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School Counseling in an Oppressed Society: Examining the Relationships Between Social Justice Advocacy Competence, Empowerment, and Social Justice Self-Efficacy

Michelle Tanner

SCHOOL COUNSELING IN AN OPPRESSED SOCIETY: EXAMINING THE

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY COMPETENCE,

EMPOWERMENT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE SELF-EFFICACY

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Michelle E. Tanner

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Presented by:

Michelle E. Tanner, M.S.Ed., California University of Pennsylvania, 2012
B.S., California University of Pennsylvania, 2007

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BETWEEN SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY COMPETENCE, EMPOWERMENT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
SELF-EFFICACY

Approved by:

_____, Chair
Jered Kolbert, Ph.D., LPC, NCC
Professor of Counselor Education and Director of Program Operations
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Debra Hyatt-Burkhart, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS
Associate Professor of Counselor Education and Interim Department Chair
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Matthew Joseph, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Counselor Education
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education
Duquesne University

_____, Member
Grafton Eliason, Ph.D.
Professor of Counselor Education
California University of Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY COMPETENCE,

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May 2021

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Jered Kolbert

The current nature of oppression that exists in the United States can be seen in the

structure and process of American schools, impacting students' social/emotional, academic, and

career development. The defined role of school counselors along with their educational

background; strategic position within schools to make meaningful change; access to critical

student, teacher, family, and community data; and their professional dispositions and experience

make them the most logical choice to help remove systemic barriers and to create equitable

opportunities for the marginalized students. School counselors must work as social justice

advocates to lead these diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; however, there is a gap between

what is expected and actual practice. Research has identified social justice advocacy competence,

structural empowerment, psychological empowerment, and social justice self-efficacy as

potential predictors of social justice advocacy practice. Yet, empirical research has not examined

how these constructs work together. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore whether relationships existed and the nature of the relationships among self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence, social justice self-efficacy, structural empowerment, and psychological empowerment of practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with at least one year of experience. Data were collected via online self-report surveys from 209 practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed school counselors' social justice advocacy competence had a statistically significant positive relationship with their social justice self-efficacy. Additionally, structural empowerment had moderating effects on the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy. Finally, psychological empowerment was not a moderator in the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy. Also discussed are the results compared to related research and theory, implications of results applied to school counselor practice and training, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

DEDICATION

Throughout my dissertation journey, I faced much adversity. If it were not for God, my family, and my dear friends, I would never have finished. First and foremost, I give thanks to God because without Him, none of this would be possible.

Next, I dedicate this work to my entire family. A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving and supportive parents, Tim and Terrie Tanner, who have fervently prayed for and encouraged me throughout this entire rigorous process. You have been my rock. My brothers Tim and Matthew have never left my side and are very special. Also, my grandparents who have been full of pride, prayers, and encouragement from the start and who mean the world to me. A deeply cherished dedication goes to two family members I have lost during this process. First, to my Pap-Pap who wanted to be here to see me graduate but was sadly taken before that could happen. I know you are up in heaven filled with pride and smiling down on me, Pap. Second, to my beautiful, sweet, furry, baby boy, Buddy, who laid at my feet during my long days of researching and writing, who cuddled with me when I needed some extra special support, and who licked my tears away in my moments of frustration. The final couple months were difficult without you, but your "mamma" finally did it!

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me in various ways. A special thanks goes to my best friends Keli DeCarlo, Stephanie Garland, and Amanda D'Andrea for being there for me and putting up with my "crazy" during the entire doctorate program. You have been some of the best cheerleaders, and I promise to make up for lost time. Though I cannot thank all of my friends and family by name, please know that you mean so much to me, and I appreciate your love and support.

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Next, to my fellow Pis—my classmates turned family members—words will never be able to express my gratitude and love I have for each of you. You have been there for me in the happiest and saddest of moments. Even though it has taken me longer to reach the finish line, you encouraged and supported me till the very end. I finally made it!

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues and students. Special thanks goes to my colleagues for their patience, support, and encouragement these past couple of years. To close

with a heart-felt thank you to my former and current students seems the most fitting because they were and have been my motivation to pursue my doctorate, to choose my research topic, and to keep pushing through. Without their words of encouragement and undeserved, unwavering understanding, I am not sure where I would be today.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Plato once said, "The part can never be well unless the whole is well" (Jade Integrated Health, 2020, para. 3), and if looking through the lens of a systems approach, the reverse can be true as well. General systems theory, originally developed by Bertalanffy (1969), is a way to view the world holistically. According to Bertalanffy, changes that occur in one part or subsystem are likely to influence other parts. Because the parts are interrelated, eventually the system as a whole is influenced by the changes. To visualize these changes, one can consider them *clogs* in the system. When anything is clogged, it prevents the entire system from working at full capacity, which could weaken the entire system.

Applying systems theory to schools, Haupt (2010) addressed schools as the microcosm of society stating that what is happening in the world impacts schools. To apply this lens means to acknowledge that the current nature of oppression that exists in the United States can be seen in the structure and process of American schools (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Solomon et al., 2019). Schools are supposed to be a place where students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location, go to acquire an education—an education that helps them reach their full potential and enter society as productive citizens (Sargrad et al., 2019). However, the nation's current education system has led to enormous gaps in the resources provided to students based on geography, income, and race (Sargrad et al., 2019). This perpetration of oppression from persons of marginalized communities within schools can impact all parts of the social system, in turn, the reverberating effects being catastrophic to all subsystems and dynamic processes within, like the students, staff, teachers, stakeholders, policies, and so forth. Given that negative societal forces such as prejudice and oppression are also evident within schools, social justice advocacy (SJA) is needed—challenging this vicious

cycle of oppression that is wreaking havoc on American schools and, more traumatically, the students they serve.

Overview

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), by 2044 racial minorities classified by any race other than non-Hispanic, single-race Whites, will become the majority of the national population. Diversity is reflected not only through race/ethnicity, but it is also evident in other aspects of culture such as socioeconomic status (SES), religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, and ability status as well (C. C. Lee, 2008). With the population of the United States becoming more diverse, there has been an increase in events demonstrating cultural oppression, marginalization, racism, and discrimination. Heart-wrenching instances involving police brutality of Black men, the shootings of unarmed Black men, sexual violence among diverse women, rejection of immigrants, Asian Americans being brutalized and blamed for a national pandemic, among others have catapulted many individuals and organizations to develop social movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #TimesUp, #DACA, #NoBanNoWall, and #MuslimBanFair, to name a few. Citizens of America are joining together in hopes of transforming unjust institutions as part of working for the common good, which is respect for and promotion of the fundamental rights of every human being. In addition to advocacy efforts, counselors have been integral in helping marginalized populations.

Historically, the counseling literature has demonstrated the importance of multicultural counseling competence. In response to the Civil Rights Movement, it became evident that counselors needed to be prepared to meet the challenges of a multicultural and diverse American society (Cartwright et al., 2008; Ponterotto et al., 2010; Ratts & Wayman, 2015; Sue et al., 1982; Sue & Sue, 2016). Deficits in ethical and moral professional behavior of counselors were

exposed (Cartwright et al., 2008; Korman, 1974; Pedersen & Marsella, 1982). In response, the

Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), a division of the American

Counseling Association (ACA), called for the formation of multicultural counseling

competencies (MCC). Developed by Sue et al. (1992) and endorsed by ACA in 2003, the MCC

provided a framework for counselors to follow for ethical and effective counseling interventions

for culturally diverse clients (Arredondo et al., 1996; Pedersen, 1991; Sue et al., 1992). Pedersen

(1991) called multicultural counseling the "fourth force" (p. 6) in the field of counseling and

deemed multicultural competence a core standard in the profession.

Helping professions have been traditionally involved in advocacy efforts aimed at

combating discrimination and removing barriers to success. *Social justice counseling*

acknowledges issues of unearned power, privilege, and oppression and how these link with

psychological stress and disorders (Ratts et al., 2004). The SJA movement began a shift in

perspective from one that disregarded the sociopolitical context to one that recognized the

importance of cultural variables in the counseling relationship as well as the importance of using

advocacy as a mechanism to address systemic barriers that hinder clients' abilities to achieve

optimal psychological health and well-being (Constantine et al., 2007; Ponterotto et al., 2010;

Ratts, 2011; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Consequently, the SJA movement was coined the fifth

force in counseling to explain human behavior complementary to psychodynamic, cognitive

behavioral, existential-humanistic, and multicultural counseling forces (Crethar & Ratts, 2008;

Ratts, 2009; Ratts et al., 2004; Ratts & Wayman, 2015).

The counseling literature shows an overlap between multicultural counseling competence

and social justice with the need for the two perspectives to combine (Ratts, 2009; Trusty &

Brown, 2005; Vera & Speight, 2003). In the MCC, oppression is not defined as a core problem

that affects the well-being of individuals (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Ratts, 2009; Vera & Speight, 2003). However, in the United States, systems of oppression, like systemic racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism, are woven into the very foundation of American culture, society, and laws, leading to the existence of oppressed communities (Hanna et al., 2000; Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2003). Oppressed communities deal with violence, lack of political representation, drug abuse, limited-to-no access to resources, denial of some legal rights, and high unemployment rates (Potts, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2003) resulting in increased negative psychological effects (Carr, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995). Consequently, both the multicultural and social justice counseling perspectives have recently been joined to form what is known as the multicultural and social justice counseling movement (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). As a result, in 2015, Carlos Hipolito-Delgado, then president of the Association for Multicultural Counseling Competencies, requested revisions to the original MCC (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018), which led to the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016). This set of competencies recognizes the multiple identities that each counselor and client possesses, provides a framework for working within these complex relationships, and underscores the intersection of identities and the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression that influence the counseling relationship (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

With the recent countless occurrences of discrimination, and thus advocacy efforts, flooding the United States, the macrocosm, it is inevitable that the dispersion will reach the microcosm of society—schools. Discrimination is increasing, and there are many variables that are contributing. Some students are subject to exclusion, discrimination, oppression, and marginalization, and the impact of oppression on human development has been linked to

academic, career, and social problems (Jacobs, 1994; House & Martin, 1998). If discrimination in schools follows the trends of the United States, then there is a call for SJA, and school counselors are in the perfect position to answer this call (Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015). When considering the combination of their educational background; strategic position within schools to make meaningful change; access to critical student, teacher, family, and community data; and their professional dispositions and experiences, school counselors are the most logical choice (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; House & Hayes, 2002; A. A. Singh, Urbano et al., 2010b; C. B. Stone & Dahir, 2006).

Authors in the field have made a strong argument, conceptually and through research about the inclusion of SJA in the skill set of school counselors (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Crethar, 2010; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Rothstein, 2004; Trusty & Brown, 2005). School counselors are being charged to make advocacy a core part of their role and professional identity, meeting the holistic needs of all students (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019a, 2019b; Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dixon et al., 2010; Education Trust, 2009; Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; House & Martin, 1998; Jacobs, 1994; J. A. Lewis et al., 2003; E. H. McMahan et al., 2010; Ratts et al., 2007). Additionally, the primary goal of the ASCA (2019a) national model is to provide school counselors with a framework to promote equal opportunities to all children regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or background. Thus, to do their jobs effectively, school counselors must serve as advocates for social justice (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). In addition, ASCA (2019a) revised many of their position statements concerning equity of all students to accommodate an advocacy focus. Combining the new MSJCC, the role of the school counselor, the increase in number of students from diverse backgrounds, and the hardships these students

face, which include poor grades, high dropout rates, disciplinary issues, high incarceration rates, unemployment, low self-esteem, and so forth, it is essential for school counselors to engage in SJA practices—being able to attend to issues of culture and address issues of power, privilege, and oppression that are prevalent in K-12 schools (Carr, 2003; Crook, 2015; Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; Hanna et al., 2000; Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Milner, 2013; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

Because more emphasis is being placed on social justice and equity of students in schools, it is crucial to investigate the advocacy efforts of school counselors (Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015). Although school counselors are being urged to be social justice advocates, there is still a disconnect between expectations and reality (D. Griffin & Steen, 2011). However, there is a paucity of literature concerning school counselors' efficacy for engaging in SJA. Bemak and Chung (2008) have divided the barriers preventing school counselors from SJA practices into personal and professional categories. A few of the personal obstacles school counselors possess are fear, being labeled as a troublemaker, apathy as a coping strategy, anxiety leading to guilt and anger, a false sense of powerlessness, and personal discomfort (Bemak & Chung, 2008). School counselors also face professional obstacles that deter many of them from engaging in multicultural and SJA services. These include professional paralysis, resistance based on professional turf considerations, dealing with administrative edicts, perpetuating a culture of fear, professional and character assassination efforts, and job security. Being a change agent is asking school counselors to take on a great deal of responsibility and risk, and some school counselors suffer from what Bemak and Chung (2008) termed the "nice counselor syndrome" (p. 372). These school counselors may be afraid and unwilling to take on the role of a social justice

advocate and will support the status quo to avoid conflict and the unpleasantry surrounding what students of color and low-income students face.

Systemic oppression is a major *clog* that needs attended to in the education system. To be considered professional and ethical, school counselors must employ SJA practices to help break down these barriers (ASCA, 2019a); however, the research indicates there is a gap between what is expected and actual practice (Constantine, 2001; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). School counselors are lacking social justice self-efficacy (SJSE; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Cooper, 2015; Fabian, 2012; L. C. Sullivan, 2019). Based on their training, standards of practice, their role as social justice advocates, and their positionality within the system, these barriers to SJSE need addressed in order to systemically confront the impact of oppression on the youth in schools. It is the researcher's belief that the discrepancy can be partially explained by the relationship among school counselors' perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence (SJAC) as well as their perceived levels of structural empowerment (SE) and psychological empowerment (PE).

Statement of the Problem

America's current education system is broken and in dire need of reform. If the purpose of education is to "support children in developing the skills, the knowledge, and the dispositions that will allow them to be responsible, contributing members of their community" (Sloan, 2012, para. 6), and the quality of education is based upon "one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location" (Slade, 2017, para. 14), there appears to be a detrimental *clog* in the education system. A quality education is supposed to provide the outcomes necessary for individuals, communities, and societies to thrive and be

equally accessible to all (Slade, 2017). Instead, oppression is systemically infiltrated within education with the challenges marginalized students face far outweighing their supports. Marginalized student groups continue to grapple with systemic and structural barriers to opportunity, which affect their social/emotional, academic, and career development.

Historically, the focus of educational research has been on the achievement gap. However, these studies, as well as opportunity gap investigations, have not demonstrated a consistent narrowing of the gaps for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds (R. Gutiérrez, 2008; House & Martin, 1998; J. Lee, 2002; Tate, 1997). Past efforts to reform K-12 education focused on standards-based accountability for schools, teacher evaluations based partly on student learning, and expanding public school choice options (Sargrad et al., 2019). Though necessary, these efforts continue to fall short in providing equitable services to all students and contribute to Ladson-Billings' (2006) "education debt" (p. 3). Discouraging gaps continue to be evident in achievement, opportunity, attainment, employment attainment, wages, civic development, and ultimately, opportunity for marginalized students. Although some gaps are decreasing, the movement is minimal. As specified by R. Gutiérrez (2008), there are four dimensions of equity: access, achievement, identity, and power. With gap studies only addressing access and achievement, while ignoring students' identity and power, the very nature of standardization is discriminatory (J. Lee, 2012). Considering these efforts proved insufficient, an education agenda rooted in the idea of equity in access and opportunity should be central moving forward. According to educational researchers Ladson-Billings (2006), Darling-Hammond (2010) and Milner (2012), instead of concentrating on deficit thinking through the achievement gap (R. Gutiérrez, 2008), people within the education system need to tally up the

education debt that systemic oppression has perpetuated, pay off the debt, and create equal opportunity for all.

Following the trends of the United States, the ongoing social inequity in American schools is a damaging *clog* in the system that needs to be addressed. With the shift in mindset from individual deficits of students to the debt that is owed to them, the onus is placed on people within the education system. One way for schools to start paying off their debt is through advocacy efforts (Burrell Storms, 2013; Dover, 2009). In a school setting, social justice advocates are change agents who are responsive to the needs of their student population, possess the ability to critically analyze the ways in which structural inequality is reproduced through schools and schooling, and implement strategies individually and collectively to create equitable services for all students regardless of their social standing in society (Burrell Storms, 2013; Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These advocates are needed to help combat the effects of oppression and diminish the social, cultural, and systemic barriers faced by marginalized students (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007).

Because this will take a collective approach, the leaders of this charge should be connected to all stakeholders in education—teachers, students, parents, families, administrators, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials (Janmaat et al., 2016); therefore, school counselors are in the perfect position to answer the call for SJA (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; House & Hayes, 2002; A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al., 2010a; C. B. Stone & Dahir, 2006). The role of a school counselor is to assist all students in their social/emotional, academic, and career development, ensuring their readiness to be productive, well-adjusted adults (ASCA, 2020b). With the demonstrated barriers to social/emotional, academic, and career development for

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diverse students, school counselors may be the only individuals who can provide the necessary academic planning, career guidance, and college/career preparation to assist these students (Corwin et al., 2004). By advocating for the educational success of all students, school counselors promote the mission of quality education and social justice.

Professional and ethical mandates require school counselors to be social justice advocates as it is central to good counseling practice (ASCA, 2016a; ASCA, 2019b). The Transforming School Counseling Initiative encourages school counselors to embrace their role as social justice advocates and organizational change agents (Erford, 2019). However, challenges of working with clients from diverse backgrounds as well as barriers to SJA practices have been established in the conceptual school counseling literature (Constantine, 2001; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). For example, Dogan (2017) and Schuerman (2019) conducted qualitative investigations on school counselors' or school-counselors-in-trainings' perceptions of social justice training. Their findings collectively highlighted a lack of self-perceived SJAC and/or SJSE. Moreover, Fay (2004) studied school counselor' perceptions of their change agency, and their results established a connection between personal power or empowerment and self-efficacy.

The limited empirical research studies on school counselors and SJA identified school counselors' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs which point to barriers to and predictors of SJA practice. For example, Bodenhorn et al. (2010) examined school counselors' perceptions of the status of the achievement gap and equity in their schools, school counselor self-efficacy, and the type of program approach that school counselors report implementing (i.e., ASCA national model, national standards, comprehensive, developmental). Findings revealed a correlation between self-efficacy and preferred practice (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). Additionally, I. A.

González (2012) investigated how factors such as colorblind racial ideology, SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice social supports, and social justice supports and barriers relate to social justice interest and commitment in urban school counselors. Results emphasized the presence of social justice supports impacted school counselors' SJSE, and higher levels of SJSE increased SJA practice.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The growing amount of literature on SJA and school counselors addresses the need for school counselors to be social justice advocates and provides theoretical frameworks and practical strategies to help implement SJA (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dixon et al., 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; J. A. Lewis et al., 2003; A. A. Singh, Urbano et al., 2010b). This conceptual and qualitative research is helpful in understanding the depth of the problem and actions and skills related to SJA, but the information makes it difficult to generalize or make conclusions. If school counselors are to be change agents in their schools, promoting equitable services to aid in all students' development and successful integration into society, it is essential to have a deeper understanding of their current practice.

Researchers have identified SJAC, SJSE, and empowerment as potential predictors of school counselor SJA practice; yet there are no studies to date empirically examining how these constructs work together (Cooper, 2015; Fabian, 2012; McCannon, 2019; L. C. Sullivan, 2019). Moreover, there is a demonstrated connection between SE and PE and self-efficacy, but no studies have been done linking these constructs to SJSE of school counselors (Hochwälder, 2007). Therefore, The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore whether relationships existed and the nature of the relationships among self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy

competence, SJSE, SE, and PE of practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with at least 1 year of experience. The current researcher aimed to answer three research questions:

1. What are the effects of self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence on the self-perceived levels of social justice self-efficacy in school counselors?

2. To what extent does structural empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

3. To what extent does psychological empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

Figures 1-2 show the moderation process models for the current study.

