, Louisville, KY.

Balkin, R.S., **Sowell, S. M.**, & Juhnke, G.A. (2016, September). Exploring life balance among entrepreneurs. Presented at the annual conference of the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

**Sowell, S. M.**, Gosnell, K., & Balkin, R. S. (2015, September). The power of SCRD and interventions that work. Presented at the annual conference of the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, Memphis, TN.

Perepiczka, M., Balkin, R. S., **Sowell, S. M.**, & Cumi, K. (2015, June). Life balance of Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral students. Presented at the annual conference of the Association for Humanistic Counseling, Cleveland, OH.

Balkin, R. S., Perepiczka, M., **Sowell, S. M.**, & Cumi, K. (2015, March). Empirically supported model and measure of the process of clients' work through forgiveness and conflict. Poster presented at the national conference of the American Counseling Association, Orlando, FL.

**Sowell, S. M.**, Cumi, K., Rogers, T. J., Rock, E., Balkin, R. S., & Harris, C. (2015, March). Using single case research design for tracking school counseling outcomes. Presented at the national Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference, Erlanger, KY.

Balkin, R. S., Perepiczka, M., **Sowell, S. M.**, Cumi, K., & Gnilka, P. (2014, September). Empirically supported model and measure of the process of clients' work through forgiveness and conflict. Presented at the annual conference of the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, Moline, IL.

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### **Professional Affiliations**

American Counseling Association  
Association for Counselor Education and Supervision  
Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling  
American School Counselor Association  
Association for Humanistic Counseling  
Kentucky Counseling Association  
Kentucky Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling  
National Academic Advising Association

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### **Professional Service**

Member, University of Louisville Undergraduate Council, 2016-present  
President, Kentucky Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, 2016-present  
Emerging Leader, Kentucky Counseling Association Mentoring Leadership Academy, 2015-2016  
President-Elect, Kentucky Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling, 2015-2016

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### **Conference Proposal Reviewer**

2017 AHRD International Research Conference (In the America Site)  
Reviewed: Qualitative Research Methodology Track  
Contact: Meera Alagaraja, Ph.D.