Figure 1

Moderation Process Model of the Relationships Among SJAC, SJSE, and SE
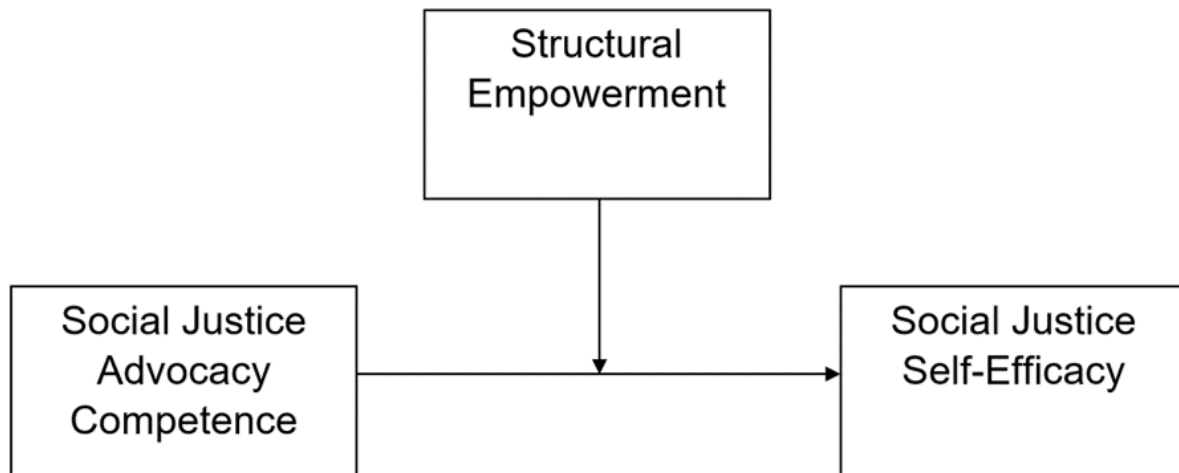
Figure 2

Moderation Process Model of the Relationships Among SJAC, SJSE, and PE
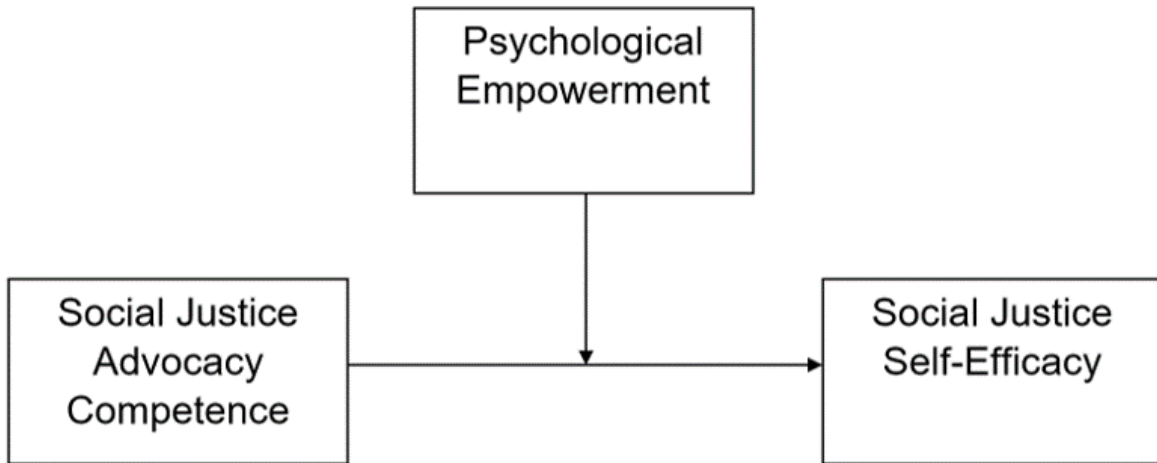
Statement of Potential Significance

The results of the present study can contribute to the extant literature by adding to the limited body of research assessing school counselors' SJSE. The results may also help to identify characteristics that are significant antecedents to a school counselor's SJSE, which is important to SJA practice. Furthermore, results may identify potential relationships between SJAC and SJSE. Added, investigating the potential moderating relationships between both SE—SJAC and SJSE and PE—SJAC and SJSE of school counselors can highlight additional variables impacting SJA practice. The information gleaned from this study adds to the existing literature addressing the gap between the expectation of school counselors and implementation into practice. It also helps inform professional development for practicing school counselors as well as ASCA, ACA, and graduate programs on how to better train, educate, and support current and future school counselors so the needs of all their students are addressed. Finally, though school counselors are the population of focus in this study, the research results can also enlighten school administrators

to the importance of empowerment of school counselors utilizing best practices, ultimately

assisting school districts to provide quality education.

Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Frameworks

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from three major theoretical

paradigms. First, Bandura's social cognitive theory focuses on the interaction of personal factors,

behavior, and environment. Specifically, self-efficacy theory posits that one's self-efficacy is a

major influence of one's behavior and functioning (Bandura, 2001) and that learning most likely

occurs if an individual holds a high level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). He defined perceived

self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects" and self-efficacy as

"the degree to which individuals consider themselves capable of performing a particular activity"

(p. 71). Bandura (1982) claimed that possessing the knowledge or skill set to do something alone

is not self-efficacy. One needs to integrate and apply this knowledge or skill set to a task

(Bandura, 1986a; Barbee et al., 2003; Rodgers et al., 2014). Self-efficacy affects people's (a)

actions, (b) decisions to engage in a task, (c) level of effort put forth, (d) ability to persevere

under failure, (e) thought patterns, and (f) amount of stress they experience in the environment

(Bandura, 1986a, 1989). This is significant to this study as school counselors' beliefs

surrounding their ability to provide SJA services can impact the way they think, feel, and

practice SJA interventions.

Researchers have found self-efficacy to be an important aspect of effective teaching,

counseling, and coping with change (Bandura, 1994; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Higher levels of

self-efficacy are linked to perseverance in the face of challenging counselor tasks (Larson &

Daniels, 1998). In school counseling literature, self-efficacy has been associated with

engagement in school-family-community partnerships (Bryan & Griffin, 2010), collaboration

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with school staff (Atici, 2014), the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (Mullen & Lambie, 2016), data usage (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009), and performance of preferred tasks (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008).

Authors in the field have made a strong argument, conceptually and through research, about the inclusion of SJA in the skill set of school counselors (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Crethar, 2010; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Rothstein, 2004; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Mandates followed from the ASCA ethical standards (ASCA, 2016a), the school counselor role description (ASCA, 2020b), and the ASCA national model (ASCA, 2019a). Even though SJA is a necessary component of a school counselor's role, it is equally challenging (Constantine, 2001; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Related to self-efficacy is SJSE, defined:

> An individual's perceived ability to engage in social justice advocacy behaviors across intrapersonal (e.g., "examine your own worldview, biases, and prejudicial attitudes after witnessing or hearing about social injustice"), interpersonal (e.g., "challenge an individual who displays racial, ethnic, and/or religious intolerance"), community (e.g., "support efforts to reduce social injustice through your own local fundraising efforts"), and institutional/political (e.g., "leading a group of co-workers in an effort to eliminate workplace discrimination in your place of employment") domains. (M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011, p. 162)

If higher self-efficacy increases the likelihood of a preferred behavior (Atici, 2014; Bandura, 2001; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2007; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Schwarzer & Renner, 2000) and helps one to persevere and overcome adversity, SJSE may determine the capacity of a school counselor to

assess, recognize, and develop a plan to help marginalized students overcome systemic barriers. As such, there is a dire need for more intentional fostering of school counselors' SJSE so they can confidently and effectively advocate for marginalized students.

The second framework guiding this study was the ACA Advocacy Competencies (2018). The ACA Advocacy Competencies (2018) focus specifically on awareness, knowledge, skills, and action that counselors should develop to address systemic barriers and issues facing students, clients, client groups or whole populations. Although Bandura's (1986a) self-efficacy theory posits that self-efficacy leads to competency, other researchers have found competency leading to self-efficacy (Bakioğlu & Türküm, 2020; Frans, 1993a, 1993b; Frans & Moran, 1993; Holden et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2004; McCannon, 2019; K. M. Williams, 2016). In addition, Arrendondo and Rosen (2007) posited one needs to focus on knowledge and skill acquisition to increase self-efficacy. Researchers Biron and Bamberger (2010) also concluded that performance-related effects may be less a function of an increase in self-efficacy and more a function of enhanced learning and competency development. Because of the ambiguity about the direction between competency and self-efficacy, the recent literature focusing on similar constructs showing a perspective that differed from Bandura's hypothesis that self-efficacy precedes competency, and the notion that self-efficacy is domain specific (Bandura, 1992), this researcher hypothesized competency, which is comprised of both knowledge and behaviors, leads to self-efficacy.

The last piece of the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the current study was employee empowerment. In a school environment, support from administrators, faculty, parents, and community is key to engaging in SJA work (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). One method of convincing school counselors of their capabilities is through empowerment. M. Lee and Koh (2001) define empowerment as the "psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four

dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor" (p. 686). This implies that the behavioral (delegating) piece impacts the perceptual (enabling) component of empowerment, which speaks to the two major perspectives: SE (Kanter, 1993) and PE (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995b). Based on the literature, both structural and PE are vital in creating a process of personnel taking the initiative to respond autonomously to and to take responsibility of job-related challenges with the motivation and support of management to perform related roles and responsibilities in the workplace (Wang & Liu, 2015; Wong & Laschinger, 2013).

SE, the behavioral component of empowerment, is the perception of one's opportunity, access to information, support, access to resources, and formal and informal power within an organization. It focuses on the access and ability to mobilize power structures, particularly opportunity, support, information, and resources from one's position in the organization to create and sustain the work environment and enhance organizational development (Kanter, 1977, 1993). In the past, researchers have posited that self-efficacy perceptions may be enhanced through SE (Ahearne et al., 2005; Earley & Lind, 1987; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Glew et al., 1995; Hochwälder, 2007).

PE, the perceptual component of empowerment, is defined as one's perception that he or she has control over their environment and feels congruence between his or her values and those of the organization (Spreitzer, 1995b; Zimmerman, 1995). Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) posited employees shape their perceptions based on their interpretation of the organizational climate (i.e., constraining or empowering). According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995b), PE is a four-dimensional construct consisting of (a) competence, which is an individual's belief in their abilities to perform their

work well; (b) meaning, consisting of the value a person ascribes to their work; (c) self-determination or choice, refers to employees' autonomy (i.e., the degree to which they have control over their work); and (d) impact, the ability to influence outcomes (e.g., immediate work environment, co-workers, and organization as a whole).

Because there is some overlap between self-efficacy and PE, it is important to differentiate how the present study conceptualized the two constructs. PE is an important condition specific to one's work environment (M. Lee & Koh, 2001). Conversely, Bandura theorized that self-efficacy is a domain or situation-specific construct (Bandura, 1982). While PE is more of a general understanding of one's ability, SJSE is specific to engagement in social justice efforts. Therefore, school counselors could have high levels of PE regarding their work environment; yet, the same school counselors could also have low levels of SJSE in terms of their ability to engage in social justice-specific behaviors or domains. Moreover, though the definition of the competence dimension of PE is similar to the definition of self-efficacy, PE contains three additional dimensions of meaning, self-determination, and impact. Therefore, a school counselor can be self-efficacious, but has weak perception of impact or choice in his or her work role. This will prevent the school counselor from feeling empowered.

Ultimately, the goal is for school counselors to engage in SJA practices, however, the literature points to antecedents of engagement in SJA. Ratts (2011) identified the need for a counselor to possess SJAC in order to engage in SJA practices, while other researchers argued that developing school counselors' SJSE is imperative to SJA practice as well (Fabian, 2012; I. A. González, 2012; M. J. Miller et al., 2009). Even though it important for school counselors to practice SJA, someone that is disempowered may not fully understand societal injustice and may naïvely cause harm through his or her activities on behalf of a marginalized community. In

essence, school counselors' perceptions of their levels of structural and PE could help identify another factor affecting their SJSE.

Summary of the Methodology

This researcher sought to explore whether relationships existed among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. This was done utilizing a quantitative approach to analyze participant survey data. The sample consisted of practicing school counselors with at least 1 year of experience. Participants were recruited through ASCA Scene (a resource for school counselors to share information and network), email, social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), and the following counseling-related listservs: CESNET, COUNSGRADS, and DIVERSEGRAD-L. Participants' data was collected using the online survey administration system Qualtrics. The researcher provided participants with informed consent agreements.

Data for this study were gathered by administering a demographic questionnaire to collect information about the participant's age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, years of experience as a practicing licensed or certified K-12 school counselor, description of current school setting (elementary, middle, high school, or private school), school geographic setting (rural, urban, suburban), school geographic region (Midwest, Northeast, South, West) political views, and amount of advocacy training completed in the past 5 years. Participants also completed a modified instrument including questions from four self-report questionnaires to collect data pertaining to school counselor SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. These assessments are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Data for this study were gathered by an emailed link sent to the participants. The link contained the modified instrument including the demographic questionnaire, Social Justice Advocacy Scale (SJAS; Dean, 2009), the Conditions of Work Effectiveness-II Questionnaire

(CWEQ-II; Laschinger, 1996), Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES), and the SJSE subscale from the Social Issues Questionnaire (SIQ; M. J. Miller et al., 2009). After the completion of the instrument, the data gathered from the participant demographic information and responses from the modified scale combining the questions from the SJAS, CWEQ-II, PES, and SJSE subscale were cleaned then entered into SPSS V27 statistical analysis software and PROCESS. This researcher employed both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, the latter of which focused primarily on correlations and multiple regression procedures as a part of moderation analyses to test for relationships between scores on the questionnaire measures and demographic data.

Limitations

All studies have limitations. The researcher has identified six main potential limitations to the study. First, one potential limitation was the generalizability of the results may be limited regarding the broader population of school counselors. Another likely limitation was the current measures' development relied on online samples. Though online data collection methods have been regarded as an inexpensive and reliable source of data collection, these methods have also indicated concerns about the reduced quality of respondent data, fraudulent respondents, and technological difficulties (Lefever et al., 2007). The next possible limitation was based on social desirability bias. For example, school counselors might feel uncomfortable rating SE in fear that, regardless of anonymity in the survey design, their administrators might find out. Also, participants might have difficulty expressing low levels of SJAC because it is something they are ethically bound to. A fourth limitation to the current study was this researcher's delimited use of quantitative methods for data analysis. This study lacked the rich data provided in qualitative research. The next potential limitation was the limited focus on only a few factors affecting SJA

practice. Finally, data collection happens to coincide with the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, since most schools have been closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and uncertainty remains regarding ongoing closures, school counselor response rates may be affected.

Definition of Key Terms

There were several key terms and concepts fundamental to the development and understanding of this study. These key terms are defined in this section.

Marginalization. Social exclusion of a certain minority or sub-group pushed to the edge and accompanied by negligence of their needs and lessening of their importance (Petkovska, 2015).

Multicultural Counseling. Any counseling relationship in which counselor and participant differ in cultural background, value, or lifestyle and a demonstrated ability to work in the diverse relationship (Arredondo et. al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992).

Multicultural Competence. A counselor's attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills in working with ethnically and culturally diverse persons (Sue et. al. 1998).

Multicultural Competencies. A set of standards provided by the ACA outlining the specific guidelines and skills a counselor must embody when working with individuals from a culture other than their own (E. J. Green et al., 2008).

Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies. A set of standards that sets the expectations for school counselors to be competent in addressing issues of power, privilege, and oppression that is prevalent in K-12 schools (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

Social Justice. Within education, it refers to promoting access, respect, and fairness in facilitating educational success and the overall well-being of students (Sander et al., 2011).

Social Justice Advocacy. "A construct that includes working to remove barriers to opportunities and positive educational outcomes among marginalized students by engaging in practices founded on respect, and fairness, ensuring access to resources and opportunities, and by working to right injustices" (Crook, 2015, p. 80).

Social Justice Advocacy Counseling. This type of counseling acknowledges issues of unearned power, privilege and oppression and how these link with psychological stress and disorders (Ratts et al., 2007).

Social Justice Advocacy Competence. Refers to a counselor's ability to "explore client problems within the context of an oppressive society and to intervene more contextually and systemically" (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018, pp. 79-80). Additionally, competence entails possessing attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action in the content area (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

Social Justice Self-Efficacy. "An individual's perceived ability to engage in SJA behaviors across intrapersonal (e.g., "examine your own worldview, biases, and prejudicial attitudes after witnessing or hearing about social injustice"), interpersonal (e.g., "challenge an individual who displays racial, ethnic and/or religious intolerance"), community (e.g., "support efforts to reduce social injustice through your own local fundraising efforts"), and institutional/political (e.g., "leading a group of co-workers in an effort to eliminate workplace discrimination in your place of employment") domains (M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011, p. 162).

Empowerment. M. Lee and Koh (2001) define empowerment as the "psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor" (p. 686).

Structural Empowerment. An organization's ability to offer access to information, resources, support and opportunity in the work environment (Kanter, 1993). It focuses on the access and ability to mobilize power structures, particularly opportunity, support, information and resources from one's position in the organization to create and sustain the work environment and enhance organizational development (Kanter, 1977, 1993).

Psychological Empowerment. One's perception that he or she has control over their environment and feels congruence between his or her values and those of the organization (Rappaport, 1987; Spreitzer, 1995b; Zimmerman, 1995).

Quality Education. "One that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing" (Slade, 2017, para. 14).

School Counselor. A licensed or certified mental health professional holding at least a master's degree in school counseling, qualified to improve student success by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students (ASCA, 2019c).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This researcher sought to explore whether relationships exist among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. This chapter is divided into several sections. The first section provides a general overview of the multicultural counseling perspective, SJA, and merging multicultural and social justice counseling. The second section addresses the condition of K-12 education, specifically focusing on diversity in schools, the nature of oppression in education, impact of oppression on youth development, consequences of quality education, and the need for reform. The third section's focus is on the school counselor's role in quality education, highlighting the need for SJA. The final section outlines the limited research studies on predictor variables of school counselors' SJSE and the need for the present study.

Brief Overview of Multicultural Counseling Perspective

Since the late 1960s, in response to the Civil Rights Movement, counseling literature emphasized the necessity to prepare culturally competent counselors to meet the challenges of a multicultural and diverse American society (Cartwright et al., 2008; Ponterotto et al., 2010; Ratts & Wayman, 2015; Sue et al., 1982; Sue & Sue, 2016). In the 1970s, concerns arose around ethical and moral deficits in professional behavior between cross-cultural counseling and therapy based on an examination of practices within the fields of counseling and psychology (Cartwright et al., 2008; Korman, 1974; Pedersen & Marsella, 1982). These deficits were perpetuated by the dominant culture's values and principles being imposed on clients from diverse racial backgrounds. In addressing these concerns, the AMCD, a division of the ACA, called for the formation of the MCC, which were then developed by Sue et al. (1992) and endorsed by ACA in 2003. The MCC outlined 30 competencies within three categories of awareness, knowledge, and skills. These competencies have since been defined, revised, and operationalized with goals of training multiculturally-skilled counselors who are able to provide

ethical and effective counseling interventions to culturally diverse clients (Arredondo et al., 1996; Pedersen, 1991; Sue et al., 1992). In 1991, Pedersen called multicultural counseling the "fourth force" (p. 6) in the field of counseling and multicultural competence a core standard in the counseling profession.

The ACA saw the need to address multicultural competence in its 2005 Code of Ethics by infusing standards related to multicultural and diversity issues throughout. The current ACA (2014) Code of Ethics continues to require that counselors develop skills to be culturally competent with "diverse client populations" by applying personal awareness, knowledge, and skills (p. 8). Additionally, specific ACA guidelines have been developed for working with specific sub-populations such as LGBTQIA and multiracial populations (A. Harper et al., 2013; Ratts et al., 2016).

Along with the inclusion of multicultural topics in the ACA (2003) ethical codes, training considerations began to emerge. Because training is necessary to adhere to the standards as well as to provide evidence of competency, professional organizations took steps to ensure the quality of training (American Psychological Association [APA], 2003; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009, 2015; Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council [MPCAC], 2014). The APA (2003) endorsed the Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists which outlined similar requirements to the MCC for doctoral level psychologists. In order to implement the competencies in the context of training future counselors, accrediting bodies like the CACREP, the MPCAC, and APA also outlined standards for master's level counselor education programs to hold them accountable (APA, 2003; D. Brown & Trusty, 2005; CACREP, 2009; Davis, 2015; MPCAC, 2014). Accreditation signifies a

level of excellence of programs, aids institutions in attracting graduate students and, in turn,

helps those students meet licensure and certification standards in states where they practice (S. E.

Goodman, 2015; C. C. Lee, 2013; Milsom & Akos, 2007). In accordance with their role of

accountability in quality of training, these professional organizations applied the MCC and the

ACA ethical codes to create the standards for counselor education programs in developing

culturally competent counselors to meet the challenges of a multicultural and diverse American

society (Ponterotto et al., 2010; Ratts & Wayman, 2015; Sue et al., 1982; Sue & Sue, 2016).

Consequently, CACREP (2001, 2015) requires students to take a multicultural course at

accredited institutions. Within this category, courses must include multicultural, social justice,

and advocacy theories and competencies (CACREP, 2015). Having a required course as part of

training signifies the importance of possessing at least a basic understanding of multicultural

competence and its impact on professionally, ethically, and morally serving future clients.

Conceptualizing Multicultural Counseling Competence

Informed by the historically demonstrated need for counseling services of multicultural

and diverse individuals, Sue and Sue (2013) defined multicultural counseling as

> . . . both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with
>
> the life experiences and cultural values of clients; recognizes client identities to include
>
> individual, group, and universal dimensions; advocates the use of universal and cultural-
>
> specific strategies and roles in the healing process; and balances the importance of
>
> individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and
>
> client systems. (p. 46)

This definition points to the assumption that each person is different, and how individuals see

and experience the world is a result of their cultural conditioning, which continues throughout

their lifespan. Therefore, it is important for counselors to apply the multicultural perspective in their work with clients.

The origin of multicultural counseling, and further the MCC, informed the foundation to multiculturally competent counseling. Sue and Torino (2005) defined cultural competence as,

Cultural competence is a lifelong process in which one works to develop the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal development of client and client systems. Multicultural counseling competence is aspirational and consists of counselors acquiring awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society (ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and intervene on behalf of clients from diverse backgrounds), and on an organizational/societal level, advocating effectively to develop new theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are more responsive to all groups. (p. 5)

In pursuit of cultural competence, counselors should be actively working toward these goals:

- becoming aware of their own values, biases, assumptions about human behavior, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and so forth;

- attempting to understand the worldview of their culturally diverse clients and the sociohistorical context in which that worldview develops; and

- developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive intervention strategies and skills in working with their culturally diverse clients (APA, 2003, 2017; Sue et al., 1992, 1998, 2019).

Additionally, when analyzing Sue and Torrino's (2005) definition of cultural competence and the MCC, Sue et al. (1992, 2019) identified five foci. First, to be a multiculturally competent counselor, one must focus treatment on the clients (individuals, families, and groups) as well as

the client systems (institutions, policies, and practices) in order to address all sociopolitical and cultural experiences of the client. Second, cultural competence can be broken down into three domains: awareness, knowledge, and skills. Awareness involves understanding one's own cultural conditioning and how it affects the personal beliefs, values, and attitudes of diverse clients. Knowledge pertains to understanding and knowledge of worldviews and cultural contexts of culturally diverse individuals and groups. Last, the skills component is the ability to determine and use culturally appropriate intervention strategies when working with different populations. Third, the definition of cultural competence has two levels: personal/individual and the organizational/system. This focus is essential because though it is important for the individual to possess competency in all three domains, this competency will do little good if the organizations in which the counselors work are oppressive and discriminatory in nature. Therefore, it is equally vital for the counselor to be involved in impacting systemic and societal change. Fourth, in order for a counselor to be involved in systemic intervention, the definition of cultural competence also emphasizes the development of alternative helping roles like consultant, change agent, teacher, and advocate. Fifth, cultural competence includes an orientation of cultural humility, which refers to an openness to working with culturally diverse clients (Hook et al., 2013; Owen et al., 2014) and serves as the conduit in which the three domains of awareness, knowledge, and skills are expressed (Sue et al., 2019).

Brief Overview of Social Justice Advocacy in Counseling

Helping professions have been historically involved in advocacy efforts aimed at combating discrimination and removing barriers to success. There is a growing movement within the profession to promote social justice as a central principle for implementing counseling and development strategies into practice (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). The SJA movement is said to be a

fifth force in counseling to explain human behavior complementary to psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, existential-humanistic, and multicultural counseling forces (Crethar & Ratts, 2008; Ratts, 2009; Ratts et al., 2004; Ratts & Wayman, 2015). *Social justice counseling* acknowledges issues of unearned power, privilege, and oppression and how these factors link with psychological stress and disorders (Ratts et al., 2004). It also takes into account the impact of oppressive social structures and systems on mental health. There was a shift in perspective from one that disregarded the sociopolitical context to one that recognizes the importance of cultural variables in the counseling relationship as well as the importance of using advocacy as a mechanism to address systemic barriers that hinder clients' abilities to achieve optimal psychological health and well-being (Constantine et al., 2007; Ponterotto et al., 2010; Ratts, 2011; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). This involves counselors acknowledging that their clients' problems could be connected to issues at the societal level—attending to not only the inner world of the client but also the external world (Ratts & Wayman, 2015). SJA is now viewed as part of the counselor's professional identity (Chang et al., 2010; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Moe et al., 2010; Ratts, 2009; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Ratts & Wood, 2011; S. D. Smith et al., 2009).

Over the past several decades, social justice has been discussed in the profession of counseling. As early as 1971, the *Personnel and Guidance Journal* published a special issue, "Counseling and the Social Revolution," Lewis, Lewis, and Dworkin urged training programs' leaders to teach and prepare counselors to be change agents on behalf of their clients facing social injustices and systemic barriers (as cited in Chung & Bemak, 2012). Later, numerous articles continued to be published addressing the need for counselors to act as advocates at both the social and political level (Baker & Cramer, 1972; Dustin, 1974; Hutchinson & Stadler, 1975; Ponzo, 1974). In the book *Social Action: A Mandate for Counselors*, J. A. Lewis and Arnold

(1998) wrote a chapter demonstrating the limitations of multiculturalism if it does not focus on SJA due to the systemically-based issues oppressed clients face. The counseling literature on social justice has been growing in research and conceptual publications with calls to integrate a social justice perspective into counseling theories, paradigms, and practices.

There are other key developments that took place which helped to advance a social justice perspective in the field. The institutionalization of social justice began with the election of Loretta Bradley as ACA president in 1999 (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). She adopted a platform of social advocacy as a primary focus and chose the title, *Advocacy: A Voice for Our Clients and Communities*, as her presidential theme address (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Moreover, in the edited book *Advocacy in Counseling: Counselors*, *Clients*, *and Community*, Bradley and Lewis (2000) discussed what advocacy entails and how it aligns with the counseling profession. Further, in 2000, then president of the ACA, Dr. Jane Goodman, called for a task force to explore ways in which counselors may intervene within clients' environments, as opposed to a sole focus on intrapsychic approaches (Ratts et al., 2007). In 2002, ACA added the division Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) with its mission to promote issues of justice and equality in society (Ratts & Wayman, 2015). It has been proposed that the formation of CSJ, and its institutionalization as a recognized entity, has also helped to legitimize the social justice counseling movement (Ratts et al., 2004).

As a result, the call for counselor educators to prepare students to advocate on behalf of clients and for counselors to engage in SJA as ethical practice has been described as a re-emerging theme in the counseling literature (Bemak & Chung, 2005). In 2001, CACREP included advocacy training as an important part of counselor preparation. Additionally, ACA (2005) identified advocacy as an ethical and appropriate function in its most recent code of

ethics. Moreover, a special issue titled Social Justice: A National Imperative for Counselor Education and Supervision was published in 2010 in the journal of *Counselor Education and Supervision* (Chang et al., 2010). This special issue called on counselor educators and supervisors to integrate social justice into their training programs. Since that time, CACREP (2015) revised their standards to incorporate social justice. For example, Section 1.e under Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice states: "advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients" (p. 8). Additionally, CACREP (2015) requires SJA theories to be addressed in a multicultural course.

Conceptualizing Social Justice Advocacy

As the discussion in professional counseling turned to SJA, many counselors became increasingly aware that they felt inadequately prepared to engage in advocacy beyond the client level and that the role of social justice advocate was not clear (Field & Baker, 2004; Gehart & Lucas, 2007; Moe et al., 2010; Nilsson & Schmidt, 2005; Roysircar, 2009; S. D. Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, the distinct characteristics of SJA need to be defined and understood to conceptualize how and why counselors need to include social justice into their theory, curriculum, research, and practice. SJA has been conceptualized and defined by many scholars, and it occurs at the individual and systemic level (Chang et al., 2010). L. A. Goodman et al. (2004) defined SJA as being "the scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination" (p. 795). Likewise, Constantine et al. (2007) defined SJA as "a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share equal power in society" (p. 24).

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To further assist with clarity in definitions and guidelines in regard to advocacy, the ACA Advocacy Competencies were developed. The ACA Advocacy Competencies were first developed in 2002 and finalized in January 2003 by a taskforce of CSJ leaders (J. A. Lewis et al., 2003). The ACA endorsed the competencies in 2003. The competencies provided counselors with a framework for SJA best practice to address issues of oppression with and on behalf of clients (C. C. Lee, 2007; J. A. Lewis et al., 2003). Formal adoption of the competencies helped add legitimacy to the social justice perspective and informed the definition for social justice competence, which "calls on counselors to explore client problems within the context of an oppressive society and to intervene more contextually and systemically" (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018, pp. 79-80).

The advocacy competencies consist of 43 competencies intended to operationalize the activities associated with SJA and include three levels of advocacy: (a) client/student advocacy (micro-level), which involves using direct counseling to empower individuals and providing advocacy at the individual level, (b) school/community advocacy, which emphasizes community collaboration and systems advocacy (meso-level), and (c) the sociopolitical level of advocacy (macro-level) which is concerned with informing the public about systemic barriers that affect human development and how helping professionals can shape public policy (J. A. Lewis et al., 2003; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Each level of the advocacy includes two domains that emphasize advocacy with (empowerment) and advocacy on behalf of people. This results in six separate domains with the three levels split into empowerment and advocacy skills, which are (a) client/student empowerment, (b) client/student advocacy, (c) community collaboration, (d) systems advocacy, (e) public information, and (f) social/political. Based on these competencies, counselors are encouraged to help their clients overcome their issues that are rooted in systemic

and environmental factors. However, the distinct actions of a social justice advocate will vary based on the setting in which an individual works and the population they serve.

ACA (2018) made minor revisions to the ACA Advocacy Competencies (J. A. Lewis et al., 2003). First, the updates further explain the original competencies and define specific strategies, knowledge and skills required for each domain of advocacy. Next, the updated competencies reflect the increase in social action taken by individuals, communities and schools and explains

ways counselors can collaborate to support advocacy efforts. Lastly, the public information domain of advocacy was renamed to collective action advocacy to better explain the broad skill collaboration efforts that take place in this domain of advocacy.

Merging Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling

Counseling literature showed the importance of multicultural counseling competence and SJAC separately; however, through the research, there are gaps seen in holistically addressing the cultural aspects of clients. There is a recent debate in the counseling literature discussing the overlap between multicultural counseling competence and social justice and the need for the two perspectives to combine (Ratts, 2009; Trusty & Brown, 2005; Vera & Speight, 2003). Multicultural counseling focuses more on the individual—understanding clients only within the multicultural context—rather than engaging with that context itself (Ratts, 2009). However, Vera and Speight (2003) contended counselors need to be aware of oppressive forces and to work to minimize them whenever possible.

In the MCC, oppression is not defined as a core problem that affects the well-being of individuals (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Ratts, 2009; Vera & Speight, 2003). Oppression refers to "a combination of prejudice and institutional power that

creates a system that regularly and severely discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups" (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d., para. 2). In the United States, systems of oppression, like systemic racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism, are woven into the very foundation of American culture, society, and laws, leading to the existence of oppressed communities (Hanna et al., 2000; Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2003). Society's institutions, such as government, education, and culture, all contribute or reinforce the oppression of marginalized social groups while elevating dominant social groups (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.; Prilleltensky, 2003). Oppressed communities deal with violence, lack of political representation, drug abuse, limited-to-no access to resources, denial of some legal rights, and high unemployment rates (Potts, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2003). Considering the issues these communities are plagued with, the negative psychological effects faced by the members of marginalized communities are high (Carr, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995). To ignore these effects of oppression at the systemic level interferes with counselors' abilities to holistically meet all the needs of their diverse clients. Therefore, joining the multicultural and social justice counseling forces cannot only produce counselors who have the awareness, knowledge, and skills, but it can also promote action in tackling the social, cultural, and systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities (C. C. Lee & Hipolito-Delgado, 2007).

Due to the research literature showing SJA as an area of multiculturalism, practitioners, scholars, and students seem to be grasping the idea that development of multicultural awareness and competency is an important stepping stone towards engagement on a broader level of social advocacy (Arredondo, 1999; Arredondo & Perez, 2003; Hage, Romano, Conyne, Kenny, Matthews et al., 2007a; Hage, Romano, Conyne, Kenny, Schwartz, & Waldo, 2007b; Myers et

al., 2002; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Speight & Vera, 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003). Consequently, both the multicultural and social justice counseling perspectives have recently been joined to form what is known as the multicultural and social justice counseling movement (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Together, the multicultural and social justice perspectives promote the need to develop multiculturally and advocacy competent helping professionals who recognize the importance of cultural variables in the counseling relationship (Ponterotto et al., 2010; Ratts, 2011) and of using advocacy as a way to address systemic barriers that block clients from experiencing overall psychological health and well-being (Constantine et al., 2007; Ratts, 2011; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009).

The importance of counselors addressing the entirety of multicultural issues by including social justice is reflected in the ethical codes and counseling programs. Since counselors have a moral and ethical obligation to infuse social justice into their practice, there was a revision of the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics. Not only does the ACA (2014) ethical code preamble list social justice as one of the profession's primary values, but it is also addressed within the codes. Section A.6.a states, "when appropriate, counselors advocate at the individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to examine potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients" (p. 5). Along with the update to the ethical codes, greater training in SJA and multicultural counseling is needed (Cook et al., 2015). In addition to the incorporation of social justice into the 2016 CACREP (2015) standards, counseling programs have emphasized commitments to multiculturalism and social justice in their mission statements (Wilczenski et al., 2011).

The advancement of a combined multicultural counseling and SJA perspective in the field is also demonstrated through the competencies. Social justice and multicultural counseling

competence go hand in hand (Crethar et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2011; Ratts, 2009). To be a social

justice advocate, one must also be multiculturally competent (D. Griffin & Steen, 2011). The

focus on advocacy is seen throughout the MCC (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Also, because of the

added layer of social justice, in 2015, Carlos Hipolito-Delgado, then president of the Association

for Multicultural Counseling Competencies, requested revisions to the original MCC, developed

in 1992 by Sue, Arrendeno, and McDavis (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Thus, AMCD and ACA

endorsed the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016). This set of competencies acknowledges the multiple

identities that each counselor and client possesses, provides a framework for working within

these complex relationships, and underscores the intersection of identities and the dynamics of

power, privilege, and oppression that influence the counseling relationship (Ratts & Greenleaf,

2018). The MSJCC has four development domains: (a) counselor self-awareness, (b) client

worldview, (c) counseling relationship, and (d) counseling and advocacy interventions as well as

four aspirational competencies: (a) attitudes and beliefs, (b) knowledge, (c) skill, and (d) action.

The MSJCC incorporates a socioecological model into the counseling and advocacy

interventions domain showing how privileged and oppressed counselors intervene with and on

behalf of clients at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and

international/global levels (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

The constant evolution of the U.S. demographics has impacted diverse populations

individually and systemically. Further, children of marginalized communities must navigate the

hardships that are a product of a legacy of discrimination (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007).

Therefore, the changes made to the ACA ethical codes, the counselor training programs, and the

competencies, combining the multicultural counseling and social justice counseling perspectives

is just a start (Ratts, 2009; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; Trusty & Brown, 2005; Vera & Speight,

2003). Because schools are the microcosm of society (Haupt, 2010), the current nature of oppression that exists in the United States can be seen in the structure and process of American schools (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Solomon et al., 2019). Thus, the discussion of the importance of SJA efforts within the field of school counseling is merited.

The Condition of K-12 Education

Lucas (n.d.) said, "Education is the single most important job of the human race" (para. 1). Historically, the purpose of education in the United States has evolved according to the needs of society (Haupt, 2010). Jonathan Cohen, cofounder and president of the National School Climate Center, stated, "the purpose of education is to support children in developing the skills, the knowledge, and the dispositions that will allow them to be responsible, contributing members of their community—their democratically-informed community" (Sloan, 2012, para. 7). Therefore, education is more than a content delivery system; rather, it is a system designed to help all children reach their potential and enter society as complete and productive citizens.

The goal of education is achieved through quality education. Formerly, some argued quality education was met through focusing on literacy and numeracy alone (Slade, 2017). However, in an effort to broaden this limited focus in assessing quality, in 2016, the United Nations endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which act as standards for all nations to achieve a better, more sustainable future (Slade, 2017). Of the 17 SDGs, Goal 4 focuses on quality education being inclusive and equitable. In a statement supporting the SDGs released by the ASCD, previously known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Education International (EI), they define quality education as "one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic

location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing" (Slade, 2017, para. 14). This can be achieved through (a) "access to quality teachers," (b) "use of quality learning tools and professional development," and (c) "establishing safe and supportive quality learning environments" (para. 15). If the end goal of education is to produce responsible, contributing members of society, applying this holistic viewpoint of quality education is paramount as it will help individuals, communities, and societies prosper. As microcosms of society (Haupt, 2010), the increased diversity seen in the demographic evolution of the United States as well as the subsequent oppression being perpetuated by all systems in America will be reflected within the schools. In light of these changes, there is a need to compare the population percentages to outcomes data in order to analyze the effectiveness of the current education system and to ensure the goal of education is being achieved.

Diversity in Schools

To begin to understand the urgent need for inclusivity and equity in education, it is important to spotlight the diversity within American public schools. According to the U.S. Census, 13% (40 million) of the U.S. population is foreign-born (Grieco et al., 2012), and it is expected that 25% of the U.S. public school students will use English as a second language by 2025 (National Educational Association, 2014). In 2014, the numbers of ethnic/multiethnic minority students enrolled in K-12 public schools surpassed those of White students (Maxwell, 2014). It is predicted that by 2020, children from culturally diverse backgrounds will be the majority in public schools (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001) as trends in immigration and birth rates indicate that there will soon not be any particular ethnic group that is more than 50% of the U.S. population (Perez & Hirschman, 2009). De Brey et al. (2019) summarized the racial makeup of American schools as follows:

Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of U.S. school-age children who were White

decreased from 62 to 51% and the percentage who were Black decreased from 15 to 14%.

In contrast, the percentages of school-age children from other racial/ethnic groups

increased: Hispanic children, from 16 to 25%; Asian children, from 3 to 5%; and children

of Two or more races, from 2 to 4%. The percentage of school-age American

Indians/Alaska Natives remained at 1% and the percentage of Pacific Islanders remained

at less than 1% during this time. (p. iii)

In fall 2015, approximately 30% of public students attended public schools in

which the combined enrollment of minority students was at least 75% of total enrollment.

Over half of Hispanic (60%), Black (58%), and Pacific Islander students (53%) attended

such schools. (p. iv)

In terms of other types of diversity, in school year 2015-2016, of the 12.5 million

students in public high schools (schools with Grades 9-12), over five million (40%) attended

schools where at least half of the students were experiencing poverty, as indicated by eligibility

for free or reduced-priced lunch (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018).

Nearly 1.8 million (over 14%t) attended schools where at least three-quarters of the students

were experiencing poverty. Additionally, child poverty is related to both age and race/ethnicity.

The youngest children are the poorest and nearly 73% of poor children in America are children

of color (Children's Defense Fund, 2020). Moreover, between 2011-2012 and 2017-2018, the

number of students labeled with a learning disability increased from 6.4 million to 7.0 million,

and the percentage served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

increased from 13% of total public school enrollment to 14% (National Center for Education

Statistics [NCES], 2020). Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC],

2016) reported that 8% (about 1.3 million) of the high school population identified themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Lastly, the percentage of public-school students in the United States who were ELLs in fall 2017 was 10.1%, or five million students (Hussar et al., 2020b).

The Nature of Oppression in Education

Mullaguru (2016), social justice advocate, writes "More than 50 years after the U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the nation's public school system has yet to fulfill its promise of equal educational opportunity for all" (para. 1). Unfortunately, even with the United Nation's efforts, the results of the U.S. education system are not where they need to be. Specifically, regarding the goal of education being inclusive and equitable, there are systemic and structural barriers to opportunity among many diverse populations. All students do not live and operate in homogenous environments with equality and equity of opportunity (Milner, 2013). Moreover, intersectionality plays a part because diverse students are typically affected by multiple sources of oppression: their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and other identity markers (Flowers, 2019; Rust, 2019).

School's daily routine looks quite different for the children of marginalized communities as they are subject to exclusion, discrimination, and oppression (House & Martin, 1998; Jacobs, 1994; Sargrad et al., 2019; Teale & Scott, 2010). Not only are these children entering school with a legacy of discrimination, but they also have to deal with social, cultural, and systemic barriers (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007). For example, the nature of oppression can be seen in the structure and process of U.S. schools, adding to the students' experiences of discrimination (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007). Systemic oppression takes place on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability level, and sexual orientation (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). The nation's current

education system has led to enormous gaps in the resources provided to students based on geography, income, and race (Sargrad et al., 2019). Schools perpetuate systemic oppression through

- inequality of funding (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007);

- overrepresentation of marginalized students in special education, remedial education, lower ability groups, and vocational tracks (Potts, 2003; Rothstein, 2004);

- an indoctrination into oppression by being taught from an ethnocentric, monocultural perspective (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Howard, 1999; Potts, 2003; D. E. Smith, 2000);

- inequitable access to advanced coursework (Education Trust, 2020);

- harsher disciplinary practices (English et al., 2016); and

- modern racist practices and microaggressions (L. C. Smith et al., 2014).

This continuation of imbedded oppression within the public-school system has detrimental effects on diverse students' quality education.

Impact of Oppression on Youth Development

Healthy identity development of youth is vital to their productivity as an adult. Two main characteristics of identity development are self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is one's individual perceptions of behavior, abilities, and unique characteristics (Bailey, 2003). From Rogers' (1959) perspective, self-concept has three parts: (a) self-image, or how people see themselves; (b) self-esteem, or one's thoughts and feelings about one's self-image; and (c) ideal self, or how a person wishes he or she could be. All of these aspects influence development and are shaped by individual, familial, social, and historical circumstances. Consequently, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed an ecological framework of development, stressing the

importance of understanding the influences between the individual and various environmental systems such as family, peers, school, community, and culture.

Narrowing the focus to youth development within the school system, there is a growing body of literature on social capital, youth development, and education. Social capital refers to the size and strength of one's support system (Acar, 2011). Child and youth development is strongly shaped by social capital in schools (Putnam, 2000). Social capital within children's families, schools, peer groups, and the community positively impacts educational achievement and, consequently, students' behavior and development (Acar, 2011). Dika and Singh (2002) found the higher amount of one's social capital, the higher amount of school attainment and achievement.

Research also shows the importance of social, emotional, and academic development of students. When K-12 public education leaders focus on these domains of development, academic performance and student engagement in school improves resulting in a higher likelihood to graduate high school, attend and graduate from college, be successful in the workforce, and experience greater lifetime well-being (Belfield et al., 2015; Civic Enterprises, 2013; Cunha & Heckman, 2012; W. Cunningham & Villasenor, 2016; Deming, 2017; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Durlak et al., 2011; Kautz et al., 2014). However, oppression affects the social/emotional, academic, and career development of students from marginalized communities. Throughout their schooling, they experience differential treatment and normalization of Whiteness (House & Martin, 1998; Jacobs, 1994; Vasquez, 2011). Marginalized students face a multitude of psychological effects stemming from discrimination, racism and acculturation, bullying, historical factors, language barriers, poverty, exclusionary and punitive disciplinary practices, and so forth (Bemak & Chung, 2008; M. Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Brittian et al., 2013;

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Carr, 2003; Caughy et al., 2003; Grieco et al., 2012; Perreira et al., 2013; Samaan, 2000; Sirin et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 1995).

For example, youth of color encounter conflicting values from teachers and parents paired with constant threats of discrimination at school (Ko & Perreira, 2010); being closely monitored and punished by school adults; racial-ethnic harassment, microaggressions, and overt racism from their peers (Balagna et al., 2013; Ko & Perreira, 2010); and pressures to assimilate to mainstream U.S. culture while also experiencing stigmatization, marginalization, and exclusion within the school context. If school adults and peers are the major socializing agents who provide important feedback to adolescents regarding their academic and social competencies (Eccles & Roeser, 2011), discriminatory feedback regarding marginalized youths' competencies, such as lower academic expectations, stereotyping, and unfair and degrading treatment, will likely affect their self-concept (or psychological well-being) and academic motivation (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Additionally, despite cultural differences, all students are expected to meet the same educational standards, and negative results link to overall lower adjustment outcomes.

Social/Emotional Development. Having positive social and emotional skills can affect how students function in school, their chances of school success, and forming strong relationships (The Urban Child Institute, 2020). However, healthy social/emotional development for diverse students is a challenge due to the chronic bullying, harassment, victimization, and segregation they face from peers and school adults. As a result of high stress from covert and overt discrimination and low supports, marginalized students coping abilities may be overwhelmed (García Coll et al., 1996; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Spencer, 1995) and can result in a higher likelihood of hopelessness (Nyborg & Curry, 2003), lower self-esteem and life

satisfaction (Seaton & Yip, 2009), depression and depressive symptoms (M. L. Greene et al., 2006), greater anxiety (Szalacha et al., 2003), and more aggression and delinquency (Bogart et al., 2013).

For instance, immigrant students struggle to succeed in many American schools because of the experiences of racism and discrimination (Hersi, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and exposure to school and community violence (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In a study of Mexican origin young people, being a target of discrimination resulted in a psychological experience of stigmatization ("otherness") commonly attributed to primary language use and racial features (Quintana et al., 2010). Latinx youth also discussed being patrolled and punished by school adults and commonly experiencing racial-ethnic harassment, microaggressions, and overt racism from their peers (Balagna et al., 2013; Ko & Perreira, 2010). Additionally, low-income African American girls in urban settings have many mental health needs linked to racial and socioeconomic segregation (E. Harper et al., 2016; K. Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2015; D. R. Williams & Collins, 2001); family stressors related to economic disadvantage (Barbarin, 1993; Barrett & Turner, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 1993; Grant et al., 2000); and increased risk of exposure to sexual and gendered harassment, violence, and stereotyping in family, community, and school settings (Cobbina et al., 2008; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Foster et al., 2004; J. Miller, 2008; Sedlak et al., 2010). Some qualitative studies also show that Latinx youth who consistently experience school-based discrimination from peers and school adults have higher internalizing and externalizing symptoms and lower academic motivation and performance (APA, 2012; Brittian et al., 2013; Fisher et al., 2000; Perreira et al., 2013; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Internalizing symptoms can include anxiety, depression, and

withdrawal, whereas externalizing symptoms include youths' outward behaviors of aggression and rule breaking (Achenbach, 1991).

   Internalizing Symptoms. The need for relatedness and sense of belonging and acceptance is extremely vital to social/emotional development. As a result of experiencing discrimination from school adults and peers, this need is threatened. By early adolescence, racially segregated peer groups and friendships tend to be the norm for most youth, even in the context of racially diverse schools (B. B. Brown et al., 2008). Who adolescents choose to associate with can influence identity development (B. B. Brown, 1990; B. B. Brown & Larson, 2009), social attitudes and behaviors (Cairns et al., 1998), and academic achievement (Hamm et al., 2011; Kindermann, 2007; Ryan, 2001). Moreover, the discrimination they experience from their peers has more negative psychological effects than discrimination from faculty (Benner & Graham, 2013). Studies of Mexican American, Latinx, African American, and Asian American youth found that experiencing ethnic microaggressions was linked to higher depressive symptoms, loneliness, social anxiety, anger, stress, and a decline in self-esteem (Benner & Graham, 2013; Delgado et al., 2011; M. L. Greene et al., 2006; Huynh, 2012; Stein et al., 2013).

   In addition to racial discrimination, other marginalized student groups face stressors that impact their social/emotional well-being. Overt heterosexist discrimination, harassment, and assault of LGBTQ students is the norm in schools nationwide (Bidell, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2010). Numerous studies demonstrate that adolescents are being harassed, bullied, and victimized in schools due to their perceived sexual identity or gender expression (W. W. Black et al., 2012; District of Columbia Public Schools, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2014), and because of this, they feel unsafe or unsupported in schools (Kosciw et al., 2014); two to three times as likely as heterosexual students to consider suicide (Almeida et al., 2009; District of Columbia Public

Schools, 2007); and transgender youth report rates of suicidal ideation at four times the rate of cisgender youth (Greytak et al., 2009). Also, children of poverty report increased levels of anxiety and depression, higher levels of behavior difficulties, and a lower level of positive engagement in school compared to children from middle-class backgrounds (M. Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Caughy et al., 2003; Samaan, 2000).

Externalizing Symptoms. Biased perceptions of faculty combined with peer discrimination of marginalized students bring about unequal discipline, limit development, and lead to poor adjustment outcomes. For example, despite their actual behavior, Latino and African American students are sometimes seen as troublemakers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Vasquez, 2011) and have a greater chance than their White peers to be expelled or suspended for the same or similar behaviors indicating racial bias within the schools' discipline system (Skiba et al., 2011). Results from one study showed Black and Hispanic students are 55% more likely to receive a discipline referral than White males (Kline, 2016). Data from a 2012 study indicated African American students were 3.5 times more likely than their White peers to be suspended (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). When looking at low-income African American girls in urban settings, perceptions of them as aggressive, hypersexual (B. Greene, 1990), and self-reliant (P. H. Collins, 1998) may increase chances of punitive discipline and contribute to their disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates while reducing odds of mental health services (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

In other recent studies, race, disabilities, and income are linked to more punitive disciplinary practices in American schools (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Crook, 2015; E. Harper et al., 2016; Kline, 2016; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Morris & Perry, 2016; Payne & Welch, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Behaviors such as disrespect, insubordination, or excessive

noise were punished more harshly for African American, Latino, and Native American students (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Additionally, of the 7.4% of all students suspended each year (Losen & Gillespie, 2012), students identified under the IDEA category of emotional disturbance account for between 15% and 44% (A. L. Sullivan et al., 2014) and Black and Hispanic children account for 37.4% of total suspensions (I. A. González, 2012). Consequently. research has shown that inhibiting school environments marked by discrimination may trigger young people's threat appraisals and feelings of frustration and anger that may result in higher levels of externalizing symptoms (Spencer, 1995; Spencer et al., 2004), greater engagement in risky behaviors, and deviant social groups (Delgado et al., 2011). For example, results from a qualitative study of Latino youth indicated racial microaggressions, like harsher treatments and being treated as if they should be feared or guilty, resulted in negative behaviors and dropping out of school (Katz, 1999; Luna & Revilla, 2013).

Academic Development. Motivation is the precursor to many behaviors. According to education researchers Cavas (2011) and Palmer (2007), student motivation and student achievement are two fundamental variables to quality learning. Studies show several factors affecting student motivation and achievement, including (a) intrinsic and extrinsic directions, (b) parental influence and participation, (c) family history, (d) peer pressure, (e) self-efficacy expectations, (f) effort, (g) value attributed to a relative, (h) anxiety, (i) self-regulation and determination of goals, (j) talent perceptions, (k) learning strategies, (l) teaching style, and (m) school environment (Brophy, 1998; Garcia, 1995; Nolen & Haladyna, 1989; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; K. Singh et al., 2002). These factors can be categorized as psychological, social, and cultural.

In conjunction with these factors, considering the role that oppression plays in marginalized youth's achievement, values, and academic motivation is an important area of investigation (Spears Brown, 2015). Oppression not only effects a students' social/emotional development, but it also affects academic outcomes. These academic outcomes include (a) objective performance measures—grades, academic achievement, and risk of dropping out of school, (b) academic motivation, (c) self-perceptions of academic performance and ability—self-efficacy, and (d) how much students define themselves by their academic successes—academic self-concept.

Oppression's impact on quality education is evidenced through what the literature identifies as the achievement gap. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) act was signed into law, representing the first mechanism to closely monitor students' and schools' achievement against national and state standards. An additional entity used to gather data on education in the United States and other nations is the NCES, which is the primary federal entity designed to address high-priority education data needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends; and report timely, useful, and high-quality data to important entities for education policy and lawmaking (de Brey et al., 2019). Because of the data provided through NCLB (2002) and NCES (Hussar et al., 2020), gaps in achievement between students of varying geographic locations, race, gender, and SES were made apparent through disparate performance on standardized test scores, graduation rates, advanced course completion, educational attainment, college enrollment, and earnings and employment (de Brey et al., 2019; NCLB, 2002). Three reports used to synthesize the data were

- The *Condition of Education* (Hussar et al., 2020)—demographic data summarized from surveys conducted by the NCES and the U.S. Census Bureau of indicators on the state of education in the United States;

- the *Trial Urban District Assessment* (TUDA; NCES, 2018)—a program funded by Congress in 2002 that has allowed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to collect and report student achievement data for participating large urban districts with results showing how school districts are performing over time and compared with other participating districts; and

- the *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (de Brey et al., 2019)—a report examining the educational progress and challenges students face in the United States by race/ethnicity.

Data on the reports point to indicators that affect students' academic achievement. These include

- family characteristics—child's race/ethnicity, parents' level of educational attainment, family structure, poverty status, children's internet access at home, and family involvement in education-related activities outside of school and

- school characteristics—type of school, racial/ethnic enrollment, geographic location, and poverty level.

In the dense conceptual literature on the academic achievement of non-dominant cultures, several themes are discussed. Berlak (2009) summarized reasons for the underachievement:

First, are students' perceptions of the opportunities in the wider society and the realities of "makingt." Second, are the educational opportunities available in the education system itself—within school districts, schools, and within each classroom. Third, are the cumulative psychic and emotional effects of living in a social world saturated with racist

ideology, and where racist practices and structures are pervasive, and often go unnamed.

(p. 68)

Berlak's views are consistent with expectancy-value theorists and previous research on marginalized youths' academic motivation being strongly influenced by teachers' perceptions and behaviors as well as institutional barriers that limit future opportunities for youth of color (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Graham et al., 1998; Moore & Lewis, 2012; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Overall, upon reviewing the literature on the influences of diverse populations' academic outcomes, there are two interconnected sociocultural phenomena to be addressed: historic discrimination that minorities have and continue to face in society and cultural differences (Rust, 2019).

Historic Discrimination. As schools are a place of socialization, peer and faculty perceptions and treatment can be detrimental to academic motivation, self-efficacy, and self-concept. To examine some of these, male adolescents of color are often perceived in a negative light. It is not uncommon for people of color in predominantly White schools to be treated as outsiders or overlooked as if they are not in the room (Chavous et al., 2003; Gossett et al., 1996), leaving them to feel like second-class citizens in the school community (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2015). Males of color are also perceived to be (a) intellectually inferior (Yeung, 2012), (b) a failure in school (Cammarota, 2004; Noguera, 2003), (c) a behavioral issue (Bongers et al., 2004), and (d) aggressive (Noguera, 2003). Additionally, African American males are overdiagnosed with learning disabilities, thus, being placed and retained in special education classes disproportionately (Bloom & Cohen, 2007; Edelman, 2007; R. Smith, 2006).

Further, many educators have biased perceptions of poor people. They often claim parents have attitudes, values, and behaviors that keep them in the position of poverty, and they

pass them onto their children (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Also, rather than viewing poverty from a sociopolitical perspective that considers systemic influences and class privilege, many educators believe that low-income individuals are inherently inferior because of some innate personal flaws, such as lack of motivation or poor decision making (Tutwiler, 2005). These misperceptions and stereotypes are pervasive and contribute to feelings of hopelessness and lack of vision for the future (Bolland et al., 2007; Rust, 2019), which affect their academic outcomes.

The negative impact peer and faculty perceptions and treatment has on marginalized students' academic outcomes can be partially explained by *perceived discrimination*—the perception of an individual that they will be treated unfairly because of their race and *stereotype threat*—the stress of confirming negative stereotypes about an individual's racial, ethnicity, gender, or cultural group (M. D. Anderson, 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The stress from perceived discrimination and stereotype threat is associated with decreased ability to adjust to school practices and expectation, thus, worse academic performance (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Liebkind et al., 2004). Children who think they will be treated differently in school are likely to perform worse academically (S. Stone & Han, 2005), be at greater risk for dropping out (Wayman, 2002), and believe that doing well in school is not important, useful, or enjoyable (Verkuyten & Brug, 2003). Studies of youth of color showed racial-ethnic discrimination was associated with decreased academic motivation, lower grades, lower school belonging, and greater perceived barriers to college (Alfaro et al., 2009; Benner & Graham, 2013; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Steele, 1997; Stein et al., 2013). In another study of high school students, those who had lower subjective social status than their peers experienced more emotional

distress, which was in turn associated with poorer study habits and worse grades (Destin et al., 2012).

Oppression can be seen through the continued racial/cultural and socioeconomic hierarchies that exist within our society as well as through structural inequalities within the U.S. school system. These hierarchies and inequalities have a major impact on academic outcomes of marginalized students (Rust, 2019). The disparity within the racial/cultural hierarchy is evidenced by how the mainstream European (White) culture is the dominant culture by which all other cultural groups are compared and judged (Fontes, 2010; Johnson, 2006; King et al., 2014; S. J. Lee, 2004; Thompson, 2003; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). For example, Black and Latino populations are not equally represented in gifted and talented programs, higher math courses, and advanced placement courses (Education Trust, 2020). In terms of SES, according to Rust (2019), the education system "rewards those who possess the cultural capital of the middle-class European American culture but not those who possess the lower socioeconomic cultural capital" (p. 1158). To illustrate, children living in poverty in America have educational experiences that seldom lead to higher achievement, a richer life experience, or the possibility of preparation for future employment (Children's Defense Fund, 2007). Due to their illiteracy, lack of self-efficacy, hopelessness, despair, and criminalization, they have diminished opportunities (Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Planty et al., 2007).

Oppression can be seen through the socioeconomic and political realities that maintain social hierarchy, and affect and define urban schools as institutions. Hughes and North (2012) defined this oppression as the *structural argument* in which realities like poverty, inadequate funding, racial/ethnic minority make up of student body, and inability to attract and retain competent teachers, set urban schools up to be systems that perpetuate social inequality, hence,

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maintaining the social hierarchy status quo. To understand the discriminatory nature of the structural argument, it is first important to explore the associations linked to suburban and urban education. For example, *suburban* is usually associated with White middle-class culture, well-funded schools, students' social/emotional and academic needs being met, parent involvement in education, and high academic achievement (Rust, 2019). In contrast, *urban* has been associated with individuals of color, violence, poverty, insufficient schools, dysfunctional family and cultural structures, and a lack of student motivation (Buendía, 2011; King et al., 2014; O'Connor et al., 2014). To clarify the conceptual nature of urban schools, Goodyear et al. (2012) identified factors that are suggestive of urban schools: (a) racially and ethnically diverse student bodies, (b) high levels of poverty, (c) high drop-out rates, (d) inadequate funding, (e) difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers, (f) large class sizes, and (g) an achievement gap between the races. In regard to attendance, discipline, and college, urban schools may exhibit high rates of truancy, drop out, violence, and suspension/expulsion, while students are less likely to enroll in college (NCES, 2013; Rust, 2019; Schott Foundation, 2010).

Instead of the academic achievement of urban students reflecting the individual, their families, and their communities, Gay (2014) points to the need to look at the structural and cultural realities in which they live. Because of these associations, urban schools are often thought of as being populated with low-income Black and Latino students in large metropolitan areas whose lack of academic success has been attributed to their internal and cultural characteristics (Buendía, 2011; Hudley & Chhuon, 2012; King et al., 2014; O'Connor et al., 2014). These children face a number of challenges brought on by social inequities that students in more affluent areas do not face (A. G. Green et al., 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Kozleski & Smith, 2009; C. C. Lee, 2005; Nunn, 2011). Schools in poor neighborhoods tend to have far less

funding per pupil than do schools in wealthier districts (McKinsey & Company, 2008), resulting in profound barriers to educational opportunities. Although not all schools in urban environments lack resources or funding, have a student body of predominantly poor minorities, and have low rates of academic achievement, the populations that are proportionally the concern of urban education are those that are racially/culturally isolated from the broader metropolitan environment and lack social, political, and economic resources to effect structural change in their environments (Buendía, 2011; Gay, 2014; Noguera, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2014). The oppressive racial/cultural and socioeconomic hierarchies imposed on poor students and students of color generate internalized messages about their place in society and educational opportunities, resulting in their low academic and societal expectations, which also diminishes their academic motivation and achievement (Hudley & Chhuon, 2012; Irving & Hudley, 2005).

The data from *The Condition of Education 2020* analyzing race/ethnicity, school poverty level, school locale, and school revenues and expenditures provide support of social inequities within urban education (Hussar et al., 2020). In fall 2017, the race/ethnicity percentages of students who attended high-poverty schools were highest for Black and Hispanic students—45% each, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native students—41%, Pacific Islander students—24%, students of Two or more races—18%, Asian students—15%, and White students—8% (Hussar et al., 2020). Examining geographic location, the percentage of students who attended high-poverty schools was higher among urban schools—about 42%—than among town schools, suburban schools, and rural schools—21%, 18%, and 15%, respectively. Combining federal, state, and local revenues, there was a -3.5 difference in fiscal year 2016 between total revenues per pupil in high-poverty districts and low-poverty districts, indicating that high poverty districts have less revenue per student than low-poverty districts (Cornman et al., 2019). The results

among these indicators showed urban schools are more populated with low-income racially/ethnically diverse students than any other school locale and receive less funding.

In terms of outcomes data on academic achievement, when compared to the rest of the nation, urban schools have significantly more students who test below basic levels in reading, math, science, and writing on the NAEP (Sandy & Duncan, 2010). Results from the 2019 TUDA in mathematics and reading showed demographic changes in student populations compared to the previous assessment year in 2017 (NCES, 2018). Trends revealed an increase in students with disabilities, ELLs, and Hispanic and Asian/Pacific ethnicity with a decrease in percentages of White and Black students (NCES, 2018).

In reviewing the average math and reading assessment scores of urban districts in comparison to the rest of the nation, racial disparities are evident. For math, fourth and eighth grade students showed no significant difference in scores between 2017–2019 or the first assessment year of 1990 in White-Black scores gaps and White-Hispanic score gaps (de Brey et al., 2019). For example, among racial/ethnic groups, the average mathematics score at Grade 8 for White students was 32 points higher than the average score for their Black peers and 24 points higher than the average score for the Hispanic students in 2017 and 2019 (de Brey et al., 2019). However, between the same years, there was a five-point increase in the White–American Indian/Alaska Native score gap from 25 to 30 (de Brey et al., 2019). As far as the reading assessment scores in Grades 4 and 8, they were lower on average for many student groups compared to 2017. Looking at the gaps among racial/ethnic groups, the average reading score at Grade 8 for White students was 28 points higher than the average score for their Black peers, up 3 points since 2017, and there was no significant difference in the White-Hispanic score gap in 2019 compared to 2017 (de Brey et al., 2019). Trends appear to support the notion that the

continued historic discrimination in schools and within the racial/cultural and socioeconomic hierarchies have a major impact on academic outcomes of marginalized students.

Cultural Differences. Cultural differences can be seen within family characteristics (e.g., child and parents' race/ethnicity, parents' level of educational attainment, family structure, poverty status, and parental involvement in school related activities) and within the school system. Before demonstrating how cultural differences affect academic outcomes, it is first essential to discuss the importance of cultural/ethnic identity in the lives of individuals and groups. Cultural identity is an important contributor to people's sense of self, how they relate to others, and their overall wellbeing (Ministry of Social Development, 2003). Identifying with a particular culture gives people feelings of belonging, security, support, and shared values and aspirations (Ministry of Social Development, 2003). Also, because it is an important protective factor against the effects of discrimination, it has been linked with positive outcomes in education (Hudley & Irving, 2012; Ministry of Social Development, 2003; Rust, 2019). Since marginalized adolescents' academic motivation and achievement are strongly influenced by their cultural context (e.g., cultural beliefs, behaviors, and experiences), a strong cultural identity is crucial.

Family impacts cultural identity, and for families from marginalized communities, that means passing down a legacy of discrimination. Children's family lives in regards to social, economic, and cultural contexts as well as their developmental outcomes can therefore be influenced by the intersection of multiple social categories, like race, parent educational attainment, family structure, and SES (Cole & Deater-Deckard, 2009; P. H. Collins 1998; Henry et al., 2020). For example, a youth's race/ethnicity is associated with oppression in many contexts, which is connected to poor academic outcomes (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007).

To illustrate, the most recent NAEP reading and math assessments were conducted in 2019 and were reported in *The Condition of Education* for Grades 4 and 8 (Hussar et al., 2020). In fourth and eighth grade reading and math, the average scores for White students were higher than those of their Black and Hispanic peers. However, there were slight differences between the grades and subjects when examining race/ethnicity gaps. For reading, the average scores in fourth and eighth grade showed the same disparities, but there was a difference in the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps between grades. In fourth grade, the White-Black achievement gap narrowed five points from 1992 to 2019 (32 to 27 points), but there were no significant changes in the gap between 2017 to 2019 (Hussar et al., 2020). However, in eighth grade, the opposite was reported with a notable difference between 2017 (25 points) to 2019 (28 points), but no significant changes since 1992. Looking at the White-Hispanic achievement gap in both grades, the same trend can be seen with the gap in fourth grade decreasing from 23 points in 2017 to 21 points in 2019, yet, no significant changes since 1992. For eighth grade, the gap narrowed six points (26 to 20) since 1992, but no major changes were measured from 2017 to 2019.

The same report showed very similar trends reflected in fourth and eighth grade math assessment scores (Hussar et al., 2020). For fourth grade, the White-Black achievement gap narrowed from 32 points in 1990 to 25 points in 2019, but the White-Hispanic achievement gap in 2019 (18 points) was not measurably different from the gap in 1990. From 2017 to 2019, the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps showed no significant changes. At Grade 8, gaps between assessment years and race/ethnicity were not measurably different, with the White-Black gap holding at 32 points and the White-Hispanic gap remaining at 24 points. While there were minor differences in the exact data, the results indicated very similar patterns of student

performance, illustrating the continued achievement gap in reading and math scores among White, Black, and Hispanic fourth and eighth grade students.

Parents' engagement in their children's education is an important contributor to the child's academic achievement. According to the National PTA (2000), the best predictor of student success is the extent to which families encourage learning at home and involve themselves in their child's education. Children do better academically when their parents are involved in their learning as opposed to their peers whose parents are less involved (Thelamour & Jacobs, 2014). However, the oppression parents face can impact their ability to be involved in their child's education. Variables that influence parental involvement include parent educational attainment, family structure, and family's SES (Pungello et al., 2010; T. Ross, 2016), with the most recent studies illuminating the interaction among these factors (T. Ross, 2016; Strauss & Kohn, 2013). Consequently, these same variables affect their children's educational outcomes. Prior research points to several risk factors associated with youth's poor educational outcomes (e.g., low achievement scores, repeating a grade, and dropping out of high school), and they are living in a household without a parent who has completed high school, living in a single-parent home, and living in poverty (Pungello et al., 2010; T. Ross, 2016).

Family structure, parental education, and SES are all related and have implications on student academic achievement. In 2018, the poverty rate for children under age 18 was highest for those living in mother-only households—39%, followed by those living in father-only households—23%, and children living in married-couple households—8% (Hussar et al., 2020). This pattern was generally observed across most racial/ethnic groups with the poverty rate for Black children living in mother-only households being highest—45%, followed by father-only households—35%, and married-couple households—12%. Amato (2000), Jeynes (2005), and

Weitoft et al. (2004) investigated the relationship between family structure and student achievement and found students from single-parent homes struggled more academically than students from two-parent households. Various factors affect a student's academic achievement including parental education.

Results from several studies indicate a direct correlation between parental education, student academic achievement, and socioeconomics (Davis-Kean, 2005; Strauss & Kohn, 2013). One NCES (2020) report on "Characteristics of Children's Families," showed that in 2018, about 9% of children under the age of 18 lived in households where no parent had completed high school, 26% lived in mother-only households, 8% lived in father-only households, and 18% were in families living in poverty. In the same report, similar trends can be seen within all racial/ethnic groups with the poverty rate being highest for those in households where no parent had completed high school—46% and lowest for those in households where the highest level of education attained by either parent was a bachelor's or higher degree—4% (NCES, 2020). As a result of a limited education, parents have a more difficult time being an educational advocate for their children (L. M. González et al., 2013). Their educational attainment not only connects to feelings of inadequacy to help their children due to the more challenging curriculum in higher grades, but it also decreases their willingness to participate in their children's educational community (Epstein et al., 2002). In addition, because of their low SES, parents spend more time at work and have decreased time to tend to their children's educational needs (Straus & Kohn, 2013).

Further, students from low-income families suffer from poor school attendance, show a lack of interest in schoolwork (Walpole, 2003), and are six times more likely to drop out of high school than their higher income peers (Bemak & Chung, 2008). As a further demonstration of

the socioeconomic hierarchy, students living in poverty face many struggles in pursuit of an education. They are much less likely to have access to adequate educational services (Children's Defense Fund, 2020) and are likely to attend schools offering a poor-quality education (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Teachers working in high-poverty schools report (a) feeling unprepared to address the challenges of working with low-income students and families (Cochran-Smith, 2004) and (b) significantly worse working conditions, including fewer textbooks and supplies, inadequate facilities, larger class sizes, and less administrative support (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Consequently, there is a high new teacher attrition rate, averaging between 40% to 50% over the first 5 years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Because of the high turnover rate, the education of children in poverty is further affected because it contributes to burdensome financial costs, staff instability, and a lack in staff mentoring and support.

Student and school poverty adversely affect student achievement. For over 10 years, the majority of U.S. students on free and reduced lunch consistently scored below the proficient level on the NAEP (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). When looking at NAEP reading and math performance scores at Grades 4 and 8, *The Condition of Education 2020* report shows similar trends in 2019 between grades, subjects, and across poverty levels (Hussar et al., 2020). For example, as shown in Table 1, the average reading score and math scores are lower for fourth-grade students in high-poverty schools compared to mid-high poverty schools, mid-low poverty schools, and low-poverty schools (Hussar et al., 2020).

Table 1

Reading and Math Scores per School Poverty Level–Fourth Grade

Fourth Grade Students	Reading	Math
High-Poverty Schools	206	231
Mid-High Poverty School	217	238
Mid-Low Poverty Schools	227	246
Low-Poverty Schools	240	258

Note. Created from the Condition of Education 2020, by B. Hussar, J. Zhang, S. Hein, K. Wang, A. Roberts, J. Cui, M. Smith, F. B. Mann, A. Barmer, & R. Dilig, 2020, p. 73. (https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf). Copyright 2020 by the U.S. Department of Education.

The same can be seen in the average reading and math scores for eighth grade students with students in high-poverty schools scoring significantly less than students in all other poverty levels. The average eighth grade reading score in high poverty schools is 30 points lower than the average score in low-poverty schools—249 and 279, respectively (Hussar et al., 2020). For mathematics, the average score in high-poverty schools—265 was lower than the scores in low-poverty schools—301. These results collectively demonstrate SES has an impact on academic achievement.

In addition to cultural differences within the family system, cultural disparities can also be seen through the curriculum, teaching styles, and school environment of mainstream U.S. schools (Gay, 2014; Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; King et al., 2014; Nganga, 2012; Park, 2011; Rust, 2019; United States Government Accountability Office, 2018; Yasin, 2014). Even with the association between having a strong cultural identity and positive educational outcomes, the

literature shows a gap amid cultural differences and learning. U.S. public schools reflect, use, and teach the cultural norms, roles, and values of mainstream American society, creating a disconnect between students of color and their sense of connection with their school (Gay, 2014; Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; King et al., 2014; Nganga, 2012; Park, 2011; Rust, 2019; Yasin, 2014). As a result of the disconnect, Hughes and North (2012) described the *cultural argument* to help explain poor academic outcomes of African American students. The cultural argument "contends that urban African American students develop cultural identities in opposition to mainstream U.S. culture, including academic achievement" (Rust, 2019, p. 1155). In response to a history of racial/cultural discrimination, many African American students will do anything to defy the roles, norms, and values of White Americans, therefore leading to lower academic motivation, decreased feelings of connection to schools, and academic underachievement of African American students (Hudley & Chhuon, 2012; Irving & Hudley, 2005; Ogbu, 2004). Likewise, in spite of the increasing number of students from non-dominant ethnic or cultural groups, students who are culturally and linguistically diverse often have inadequate support in U.S. schools, thus, are faced with many issues that impact their academic achievement.

Multicultural students are often being taught from an education system different from their own (Alsubaie, 2015; Ford, 2010; Nieto, 2005; Schulz et al., 2014). Teaching practices range from being unintentionally biased to overtly abusive toward diverse students (McEachern et al., 2008). There is also a disparity between teaching and learning styles. For example, styles of inquiry most often employed by classroom teachers are different from those most often used by African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian American students like convergent questions and the use of deductive reasoning to solve problems (Gay, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). If the new information has little relevance to what students

already know and believe, they are unlikely to learn it. Since the experiences of communities of color are generally not accurately portrayed in American curricula and students are taught from an ethnocentric, monocultural perspective, students from diverse populations will likely question their ability and have a difficult time in school (Howard, 1999; Loewen, 2018; Potts, 2003; D. E. Smith, 2000).

The classroom environment is discriminatory in nature as well. Students from diverse populations have different styles of nonverbal communication making it difficult for them to understand and be understood (Böhm et al., 2002). Many immigrant students have to learn a new language as well as adapt to a new culture and environment at the same time (Alsubaie, 2015). The impact this language barrier has on students is evidenced in the reported 2019 reading and math NAEP scores (Hussar et al., 2020). In both fourth and eighth grade reading and math, ELL students' scores were significantly lower than the scores for their non-ELL peers with score differentials ranging from 24-45 points. Not only are marginalized youth learning and trying to communicate in a new way, but they are also surrounded by a completely different cultural environment that they have to navigate through, contributing to trust problems (Alsubaie, 2015). Moreover, educators often have difficulty addressing issues of diversity within the classroom, which may impede their ability to incorporate cultural references from non-dominant groups' perspectives (Ford, 2010). This can contribute to inequitable outcomes for students in those populations (McEachern et al., 2008; Phuntsog, 1999) because it is important for students from a different cultural background to feel respected and safe with their teachers and classmates in order for them to be receptive to learning. Jointly, these findings indicate experiencing discrimination in various contexts creates additional adversity that marginalized youth must overcome to successfully engage in academic tasks.

Career Development. For students to be successful participants in society, part of the focus of quality education is on preparing them for college and the workforce. However, as the literature has demonstrated, diverse student populations face barriers to their social/emotional and academic development resulting in academic underachievement. This leads to poor adjustment outcomes impacting postsecondary opportunities. Despite increases over the past decade, many students who begin high school do not graduate within four years, and of those, numbers rise among diverse student groups (Hussar et al., 2020). With a limited number of good paying jobs available for individuals without a high school diploma, these emerging adults can expect to earn significantly less than college graduates (Torpey, 2018). Even for those students who do graduate from high school, earning a high school diploma does not necessarily mean that they are truly prepared for either postsecondary education or the workforce.

The impact of oppression on adolescents' career development can be further demonstrated through the attainment gap and its effects. Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that a person has completed (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017). Between 2000 and 2017, the United States fell from fifth to 10th among Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) countries in its rate of postsecondary degree attainment. Along with racial/ethnic disparities, the attainment gap is greatest for those assessed with special educational needs and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017).

Secondary transition is a critical period for all students; however, studies indicate that this time of vulnerability is magnified for minority youth due to a lack of educational opportunity and support (Benner & Graham, 2009; Edeburn & Knotts, 2019; McIntosh & White, 2006; Prelow et al., 2007; J. S. Smith, 2006; Vasquez-Salgado & Chavira, 2014). For example, a few studies

investigating secondary transition with Latino adolescents identified it as a significant barrier to the academic success of Latinx students in high school (S. Black, 1999; Niesel & Griebel, 2005; Vasquez-Salgado & Chavira, 2014). Concerning postsecondary opportunities, some studies show that African American and Latinx students and students from low-SES backgrounds continue to be underprepared for and underrepresented in 4-year colleges and universities (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; NCES, 2013; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Research focusing on inequalities in the education between Black and White Americans indicates lower academic achievement among Black American children and adolescents contributes to an ongoing pattern of Black–White inequity in markers of adult success, such as educational attainment and wages, in U.S. society (Heckman, 2011; Henry et al., 2020). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010) also noted that academic underachievement of immigrants has enormous consequences on their postsecondary opportunities in today's knowledge-based economy "where opportunities are limited for the undereducated" (p. 16).

Upon analyzing educational attainment data, the continued pattern and depth of racial disparities is alarming. Regarding race and SES, the statistical research shows higher dropout rates among students of color and poor students (Bemak & Chung, 2008; de Brey et al., 2019). From 2000 to 2019, trends in overall educational attainment rates show an increase; however, there continues to be large gaps between diverse populations and White students across all levels and widening with level of degree (Hussar et al., 2020). When looking at postsecondary education, *The Condition of Education*'s report stated that in 2019, the percentage of 25 to 29-year-olds with high school completion or higher was more for those who were Asian (97%) and White (96%) than for those who were Black (91%) and Hispanic (86%). The same report showed very similar trends reflected in associate's or higher and bachelor's or higher degree attainment

rates as shown in Table 2. Once again, the highest rate of graduation with an associate's degree or higher and bachelor's degree or higher was achieved by Asian students, followed by White, Black, Hispanic and the lowest being American Indian/Alaska Native students (Hussar et al., 2020).

Table 2

Education Attainment by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Associate's Degree or Higher %	Bachelor's Degree or Higher %
Asian	78	71
White	56	45
Black	40	29
Hispanic	31	21
American Indian/Alaska Native	23	14

Note. Created from the Condition of Education 2020, by B. Hussar, J. Zhang, S. Hein, K. Wang, A. Roberts, J. Cui, M. Smith, F. B. Mann, A. Barmer, & R. Dilig, 2020, p. 205. (https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf). Copyright 2020 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Among the ethnicities listed in Table 2, while there were minor differences in the exact data, the results indicated very similar patterns of student performance for each demographic group. The White-Black, White-Hispanic, and White-American Indian/Alaska Native gaps continue to persist in attainment.

Along with ethnicity being a factor in educational attainment, it is also linked to low-income jobs with little promise of mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The White-Black, White Hispanic, and White-American Indian/Alaska Native gaps are evident in employment and wages.

In 2016, the gap in unemployment rates was highest for White-American Indian/Alaska Native adults—4% and 11% respectively, followed by Black—8%, and Hispanic—5% (de Brey et al., 2019). In the same report, median annual earnings among those with a bachelor's or higher degree were higher for White peers ($54,700) than those of their Black ($49,400) and Hispanic ($49,300) peers (de Brey et al., 2019).

Further, it is normal for transition planning to be more of a challenge within the special education community, but an increase of diverse populations within special education services is making it more difficult. In school year 2015-2016, the percentage of students served under IDEA was highest for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native—17%, followed by those who were Black—16%, White—14%, of Two or more races—13%, Hispanic and Pacific Islander—12% each, and Asian—7% (de Bray et al., 2019). Though transition planning is required by IDEA and consists of helping students with individualized education plans make decisions about postsecondary options as well as how to get there (Grigal et al, 2011), students with intellectual disabilities are frequently held to low expectations related to postsecondary education and career outcomes. Educators not only often focus on their limitations rather than on their strengths, abilities, and learning variations (Grigal et al., 2011), but some educators also believe that problems inherent within individual students or larger cultural groups are the reason for discrepancies in postschool outcomes (Wagner et al., 2005). Because of this, they are usually excluded from postsecondary planning and have a hard time transitioning into adulthood (A. L. Cook, 2017; Folk et al., 2012; M. M. Griffin at al., 2010).

In the 2015-2016 school year, students with disabilities accounted for about 19% of the undergraduate student population and about 12% of the postbaccalaureate student population (NCES, 2019). According to reports produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), in

2015, persons with disabilities had lower employment rates than persons without disabilities. Combining disability, attainment, and employment, employment percentages for those who had not completed high school—15% or had completed only high school—22% were lower than for those who had completed some college—31%, an associate's degree—35%, or a bachelor's or higher degree—45% (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

In addition to biased perceptions of school adults leading to higher internalizing and externalizing symptoms and poor academic motivation and achievement, this discrimination also impacts secondary transition. Higher involvement with the discipline system by students of color, emotional and behavioral disabilities, and low-income levels contributes to increased rates of academic failure, dropout, and the school-to-prison pipeline for these minority populations (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Kline, 2016; Morris & Perry, 2016; Payne & Welch, 2015). Data on retention, suspension, and expulsion were reported in NCES's *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (de Brey et al., 2019). percentages include:

> In 2013–14, about 2.6 million public school students (5.3%) received one or more out-of-school suspensions. A higher percentage of Black students (13.7%) than of students from any other racial/ethnic group received an out-of-school suspension, followed by 6.7% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 5.3% of students of Two or more races, 4.5% each of Hispanic and Pacific Islander students, 3.4% of White students, and 1.1% of Asian students. (p. v)

The strongest predictor of dropping out of school is repeating a grade, and a single suspension or expulsion increases the likelihood of this happening (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016). In 2002, results from a national longitudinal study examining the relationship between grade retention and dropping out of high school indicated students who experienced a suspension were 68% more

likely to drop out of school compared to youth who were never suspended (Jimerson et al., 2002).

The adjusted cohort graduation rate is the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting ninth grade (Hussar et al., 2020). Despite increases over the past decade, 15% of high school students who began high school in 2013 did not graduate within 4 years, and of those, numbers rise to 26% for American Indian/Alaska Native students, 22% from families with low incomes, 21% for Black students, and 19% for Hispanic students (Hussar et al., 2020). In school year 2017-2018, the adjusted cohort graduation rates for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students was above the U.S. average of 85% (89% and 92% respectively); however, the graduation rate for other race/ethnicities were below the national average with American Indian/Alaskan Native—74%, Black—79%, and Hispanic—81% (Hussar et al., 2020). Additionally, although the overall status dropout rate, which refers to the percentage of 16 to 24-year-olds who are currently not enrolled in school and did not earn a high school credential (either a diploma or equivalent), decreased 4.4% from 2006 to 2018, the status dropout rates remained higher for Hispanic—8%, Black—6.4%, and foreign-born—8.6% individuals than their White peers—4.2% (Hussar et al., 2020).

Examining the school-to-prison pipeline, school disciplinary policies disproportionately affect students of color. Students who are suspended or expelled are nearly three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year (Crook, 2015). Of the youth represented in the justice system, boys of color are overrepresented with higher rates than White male boys (Pew Center on the States, 2008). In 2011, 1.5 million youth 18 year of age and younger were arrested, and of those, an unequal number were African-American and Latino youth (Puzzanchera & Sickmund, 2013). Black and Hispanic children are 71% of the nation's

detained youth which is six times the rate of White youth (Hockenberry, 2013; Lacey, 2013).

Moreover, some studies suggest that adolescents with disabilities are overrepresented in the

juvenile justice system with rates ranging from 42% to 60% of the population (Quinn et al.,

2005). Therefore, one can conclude that race, disability, and income increase students'

challenges and barriers that negatively impact aspects of their career development.

Consequences of Quality Education

Quality education should be the rule rather than the expectation; yet the opposite is true.

When people receive a quality education, not only will they reap many benefits, but humanity

will profit as well. Education is important to *human capital* and is defined by the OECD (2007)

as "the knowledge, skills, competences and other attributes embodied in individuals that are

relevant to economic activity" (p. 29). Nonetheless, the current state of K-12 education in

America has negative implications for the individual and society.

Costs

Educational researcher Ladson-Billings (2006) discussed an "education debt" (p. 3) that

is owed to the students whom the education system has poorly served (Milner, 2013). The

premise is that by not allocating funds to improving the quality of education for all students, this

created even more of a debt. She outlined four aspects of the debt: (a) historical debt, which is

the legacy of inequities in education (e.g.., race, class, gender, etc.); (b) economic debt, involving

funding and earning disparities; (c) sociopolitical debt, the degree to which marginalized

populations are excluded from the civic process; and (d) moral debt, which is "what human

beings owe to each other in the giving of, or failure to give, honor to another when honor is due"

(Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 8). The discussion of the condition of education demonstrated the

historical debt owed to its students. Discriminatory education created inequitable opportunities

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for the marginalized students. Once they leave the U.S. school system, the cycle of oppression

and its effects continue to impact the individual as well as society. Specifically, youth's

educational attainment has implications on their wellbeing (e.g., employment opportunities,

income, social status, and health) as well as the health of the economy and humanity

(Easterbrook et al., 2016). Findings from Easterbrook et al.'s (2016) research project *Identity*,

Socioeconomic Status, *and Wellbeing*, suggested the higher one's educational attainment, the

higher one's political interest, social trust, and health and wellbeing.

Individual. Ladson-Billings' (2006) concept of economic debt highlights the impact of

funding disparities by geographic location, race, and SES and the cumulative effect of income

disparities. High social and economic cost correlates with the large numbers of students dropping

out of high school (Bemak & Chung, 2008). These individuals are more likely to be unemployed,

live in poverty, become incarcerated, and have children who also drop out of high school

(Happel, 2006). Moreover, known as the wage gap, earning ratios related to years of schooling

are lower by race (Hussar et al., 2020). Consequently, an individual's social position is effected

because wealth impacts political and social power; access to capital for businesses; insurance

against fluctuations in labor market income; quality of housing, neighborhoods, and schools a

family has access to; and ability to pay for higher education (Altonji & Doraszelski, 2005). The

availability of financial, social, and political resources is further perpetuated by the nature of

friendships and family ties within communities of color. The limited resources available to

members of marginalized communities effect their quality of life.

There is a link among a poor education, unemployment, and the cycle of poverty, with

racial disparities weaved throughout. According to Duffin's (2020) statistical report on the most

recent unemployment rates of U.S. high school graduates, in 2019 around 14.8% of high school

dropouts were unemployed, compared to 14.6% of graduates and the national unemployment rate of 3.7%. Of those, unemployment rates were higher for American Indian/Alaska Native adults (11%) than for Black (8%), Hispanic (5%), White (4%), and Asian (4%) adults. In addition to the high unemployment rate of high school dropouts, working high school dropouts earned less on average than individuals of any other level of educational attainment (Duffin, 2020) with White citizens making more than any other racial/ethnic group (de Brey et al., 2019). In 2018, the average annual earnings of individuals who did not complete high school were about $26,220, compared to $38,145 among high school graduates and $71,155 among those with a bachelor's degree (Duffin, 2020). Because higher levels of educational attainment correlate with higher earnings, there is a greater likelihood that individuals who drop out of high school will live in poverty. Though not every person lacking a quality education will live in extreme poverty, most living under that condition do lack a basic education (Giovetti, 2019). Also, because it is typical of individuals who live in poverty to keep their children out of school, there is a higher likelihood that the cycle of poverty will continue (Giovetti, 2019).

On top of being probable victims to unemployment and poverty, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested than students who received a diploma (Hanson & Stipek, 2014). Across the United States, 68% of all males in prison never graduated from high school (Hanson & Stipek, 2014). Of the youth and adults represented in the criminal justice system, there is a disproportionate number of diverse populations when compared to their White peers. According to the Carson (2018), African Americans and Latinos comprise 29% of the U.S. population; yet they make up 57% of the U.S. prison population. Among juveniles, the racial gap continues to increase (Rovner, 2016) with African Americans being 4.1 times as likely to be committed to secure placements as Whites, followed by American Indians being 3.1 times as likely, and

Hispanics being 1.5 times as likely (Sickmund et al., 2017). Imprisonment rates for African-American and Hispanic adults are 5.9 and 3.1 times the rate for White adults (Carson, 2018).

Quality education impacts a person's wellbeing. Higher unemployment rates and lower income potential decreases quality of life. Living in a poor or low-income household has been linked to poor health and increased risk for mental health problems in both children and adults that can persist across one's lifespan (Hodgkinson et al., 2017). Families living in poverty have to deal with stressors involving insecurity in food, housing, and income, which can cause increased risk of mental health, substance abuse, and child abuse and neglect issues in the parents and children. These families are also often subjected to limited resources, poor housing, high crime and violence rates, and inadequate schooling, all of which are associated with poor mental health outcomes as well as physical health problems (Hodgkinson et al., 2017). However, people living in poverty have many barriers to accessing treatment. Some barriers include (a) lack and/or quality of health insurance, (b) transportation, (c) taking time off work, and (d) stigma surrounding mental health and living in poverty, leading to self-discrimination, and lack of self-confidence (Hodgkinson et al., 2017). Due to these barriers, individuals living in poverty do not receive adequate physical and mental healthcare. For example, in line with other poverty studies (Bitsko et al., 2016; L. I. Black et al., 2016), compared with children in higher-income households, those in lower-income households less often had seen a health care provider in the previous year (80.4% versus 93.8%).

History of incarceration has a negative effect on individual's quality of life. In addition to increased physical issues, for example, high blood pressure, asthma, cancer, arthritis, and infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis C, and HIV (Binswanger et al., 2009; Dumont et al., 2012; Maruschak & Beavers, 2009; Restum, 2005; Spaulding et al., 2009) and mental health

issues (James & Glaze, 2006), people face many problems when reintegrating into society, for example, family, employment, housing, health, and trouble adjusting (Dumont et al., 2012). Due to their prior imprisonment, they have a difficult time finding a job and a place to live. Loss of state and federal benefits including public housing benefits, food stamps, driver's license, and access to education assistance is also a potential consequence of going to jail (Chin, 2011). Many studies connect these stressors to a greater likelihood of a drug overdose and suicide (Binswager et al., 2007; Pratt et al., 2006; Seaman et al., 1998; Spaulding et al., 2011; Travis et al., 2014).

Societal. A combination of poor education and individual costs to marginalized populations affects human capital. The descriptive statistics of disadvantaged minorities link to lower academic skills, lower rates of educational attainment, higher unemployment rates, and lower earnings—in addition to how all of this impacts quality of life—raises concerns about inequitable education's effects on society (Swanson, 2009). The discriminatory education received by these individuals produces U.S. citizens with low skills, high unemployment, and high incarceration rates excluding them from participating in the national economy and the civic process (Ladson-Billings, 2006). For example, the average high school graduate will generate a positive lifetime net fiscal contribution of $287,000 as opposed to the average high school dropout costing the nation roughly $292,000 in taxes over their lifetime (Sum et al., 2009).

Poor quality education also results in what Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to as the sociopolitical debt. This debt reflects how communities of color are omitted from the civic process, affecting their political capital. Because of their lack of voice, families of color are repeatedly left out of decision-making processes that influence the quality of education for their children. Thus, systemic oppression is perpetuated resulting in education favoring the White population. Ultimately, the historic, economic, and sociopolitical debt that the education system

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owes marginalized students can be summed up by the final component of the education debt—

moral debt. R. Robinson's (2000) sentiments summarized the idea of the moral debt well. He

stated,

> No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled
>
> and penniless, pit them, without assistance, in a hostile environment, against privileged
>
> victimizers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to
>
> narrow. Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch. (p. 74)

In the end, non-dominant populations are where they are because of the dominant culture's

historical and systemic discrimination.

Benefits

Cherlin (2017) defines *positive externalities* as "benefits received by others when an

individual or business produces something, but for which the producer is not fully compensated"

(p. 6). Positive externalities involve the production of what are called *public goods*, "things that

may be enjoyed by people who do not themselves produce them" (p. 6). Combining the two

terms, children can be considered a public good when they benefit society by paying taxes, being

good citizens, and being productive workers. In her article "Children as a Public Good,"

economist Strober (2004) discussed children as public goods whose welfare and education need

to be addressed collectively. Public schooling can be viewed as a positive externality with the

public as well as individual students and parents benefiting when its citizens are well educated.

This is how the state justifies taxing the public to provide for children's schooling. Education is

often an indictor on many quality of life (QoL) or well-being indexes such as Human

Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2003), Quality of Life (Diener,

1995), Index of Social Progress (Estes, 1997), Quality of Life Index (Johnston, 1988),

International Living Index (Haggerty et al., 2001), Miringoff's Index of Social Health (Miringoff & Miringoff, 1999; Miringoff et al., 1996), North American Social Report (Michalos, 1980, 1982), Netherland's Living Conditions Index (Boelhouwer & Stoop, 1999), and the Swedish ULF system (Haggerty et al., 2001) demonstrating the belief that education is a factor impacting living conditions.

Higher educational attainment raises quality of life. In their chapter "Education and Quality of Life," Edgerton et al. (2012) established a relationship among educational attainment and many other factors affecting quality of life (e.g., occupational status, material well-being/standard of living, emotional well-being, health, community, intimate relationships, and personal safety/future security). Thus, the higher one's education, the higher one's material, emotional, physical, and social well-being. Increased schooling also influences decisions surrounding marriage, divorce, parenthood, and child welfare (Edgerton et al., 2012) due to better access to information (Wolfe & Haveman, 2001), improved communication skills (Edgerton et al., 2012), and increased financial support (Greenwood, 1997; Kieran, 1997; Tzeng, 1992). Moreover, with an increased income, individuals will be less likely to rely on social support programs and will pay more federal, state, and local taxes, which contribute to the nation's economic development (Baum et al., 2010; Swanson, 2009). Overall, receiving a quality education not only benefits the individual through an increased quality of life, but it also helps society through producing good citizens.

Individual. At the individual level, increasing education (human capital) increases one's productivity at work, accordingly, better employment and income (Edgerton et al., 2012; Swanson, 2009). Hauser et al. (2000) analyzed several national datasets as well as longitudinal data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey and found people who graduate from high school

and beyond have a greater occupational status. Other studies indicated a positive relationship between the amount of postsecondary education and occupational status, workforce participation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and career advancement (Bound et al., 1995; Krahn, 2004; C. E. Ross & Reskin, 1992), with a negative relationship between amount of postsecondary education and likelihood of unemployment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Researchers also found educational attainment combined with occupational status contribute to determining income (Grubb, 1993; Kane & Rouse, 1993; Murname et al., 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Soloman & Fagano; 1997; Tachibanaki, 1997).

There is a wealth of literature to support the positive impact of educational attainment on emotional and physical health. For example, many studies report a positive relationship between educational achievement, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, which are associated with numerous physical and mental benefits (Bound et al., 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Ranchor et al., 1996; C. E. Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). In their article, Fuller-Rowell et al. (2015) highlighted several benefits of educational attainment connected to one's health. As a result of higher earnings and wealth accumulation, individuals have (a) accrual of social and intellectual capital, (b) improved health behaviors (c) decreased stress exposure (d) increased capacity for coping with stressful life events, and (e) better access to health care and other health-relevant resources (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2015). Education is predictive of physical health, which can be explained by socioeconomic factors—employment, job quality, earnings, income, and wealth and behavioral factors—habits, beliefs, and personal relationships (Mirowsky & Ross, 2005). For example, the greater one's educational attainment, the higher likelihood of obtaining a job that involves less health risk and provides greater financial capacity to buy better housing, nutrition, and health care (Roberge et al., 1995).

Societal. As an individual's human capital increases, overall productivity, prosperity, and social cohesion also increases (OECD, 2018). With a rise in financial resources, people will contribute more to the economy through increased taxes, investments, and spending (Baum et al., 2010; Bowles et al., 2000; Edgerton et al., 2012). Few studies also connect higher wages to decreased criminal activity (F. Freeman, 1996; Gould et al., 2002; Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Machin & Meghir, 2000; Tauchen et al., 1994).

Well-educated people report having higher levels of social support–social capital (Ross & Van Willigen, 1997) and a variety of and participation in organized civic and political activities (Curtis et al., 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; T. W. Smith, 1995). Historically, there is a dense amount of literature connecting education to civic engagement. Theoretical contributions from Friedman (1955), Converse (1972), and Putman (2000), all point to the positive social return of education as it is one of the most important predictors of civic participation. In addition, a large amount of empirical studies indicated a positive relationship between education and civic engagement (Dee, 2004; Dye, 1980; R. B. Freeman, 1997; Helliwell & Putnam, 2007; Qiao et al., 2017; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Researchers found

- an extra year of schooling correlated with an increase in voter turnouts (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980),

- more education promotes activities like community work and group memberships (Helliwell & Putnam, 1999),

- additional schooling is linked to a higher amount of volunteer time given (Dye, 1980; R. B. Freeman, 1997), and

- positive relationships are found between higher attainment and civic engagement—regular voting, volunteering, group membership, and protesting (Dee, 2004; Qiao et al., 2017).

The Need for Reform

As it stands, America's current education system is broken and is in dire need of reform. If the purpose of education is to "support children in developing the skills, the knowledge, and the dispositions that will allow them to be responsible, contributing members of their community" (Sloan, 2012, para. 7), and the quality of education is based upon "one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location" (Slade, 2017, para. 14), there appears to be a detrimental *clog* in the education system. A quality education is supposed to provide the outcomes necessary for individuals, communities, and societies to thrive, but as the conceptual and empirical literature demonstrated, oppression is systemically infiltrated within education with the challenges marginalized students face far outweighing their supports. Quality education is not equally accessible to all. Marginalized student groups continue to grapple with systemic and structural barriers to opportunity, impacting their social/emotional, academic, and career development.

Historically, the focus of educational research has been on the achievement gap. However, these studies as well as opportunity gap investigations have not demonstrated a consistent narrowing of the gaps for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds (R. Gutiérrez, 2008; House & Martin, 1998; J. Lee, 2002; Tate, 1997). Past efforts to reform K-12 education focused on standards-based accountability for schools, teacher evaluations based partly on student learning, and expanding public school choice options (Sargrad et al., 2019).

Though necessary, these efforts continue to fall short in providing equitable services to all students and contribute to Ladson-Billings's (2006) education debt. Discouraging gaps continue to be clearly evident in achievement, opportunity, attainment, employment attainment, wages, civic development, and ultimately, opportunity for marginalized students. Although some gaps are decreasing, the movement is minimal. According to R. Gutiérrez (2008), there are four dimensions of equity: access, achievement, identity, and power. With gap studies only addressing access and achievement, while ignoring students' identity and power, the very nature of standardization is discriminatory (J. Lee, 2012).

Considering these efforts proved insufficient, an education agenda rooted in the idea of equity in access and opportunity should be central moving forward. According to educational researchers such as Ladson-Billings (2006), Darling-Hammond (2010) and Milner (2012), instead of concentrating on deficit thinking through the achievement gap (R. Gutiérrez, 2008), educational researchers need to tally up the education debt that systemic oppression has perpetuated, pay off the debt, and create equal opportunity for all. Essentially, the education debt needs to be reduced in order to close the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Addressing the education debt is not only the right thing to do, but it is also crucial to education progress, school desegregation and funding equity, and the health of society (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Currently, the efforts being made to improve education are perpetuating distrust within the system (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision to desegregate schools was made over 60 years ago; however, research shows the continued need for desegregation in schools and funding equity. Descriptive statistics comparing the demographics of public schools to locale and funding demonstrate that the system has ignored the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and is far from where it needs to be. The education

system owes marginalized populations a moral debt. Even after significant contributions made to society over the years, these individuals still face historic and systemic oppression that wreaks havoc on their social/emotional, academic, and career outcomes, which is not only detrimental to the individuals, but it also further perpetuates the disparities. Ladson Billings (2006) argued "the cumulative effect of poor education, poor housing, poor health care, and poor government services creates a divided society that leaves more than its children behind" (p. 10).

In summary, following the trends of the United States, the ongoing social inequity in American schools is a damaging *clog* in the system that needs to be addressed. With the shift in mindset from individual deficits of students to the debt that is owed to them, the onus is placed on people within the education system. One way for schools to start paying off their debt is through advocacy efforts (Burrell Storms, 2013; Dover, 2009). In a school setting, social justice advocates are change agents who are responsive to the needs of their student population, possess the ability to analyze the ways structural inequality is reproduced through schools and schooling, and implement strategies individually and collectively to create equitable services for all students regardless of their social standing in society (Burrell Storms, 2013; Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These advocates are needed to help combat the effects of oppression and diminish the social, cultural, and systemic barriers faced by marginalized students (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007). Because this will take a collective approach, the leaders of this charge should be connected to all stakeholders in education—teachers, students, parents, families, administrators, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials (Janmaat et al., 2016); therefore, school counselors are in the perfect position to answer the call for SJA (Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015).

Quality Education and School Counselors

With the mounting evolution of diversity within the school population, the education debt will continue to grow as well until interventions are put in place. Just as the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) was not created by one individual and did not add up overnight, working toward eliminating the debt will take an extensive team approach. Because the problem is systemic in nature and deals with inequities within the system, the solution should address these discriminations from a systemic perspective as well. In order to do this effectively, a SJA framework must be utilized. According to Constantine et al. (2007), to be a social justice advocate, one must believe in and stand up for "a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share equal power in society" (p. 24).

School Counselors as Social Justice Advocates

Scholars have explored who should lead the SJA charge within the public-school system. When considering the combination of their educational background; strategic position within schools to make meaningful change; access to critical student, teacher, family, and community data; and their professional dispositions and experiences, school counselors are the most logical choice (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; House & Hayes, 2002; A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al., 2010a; A. A. Singh, Urbano et al., 2010b; C. B. Stone & Dahir, 2006). Additionally, the definition of quality education as "one that focuses on the whole child—the social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographic location" (Slade, 2017, para. 14) coincides with the role of a school counselor, which is to assist all students in their social/emotional, academic, and career development, ensuring their readiness to be productive, well-adjusted adults (ASCA, 2020b). With the demonstrated barriers to social/emotional,

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academic, and career development for diverse students, school counselors may be the only individuals who can provide the necessary academic planning, career guidance, and college/career preparation to assist these students (Corwin et al., 2004). By advocating for the educational success of all students, school counselors promote the mission of quality education and social justice.

In light of the oppression marginalized students face in schools and the resulting continuation of the education gaps, school counselors are being asked to combine efforts with school stakeholders and view these issues within the context of all the systems students are involved in—school, family, and community (Noguera, 2003). ASCA (2016c) stipulates that part of the role of school counselors is to promote, facilitate, and advocate for school-family-community partnerships in which they

> promote student academic, career and social/emotional development; inform the school community about relevant community resources; actively pursue collaboration with family members and community stakeholders; remove barriers to the successful implementation of school-family-community partnerships (e.g., mistrust and miscommunication between parties, resistance to the concept and practice, transportation and childcare issues, accessible meeting times) . . . serve as an advocate, leader, facilitator, initiator, evaluator and collaborator to create, enrich and assess the effect of these partnerships on student success within the school counseling program. (para. 3)

Focus should also be on the relationship between the challenges students face and systemic factors related to things like race/ethnicity, SES, and sexual orientation (Kosciw et al., 2014; Steen & Noguera, 2010). Through collaboration, school counselors can expand their focus from individual students to other external factors such as excessive turnover rates of teachers,

principals, administrators, and other staff (Porter & Soper, 2003); limited family involvement;

low morale; poor teacher quality; and negative, discriminatory school climates involving

disproportionate discipline referrals and expulsion of students of color which impacts the

capacity of schools to meet the array of students' needs (Gregory et al., 2010; D. Griffin &

Steen, 2011).

Advocacy Competencies

The above recommendations are supported by developed advocacy competencies. The

ACA Advocacy Competencies (2018) are broken down into three levels: (a) client/student

advocacy, (b) school/community advocacy, and (c) collective action advocacy, and each level

includes two domains and specific competency areas (ACA, 2018). Applying the ACA advocacy

competencies to the work of a school counselor, the client/student level involves school

counselors working with and on behalf of the student through student empowerment and student

advocacy. For the school/community level, school counselors can choose to work alone or in

collaboration with others fighting for systemic change and to remove barriers to student success.

Finally, collective action is dedicated to informing the general public about issues with the

school system and the need for policy changes (ACA, 2018).

Taking school counselor advocacy one step further, Trusty and Brown (2005) created a

specific set of competencies that articulated the knowledge and skills school counselors need to

be effective advocates. The competencies are organized into three categories: *disposition*, which

"refers to those personal qualities that school counselors must have in order to gain the

knowledge and skills needed to become effective advocates" (Trusty & Brown, 2005, p. 261);

knowledge—of resources, parameters of practice, dispute resolution mechanisms, advocacy

models, and systems change; and *skills*—communications, collaborations, problem assessment,

problem solving, organizational, and self-care (Trusty & Brown, 2005). In line with these competencies, school counselors need to be prepared to question authority, challenge the injustices they see in their schools, and work collaboratively with each other (Bemak & Chung, 2008). It is risky and challenging to stand up against a system where members in charge work hard to maintain the status quo; therefore, it is extremely important for school counselors to work in conjunction with these key stakeholders—students, parents, administrators, teachers, city officials, board members, local business employers, and college admission counselors—to effect real systemic change (D. Griffin & Steen, 2011). Ultimately, school counselors are uniquely positioned to have a holistic view of their students, the families, and the community, thus allowing them to provide targeted supports to keep their students on track for success (D. Griffin & Steen, 2011). School counselor advocates empower others and take risks to meet the needs of their students and parents while keeping professional standards of practice and ethical principles.

Professional and Ethical Mandates

School counselors have professional and ethical responsibilities to be receptive to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds (ASCA, 2016a; ASCA, 2019b; Bemak & Chung, 2005, 2008; Dixon et al., 2010; Education Trust, 2020; Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; House & Martin, 1998; Jacobs, 1994; J. A. Lewis et al., 2003; Ratts et al., 2007; Sue & Sue, 2016). In order to address the inequities in education noted through the achievement gap, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), a subgroup of the Education Trust, was formed in 2003, and with it came a new vision of the skills a school counselor must possess (Education Trust, 2009). These skills include leadership, advocacy, team and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and assessment and use of data (Education Trust, 2009).

Later, ASCA and the Education Trust worked together to ensure that these new skills were included in the *ASCA* (2019a) *National Model*, which is a framework developed to assist school districts, schools, and school counselors design and deliver consistent K-12 comprehensive school counseling programs. The aim of the ASCA (2019a) national model is for school counseling programs to improve outcomes data—student achievement, attendance, and discipline. The framework includes four components: define, manage, deliver, and assess (ASCA, 2019a). School counselors fulfill their role of providing equitable services to all students addressing their academic, career, and social/emotional development by designing and delivering school counseling programs based on three sets of standards: ASCA (2014) *Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success: K–12 College- and Career-Readiness for Every Student*, ASCA (2016a) Ethical Standards for School Counselors, and ASCA (2019b) School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies.

In response to the continued education debt owed to marginalized students, ASCA (2016a) made substantial revisions to their professional and ethical standards. SJA verbiage is now weaved throughout the ASCA (2016a) Ethical Standards, almost every ASCA position statement, and the ASCA (2019b) School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies. The direct and indirect social SJA focus demonstrates the importance national school counselor associations place on advocacy efforts. For example, the ethical codes include many multicultural specific standards ranging from SJA awareness and skills, to developing the knowledge, training, and skills to work with diverse populations (ASCA, 2016a).

School counselors are expected to advocate for an education system that meets the needs of all its students and for equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community. To

demonstrate, in ASCA's (2016b) "The School Counselor and LGBTQ Youth" position statement, school counselors are expected to

> promote equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors recognize the school experience can be significantly more difficult for students with marginalized identities. School counselors work to eliminate barriers impeding LGBTQ student development and achievement. (para. 1)

There are similar position statements regarding equity of services in academic, career, and social/emotional development. Moreover, in the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b), there are mindsets and behaviors that are inclusive in nature, but there are also specific behavioral standards addressing multicultural influences on student success and opportunities, advocating for systemic change, and so on that school counselors are expected to implement in their school counseling programs.

Counselor education programs have joined in the movement to promote SJA. In 2009, the CACREP revised its standards to emphasize social justice, including a section devoted to diversity and advocacy. Their efforts continued in their latest revision of the CACREP (2015) standards requiring counseling graduate programs to teach "advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients" (p. 9).

Despite the disparities present in the U.S. educational system and the call by professional organizations and counselor educators for school counselors to be social justice advocates to help with these disparities, there is a gap between the ideal and reality (D. Griffin & Steen, 2011). Being a change agent is asking school counselors to take on a great deal of responsibility and risk, and some school counselors suffer from what Bemak and Chung (2008) termed the "*nice*

counselor syndrome" (p. 372). These school counselors may be afraid and unwilling to take on the role of a social justice advocate and will support the status quo to avoid conflict and the unpleasantry surrounding what students of color and low-income students face (Bemak & Chung, 2005).

Social Justice Advocacy Competence of School Counselors

As previously discussed, Liu et al. (2004) found multicultural competence is the strongest predictor for multicultural research self-efficacy. Multicultural counseling competence is also described in the literature as a close companion and complement to social justice (Ratts, 2011; Ratts et al., 2016). Additionally, the former MCC recently added social justice and advocacy terminology to their competencies, now titled the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016). With the changes to the competencies and the previously established impact of competence on self-efficacy, it is important for empirical studies evaluating the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of school counselors to exist; however, a review of the literature revealed no such study. To demonstrate the importance of said study and the gap in the literature, it is first necessary to highlight the research dedicated to SJAC and school counselors.

According to the MSJCC, counselors who are multicultural and social justice competent are in constant pursuit of developing attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action that permit them to work with marginalized populations effectively (Ratts et al., 2016). Of the four aspirational competencies in the MSJCC, a review of the current literature related to SJAC and school counselors only revealed a handful of articles and dissertation studies, with even fewer empirical investigations, considering attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills.

Attitudes and Beliefs

The aspirational competencies of attitudes and beliefs relate to the developmental domain of counselor self-awareness within the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016). When studying the literature surrounding school counselors' attitudes and beliefs about SJA, several predictors of SJAC were revealed. Beginning with Parikh et al. (2011), they conducted a quantitative study examining personal variables that contribute to SJA attitudes of school counselors. Their sample consisted of 298 acting school counselors derived from the ASCA membership online directory. Parikh et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between belief in a just world (BJW) as measured by the Global Belief in A Just World Scale (GBJWS; Lipkus, 1991), SJA as measured by the SJAS (Van Soest, 1996), and a demographic questionnaire with gender, number of years in the profession, type of setting in which the participants worked, their political ideology, religious ideology, socioeconomic status of origin, and race.

Through a sequential multiple regression, the independent variables (BJW, political ideology, religious ideology, socioeconomic status of origin, and race) were analyzed to examine how they related to SJA attitude, the dependent variable (Parikh et al., 2011). Results of the study revealed a positive correlation between religious and political ideology and SJA attitudes, which implies that liberal school counselors were more likely to engage in SJA. Results also showed a negative correlation between BJW and SJA attitudes suggesting that individuals with a higher BJW are less likely to engage in SJA behaviors. This study (Parikh et al., 2011) had a couple limitations, however, both of which related to Van Soest's (1996) SJAS. First, the SJAS is an outdated measure of SJA that does not include any of the current advocacy competencies. Next, the SJAS does not have any reports on construct or concurrent validity (Van Voorhis &

Hostetter, 2006). Conclusions drawn from the study indicated a need for increased multicultural competence in order to increase school counselors' SJA attitudes (Parikh et al., 2011).

Comparable to the constructs studied in Parikh et al. (2011), Jones (2013) conducted a quantitative analysis for her dissertation study, assessing the relationship between BJW as measured by the GBJW (Lipkus, 1991), multicultural knowledge and awareness as measured by the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS; Ponterotto et al., 2002), and SJA attitudes as measured by the SJAS (Van Soest, 1996) of professional school counselors. Jones (2013) obtained 88 participants from the ASCA list serve. A sequential multiple regression revealed a negative relationship between BJW and multicultural counseling awareness. This result suggested participants who strongly believe that people get what they deserve in life had less awareness of the impact of outside influences on individual success. Results also showed BJW and multicultural knowledge and multicultural awareness were not related to SJA. Not only is this finding inconsistent with previous research findings suggesting that high believers in a just world blamed negative outcomes such as poverty and oppression on the victim (Appelbaum et al., 2006; M. O. Hunt, 2000; Lipkus & Siegler, 1993), but the results also do not support Parikh et al.'s (2011) previous finding of a negative correlation between the two variables, indicating that school counselors with a higher belief in a just world were less likely to advocate for social justice. Numerous limitations were listed for Jones's (2013) study surrounding the instruments and participants. First, Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) SJAS has face validity, but there are no reports on construct or concurrent validity. Also, the SJAS does not specifically measure SJA. Regarding the sample, there was a response rate of only 6%, and participants were predominately White females. Nonetheless, this was the first empirical

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study with school counselors focusing on examining the relationship between their multicultural competence and their SJA (Jones, 2013).

In a qualitative study examining the aspects of "self" school counselor advocates described as being vital to their advocacy as social change agents in their school, McMahan et al. (2010) employed grounded theory and conducted semi-structured interviews to gather their data. Of the 16 participants, 12 were female, 1 were White, four were Black, and one was Asian. McMahan et al.'s findings exposed three overarching themes that impacted a school counselor's advocacy work: racial identity, self-reflection, and feminist style of work. The researchers found that participants' power was relative to having a racial minority status. They also concluded school counselors will be more committed and will actively challenge systems of oppression if they have witnessed or experienced racism themselves (McMahan et al., 2010). There were several limitations to this study as well: (a) participants had to self-identify as an advocate; (b) qualitative studies are difficult to generalize; (c) the sample consisted of nearly three times as many females than males with most being White, middle class school counselors; (d) the theme surrounding racial identity development only emerged in the racial minority participants; and (e) the racial awareness and knowledge of the White school counselor participants was not discussed.

In a recent quantitative dissertation study with 171 participants, Noble (2019) investigated whether White licensed and certified school counselors' self-perceived multicultural competence and White racial identity development (WRID) predicted self-perceived SJAC. A total of eight independent variables were used in this study, grouped into two separate constructs: WRID statuses and multicultural competence. WRID statuses included six independent — Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, Immersion/Emersion, and

Autonomy—that were measured using the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (Helms, 1994). Two independent variables examined multicultural competence (multicultural awareness and multicultural knowledge) as measured by the Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MKAS) (Ponterotto et al., 2002). Noble's (2019) results of four hierarchical stepwise multiple regression analyses indicated higher levels of self-reported WRID significantly predicted SJAC. Results also revealed knowledge of multicultural counseling significantly predicted SJAC in three out of the four subscales of advocacy investigated.

However, in Noble's (2019) study, there were several limitations. First, since there were no demographic questions about location of participants, it is unknown if the sample was nationally representative. Too, generalizability may be problematic because participants were members of their state professional school counseling organizations, and it is important to get an overall sense of the profession. Limitations related to demographics, instruments, and procedures were also noted. For example, the sample was made up of 90% female participants with 92% of the sample working in public schools. Concerning the instruments, in addition to being self-report measures, the MKAS does not assess the skills component, while action is vital in SJA work. Also, the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale and SJAS have low internal consistency as well as limited data on validity and reliability. Lastly, 296 school counselors began the study, but only 171 completed it, indicating the time it took participants to complete the survey could be a limitation as well. Overall, Noble's (2019) dissertation study helped to identify more predictors of SJAC.

Feldwisch and Whiston (2015) examined school counselors' degree of commitment to SJA, whether school counselors who report doing social justice work in their schools differ on measures of SJA, and whether school counselors in recognized comprehensive school counseling

programs have different levels of SJA when compared to counselors in non-recognized programs. Participants included 171 practicing school counselors in the state of Indiana, and they were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, the Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment (Ratts & Ford, 2010), and the Social Issues Advocacy Scale (Nilsson et al., 2011). Results indicated, on average, school counselors do report moderate to high SJA attitudes and beliefs; school counselors who endorse higher levels of SJA in their work also reported higher scores on measures of SJA; and school counselors from RAMP and Gold Star schools did have higher scores on the Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment and Social Issues Advocacy Scale when compared to school counselors who do not participate in those programs (Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015). RAMP and Gold Star are recognized school counseling programs. There were several limitations to the study. First, the sample came from one state and consisted of mostly White, heterosexual females. Next, selection bias might exist among the current participants due to the title of the email including social justice. Third, there was a small number of participants, and of the 171, only 33 participated in RAMP and Indiana Gold Star programs. Therefore, the researchers could not conclude participation in recognized school counseling programs caused higher scores. Last, information was not obtained regarding attributes of guidance programs that were not RAMP or Indiana Gold Star programs. Nonetheless, through examining school counselors' attitudes and beliefs, the results of the study expand current knowledge of the factors that influence SJAC of school counselors.

Dogan (2017) took a phenomenological qualitative approach in her dissertation study to explore school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilized to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families; school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate, and how those beliefs and attitudes

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affected their support and services to immigrants; and school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and their perceptions of how families' language policies influence student outcomes. Data from 13 semi-structured interviews of school counselors who work at schools that have 5% or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio revealed several major themes. First, school counselors feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level. Participants also believed their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants. Additionally, they felt they learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences. Next, they need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work. Then, the more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn. Another theme that emerged was social justice is at the heart of their work. Lastly, they believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not families' language policies impact student outcomes. In addition to the many themes identified, participants' perceptions and experiences were categorized into paradigms: (a) superficial awareness, (b) growing awareness, (c) flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and (d) culturally competent school counselor. Though the nature of Dogan's (2017) qualitative study made it difficult to generalize, the themes point to the importance of personal experiences, training, and stepping out of one's comfort zone in advancing SJA work.

Knowledge and Skill

The aspirational competencies of knowledge and skill relate to the developmental domain of counselor self-awareness within the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016). Of the scant research found related to school counselors' knowledge and skill in SJA, all highlighted training as a barrier to SJAC.

As previously addressed in the section discussing school counselors' attitudes and beliefs about SJA, Dogan's (2017) dissertation study pointed to the need for added training. In her assessment of school counselors' competencies and what resources they used to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, three themes emerged connected to training. Participants believed their training did not include and was not effective for counseling immigrants. They also voiced the need for more professional development to improve their work. Lastly, the interviewed school counselors highlighted the positive relationship among their learning about immigrant students and families, their awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, and their development of greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn. These themes suggested the importance of improved quality and quantity of training to increase school counselors' SJAC.

Continuing with the thematic focus, in a heuristic, critical qualitative dissertation study, Schuerman (2019) recruited school counselors-in-training from a school counseling graduate program at a midwestern, urban university. Schuerman set out to explore their attitudes and beliefs in relation to equity and social justice. Participants were chosen based on their commitment to multicultural competence, social justice, and culturally proficient consultation and advocacy. Results revealed their belief that equity and SJA work is important; however, when asked about if schools can be impactful in addressing systemic barriers that lead to the

achievement gap for linguistically and culturally diverse students, participants were fast to mention barriers to that work. One such obstacle identified was the lack of focus on social justice aspects of school counseling in their graduate program. The attitudes and beliefs emphasized further illuminated the relationship between SJSE attitudes, training, and effectiveness.

In a quantitative dissertation analysis, Decker (2013) investigated the relationship between the variables of SJA training, ratings of competence in SJA, and the likelihood to advocate. The sample consisted of counselor educators and counselor trainees who were in the practicum and internship phase of their training in CACREP accredited master's-level counselor education programs. Though this study was not specific to school counselors, the results continued to highlight the relationship between training and SJAC. Results from the SJAS (Dean, 2009) were analyzed using a multivariate linear regression, and Decker (2013) found there was a significant relationship between SJA training, ratings of SJAC, and likelihood to advocate, particularly at community and societal levels. Although there were limitations to the study revolving around the nature of self-report measures, the use of a convenience sample, and the required sample size barely being achieved with 112 of 108 needed, the findings still support the inclusion of SJA training in counselor education programs (Decker, 2013).

A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al. (2010a) sought to understand perceptions of social justice training of counseling psychology doctoral trainees. The sample consisted of a diverse sample of 66 counseling psychology doctoral trainees as they were on their predoctoral internships. Using grounded theory, the researchers broke up participant responses into the major themes of (a) promotion of social equality; (b) infusion across training contexts; (c) training opportunities outside of programs; and (d) importance of "walking the talk." Implications for future counseling psychology doctoral training were discussed, and A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al. emphasized the

need for the addition of a social justice course and multidisciplinary involvement in the translation of social justice theories into research and advocacy practice.

In a similar study, S. Collins et al. (2015) used the critical incident technique to examine perceived preparedness of master's level counseling students to engage in multicultural counseling (MC) and social justice (SJ) practice. For their qualitative study, they obtained 32 participants who were provided critical incidents and responded to a series of prompts. The critical incident categories were a single graduate course, practicum/practicum supervisor, and specific learning activities. The three organizing domains described the outcomes of the participant experiences as competencies facilitated, barriers encountered, and gaps identified. Findings from the study indicated students reported their multicultural and/or social justice education as generally positive, although certain barriers and gaps were identified.

Their education primarily resulted from a single course design and an emphasis on awareness and knowledge of culture (S. Collins et al., 2015). However, participants reported the barriers of lack of buy in, lack of competency, lack of personal agency, lack of support, and lack of resources as obstacles to their learning or application of MC or SJ concepts. Students also identified gaps in competencies and the education process and provided several suggestions on how to improve the curriculum content and learning processes in order to facilitate competency development. Their recommendations for competencies were categorized into the themes of MC or SJ practice skills, information on other cultures, more understanding of contextual/systemic influences, and empowerment for MC and SJ work. Participants noted that these competencies could be better facilitated through additional courses or training opportunities, more applied practice experience, MC and SJ concepts integrated throughout the curriculum, integrity in teaching, and a stronger conceptual foundation or working model for identifying, developing,

and applying MC and SJ competencies in practice. Though S. Collins et al. (2015) did not conduct this study with school counselors, it continues to highlight the gaps in MC and SJ training.

Empowerment and Social Justice Self-Efficacy of School Counselors

Conceptual articles exist connecting SJA and the use of empowerment with students; yet there are no existing studies to date evaluating the personal empowerment of school counselors in relation to SJA. According to Hipolito-Delgado and Lee (2007), Padilla (2014), Portman and Portman (2000), and Washington (2015), promoting student, parent, and community empowerment is an important aspect of the school counselor's role as a social change agent. Moreover, the ACA (2018) advocacy competencies as well as the MSJCC (Ratts et al., 2016) incorporate empowerment throughout. In response to critiques of their article "Empowerment Theory for the Professional School Counselor: A Manifesto for What Really Matters," Hipolito-Delgado and Lee (2007) stated if school counselors are to be successful in facilitating the empowerment of students, they must engage in a self-reflective process leading to their own sense of empowerment. Additionally, considering Bandura's (1977b) concept of self-efficacy helped develop the study of empowerment and Hochwälder's (2007) study highlighted the mediating relationship between PE, SE, and worker outcomes, therefore, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of these concepts linked to SJA and school counselors. When searching the existing literature for studies involving SJA, self-efficacy, empowerment, and school counselors, only a handful of articles and dissertations were found, and of those, one study exists tying all these concepts together.

Because of the push for school counselors to become leaders within the school system, Fay (2004) engaged in an examination of school counselors' perceptions of their change agency.

The sample included 194 K-12 school counselors, and they were asked to complete the researcher developed Self Perceptions of Effectiveness as Educational Change Agent survey. The survey consisted of three parts: a section based on Goleman et al.'s (2002) primal leadership theory including 19 indicators of emotionally intelligent primal leadership aptitude, a section on personal power or empowerment comprised of 15 indicators gathered from the literature (Fay, 2004), and a demographic questionnaire. A correlational analysis was used for the dependent variables of primal leadership and personal power or empowerment, and a univariate ANOVA procedure was employed to compare the school counselors' responses by building level. Findings revealed the school counselors' perceptions of having high indicators of emotionally intelligent primal leadership and adequate levels of personal power or empowerment did not significantly differ by building level (Fay, 2004). However, some important limitations were noted pertaining to involvement in program policy, indicating that school counselors appeared less engaged with program policy factors. Additionally, results differed by gender with females showing higher self-confidence to lead programmatic change, building their effectiveness on relationship management; yet males are better at combining their ability and strategy through the combination of self-management and explicit personal power. No limitations or data were reported. Even so, the summarized results of this study establish a connection between school counselor personal power or empowerment and self-efficacy.

Sutton and Fall (1995) conducted an investigation of the relationship between self-efficacy, as measured by the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and school climate, measured by the School Climate Scale (Coladarci, 1986) among 316 public school counselors in the state of Maine. Both instruments were modified to reflect the position of school counselor where appropriate (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Stepwise multiple regression techniques

were used to analyze the data. Results from the study suggested school counselor self-efficacy may be influenced by school climate, particularly colleague and administrative support, which is congruent with prior research (Ashton et al., 1983; Denham & Michael, 1981). The study also had a few limitations reported (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Because the participants represented a relatively small group of school counselors in a predominantly rural state, generalizability of the results was problematic. Moreover, further validation and refinement of the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale was needed. Nonetheless, Sutton and Fall's (1995) results continued to highlight the importance of developing effective methods for working with administrators, parents, and school board members to obtain support and encouragement for school counseling services and programs, which was later supported in a qualitative study investigating the activities of school counselors, their perceptions of collaboration with school staff, and their feelings of self-efficacy as school counselors. Atici (2014) found a similar finding to Sutton and Fall (1995), suggesting the need for collaboration between school counselors and school staff as well as the importance of principals, teachers, and students' perceptions of counseling to increase school counselor self-efficacy.

Another study examining perceptions of teachers' PE, self-efficacy, social support and well-being rendered comparable results. Bal Taştan (2013) conducted a study with 170 teachers from public primary schools in Kadıköy county of Istanbul. The author hypothesized that PE perception may apply its influence through individuals' appraisals of themselves (self-efficacy) or their perceived social support from their colleagues or administration. A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to analyze the independent variable of PE, measured by the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995b), the mediating variable of self-efficacy, measured by a revised version of the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer &

Jerusalem, 1995), the moderating variable of supervisory social support, measured by a 6-item scale developed by Grandey (1999) and a single item developed by Ünler-Öz (2007), and the dependent variable of psychological well-being, measured by a psychological well-being scale (Warr, 1990). Findings from Bal Taştan's (2013) study indicated

- PE largely contributes to the outcome of psychological well-being, which supports previous study results (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010; McClain, 2001);

- consistent results to Deci and Ryan's (2000) study, implying that individual's perceptions of competence are related to higher psychological well-being, motivation, and performance in the workplace;

- PE has an antecedent role for self-efficacy perception, and the impact of PE on psychological well-being is increased through self-efficacy, which further supports prior research (Bandura, 1986b, 2000; Jex et al., 2001; Nielsen et al., 2009; O'Leary, 1992; Parker, 1994); and

- supervisory social support had a significant moderating role on the relationship between PE and psychological well-being, which is in line with multiple former studies (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Liden et al., 2000; Siegall & Gardner, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995b).

Bal Taştan noted a few limitations to the study including the narrowed focus on PE rather than studying other types, the inability to comment on causality due to the data being cross-sectional, and recruiting participants from public schools only. This researcher further established a relationship among PE, self-efficacy, and support of colleagues and administration.

M. J. Miller et al. (2009) surveyed 274 college students to examine the degree to which social-cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent et al., 1994) explained their development of social

justice interest and commitment. Confirmatory factor analysis and latent variable path modeling were used to analyze data from the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009), which assessed the independent variables of SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice interest, social justice commitment, and social supports and barriers to social justice engagement. Several conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the results (M. J. Miller et al., 2009):

- the higher one's SJSE and outcome expectations, the higher one's social justice interest and commitment, which was consistent with prior SCCT-based research (Kahn, 2001; Lent et al., 2001, 2003, 2005);

- the higher one's SJSE and the more positive one's outcome expectations specific to social justice activities, the more likely that one would become interested in social justice–specific activities;

- in line with previous research (Sheu et al., 2006), self-efficacy, compared with outcome expectations, had a stronger impact on the development of social justice interest, highlighting the importance of self-efficacy beliefs in the development of college students' social justice interest;

- the greater one's interest in social justice, the more likely one indicated commitment to future SJA;

- social justice–specific social supports appeared to impact social justice commitment by enhancing SJSE beliefs, which is consistent with prior theory and research (Bandura, 2000; Lent et al., 2001, 2003, 2005); and

- social supports appeared to impact social justice commitment indirectly by enhancing SJSE beliefs and producing more positive social justice outcome expectations.

M. J. Miller et al. (2009) listed numerous limitations for their study. First, generalizability to the population of college students in the United States is hindered due to the use of a convenience sample and the limited diversity in demographics (i.e., mostly middle-class, female, self-identified White participants). Second, researchers used an adapted measure to operationalize social justice-related SCCT constructs, which left out important variables related to self-efficacy and outcome expectations (e.g., learning experiences, personality dispositions, prior social justice learning experiences, and experiences of injustice). Last, the use of cross-sectional data prevented researchers from examining the impact of social-cognitive variables on the development of social justice interest and commitment over time. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn from this study further point to the importance of self-efficacy in social justice work, the relationship between empowerment (through social justice supports) and SJSE, and the role empowerment plays in one's commitment to social justice.

In her quantitative dissertation research study, I. A. González (2012) continued M. J. Miller et al.'s (2009) investigation by examining how factors such as colorblind racial ideology, SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice social supports, and social justice supports and barriers related to social justice interest and commitment in urban school counselors. The sample included 129 urban school counselors who completed an online survey consisting of a demographic questionnaire, the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al., 2000), and the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2007), which contained subscales on SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice interest, social justice commitment, and social justice supports and barriers. Major conclusions of I. A. González's (2012) study were

- the higher a participant's SJSE, the higher their outcome expectations are regarding social justice activities and, in turn, the higher their interest in social justice activities;

- a path analysis confirmed self-efficacy having a direct effect on social justice commitment, which highlights the importance of developing urban school counselors' SJSE;

- when school counselors have social justice supports, they are more likely to be committed to SJA efforts through SJSE; and

- there was a significant negative relationship between colorblind racial ideology and social justice commitment, suggesting that the higher the levels of colorblind racial ideology, the less likely one would be interested in engaging in SJA and committed to SJA in the future.

Essentially, school counselors' mindfulness of blatant racial issues, White racial privilege, and institutional discrimination is vital to their social justice interest and commitment; yet, school counselors of color have more awareness in these areas (I. A. González, 2012).

Concerning limitations of the study, according to I. A. González (2012), to assess the significance of the path model the sample size should have been 140. However, her obtained sample size of 129 urban school counselors limited the statistical significance of the path coefficient. Next, due to the limited use of the SIQ, there is incomplete construct validity for this instrument. This researcher defends the need to study factors effecting school counselors' SJSE.

The importance of empowerment and self-efficacy to worker outcomes has been established. In addition, previous studies have highlighted the mediating relationship between PE, SE, and worker outcomes (Hochwälder, 2007). However, empirical evidence among the constructs of SE, PE, and SJSE is lacking in school counseling research. With the continued gap in education, the education debt owed to marginalized students, and the growing body of

literature calling school counselors to be the agents of change in these issues, more studies dedicated to school counselor empowerment and SJSE are vital.

Social Justice Self-Efficacy of School Counselors and Need for the Present Study

A review of the existing literature surrounding SJSE specific to school counselors rendered one result, which was I. A. González's (2012) dissertation study previously discussed. One major conclusion drawn from her study was developing school counselors' SJSE is imperative to SJA practice (I. A. González, 2012). The influence of one's self-efficacy on one's behavior and functioning is well documented in the literature (Bandura, 2001; Schwarzer & Renner, 2000), and it is an important aspect of effective teaching, counseling, and coping with change (Bandura, 1994; Larson & Daniels, 1998). For example, in their meta-analysis on counselor self-efficacy, Larson and Daniels (1998) found higher self-efficacy was linked to perseverance in the face of challenging counselor tasks.

Narrowing the focus to school counselors, many researchers have studied school counselor self-efficacy. For instance, Mullen and Lambie (2016) found the higher the school counselor's self-efficacy in being knowledgeable about the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program, the higher likelihood they would implement it effectively. Moreover, in their investigation of school counselor dispositions as predictors of data usage, Holcomb-McCoy et al. (2009) found the most predictive dispositions of data usage were general self-efficacy and school counselor-self efficacy. Other studies reported higher levels of school counselor self-efficacy being linked to a higher probability to perform preferred tasks and being supported by members of their schools (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). A connection between school counselor self-efficacy and effectiveness also exists regarding school-family-community partnerships (Bryan & Griffin., 2010) and collaboration with school staff (Atici, 2014).

In addition, Bodenhorn et al. (2010) conducted a study on school counselors' perceptions of the status of the achievement gap and equity in their schools, school counselor self-efficacy, and the type of program approach that school counselors report implementing—ASCA National Model, National Standards, comprehensive, developmental. The sample included 860 school counselors who were members of ASCA, and they completed the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) as well as researcher developed questions regarding the school counseling program, achievement gap information, and demographics. Several conclusions were drawn from the study's findings:

- the type of school counseling program endorsed does not seem to be related to the achievement gap status or equity issues in the school;

- participants who did not select a school counseling program choice had lower school counselor self-efficacy scores, were least likely to respond to the achievement gap questions, and were least likely to report a closing achievement gap in their schools;

- school counselors with higher levels of self-efficacy seem to have a different impact on their students as well as awareness of the achievement gap data and implementation of the ASCA National Model; and

- higher self-efficacy is linked to a higher likelihood of reporting equitable opportunities in the school.

Limitations were reported pertaining to generalizability of results based on a sample of only ASCA members, the self-report nature of the survey, and the equity questions were not exhaustive or inclusive in terms of measuring the whole construct. Findings from Bodenhorn et al.'s (2010) study support the notion that school counselor self-efficacy is crucial to effective practice.

School counseling literature over the past decade has urged school counselors to be more involved in social justice and equity issues (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; House & Sears, 2002; Nelson et al., 2008). Mandates followed from the ASCA ethical standards (ASCA, 2016a), the school counselor role description (ASCA, 2020b), and the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a). However, there are still practicing school counselors who report not being aware of the equity and achievement data in their own schools (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). If higher self-efficacy increases the likelihood of a preferred behavior (Atici, 2014; Bandura, 2001; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Schwarzer & Renner, 2000), there is a dire need for more intentional fostering of school counselor self-efficacy. Previous literature also highlights the significance of training to counselor self-efficacy. Tang et al. (2004) found the length of internship hours and prior related work experience were positively related with counselors' self-efficacy. Researchers Urbani et al. (2002) and Barbee et al. (2003) examined training in relation to counselor self-efficacy as well, and results indicated counselors who attended skilled counselor training had greater gains in both skills acquisition and self-efficacy, and pre-practicum service learning had a significant positive relationship with counselor self-efficacy and a significant negative relationship with student anxiety.

A review of the literature specific to SJSE further emphasized implications of training. L. C. Sullivan (2019) completed her quantitative dissertation study on the relationship between master level counseling trainees' social justice training, training environment supports and barriers, perception of institutional support on social justice and student beliefs on colorblind racial attitudes, social justice interest, social justice commitment, and SJSE. The participants included 132 master's level trainees in CACREP accredited Clinical Mental Health Counseling

and School Counseling programs. They were surveyed using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes

Scale (Neville et al. 2000), Social Issues Questionnaire (M. J. Miller et al., 2009), and the

Training Environment Support and Barriers scale (M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011). The

purpose of L. C. Sullivan's (2019) study was to identify if formal training experiences and

supportive training environments influenced masters' level counseling trainees' beliefs on

colorblind racial attitudes, social justice interest, commitment, and self-efficacy. Data from the

surveys were analyzed using multiple analysis of variance. Survey results did not show

statistically significant differences between students that did and did not take a multicultural

course, social justice course, or completed at least three conferences or workshops on social

justice on their reported social justice interest, commitment, self-efficacy, or color-blind racial

attitudes.

Several limitations to the study were noted centering around sampling procedures and

research design (L. C. Sullivan, 2019). For example, online survey research from a convenience

sample was used and is susceptible to self-selection bias having an over or underrepresented type

of respondent as well as a high "severity of nonresponse bias" (Alreck & Settle, 2004, p. 33).

Next, because respondents for the study were predominately White heterosexual women,

minority identities were underrepresented in the sample; therefore, L. C. Sullivan (2019) was

unable to compare groups on race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender on the proposed

variables of interest. Additionally, no causational conclusions could be made about the

relationships between the variables being studied due to the inability of the researcher to

manipulate variables or assign participants to groups. Furthermore, unlike many previous

researchers utilizing SCCT, L. C. Sullivan chose not to employ structural equation modeling to

identify paths between variables (Autin et al., 2015; I. A. González, 2012; M. J. Miller et al.,

2009; M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011); thus the opportunity to compare results from her study and others is limited. Last, conclusions on relationships as mediated by other variables was not explored. Nonetheless, findings from L. C. Sullivan's (2019) study support that focusing on identifying and bolstering students' SJSE may help to increase interest and commitment to social justice.

In a similar quantitative dissertation study with a cross-sectional sample of school psychology graduate students, Cooper (2015) examined their perceived beliefs related to social justice (and hypothesized related constructs), potential differences in their social justice beliefs, and possible predictors of SJSE and social justice commitment. To assess the dependent variables of SJSE and social justice commitment, participants completed the SJSE and Social Justice Commitment subscales of the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2007, 2009). The independent variables of personal moral imperative, domains of multicultural personality, and social justice training environment were measured by the Personal Moral Imperative (M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011), the Program Training Environment scale (M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011), and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire-Short Form (van der Zee et al., 2013). Empirical support for relationships between SJSE and commitment and trainees' moral beliefs, multicultural personality, and program training environment was found. A couple of conclusions were drawn: (a) affiliation with a social justice and/or multicultural-focused program was positively related to a more supportive training environment related to social justice (Cooper, 2015); and (b) consistent with prior research (McCabe & Rubinson, 2008; Shriberg et al., 2011), training approaches in the field of school psychology need to focus more on the skills domain (Cooper, 2015). According to Arredondo and Rosen (2007), SJA is action-oriented; therefore, it is imperative to not only facilitate students' awareness and knowledge, but it is even more crucial

to foster growth in their skills by teaching knowledge of how and when to take professional

risks, leading to higher SJSE. Limitations were reported related to the selective sample, self-

selection bias, exclusion of potentially important variables (e.g., personality dispositions and

experience with discrimination/oppression), use of cross-sectional data, and use of self-report

measures (Cooper, 2015). Implications of Cooper's study are similar to the ones gleaned from L.

C. Sullivan's (2019) study, meaning they both demonstrate a lack of the graduate program's

attention to the skill and action domains of the MSJCC.

Fabian (2012) examined predictors of social justice orientation among social work

students for her dissertation study. The sample included 131 graduate social work students in the

Winter 2012 term at the University of Michigan. Participants completed measures of the

independent variables—racial and gender identity (Gurin & Markus, 1988), of the mediating

variables—belief in a just world (Lipkus, 1991) and SJSE (M. J. Miller et al., 2009), and of the

dependent variables—social justice interest, social justice commitment (M. J. Miller et al., 2009),

and belief in the mission of social work (Santangelo, 1993). Descriptive statistics, correlations,

and tests of mediation were utilized in the data analysis for this study (Fabion, 2012). Results

indicated

- belief in a just world and SJSE both mediated the relationships between racial identity
  and social justice interest;

- only SJSE mediated the relationships between racial identity and social justice
  commitment and between racial identity and belief in the mission of social work;

- the belief that the world is inherently just was only a predictor of social justice
  interest for those participants whose race was particularly salient, but not for those
  whose gender was salient;

- only SJSE mediated the relationships between gender identity and social justice interest and between gender identity and social justice commitment; and

- only belief in a just world mediated the relationship between gender identity and belief in the mission of social work.

There were several limitations noted in Fabian's (2012) study. First, data were collected from one social work graduate program, possibly limiting generalizability. Second, the sample lacked diversity with almost 80% Caucasian and 93% female participants. In addition, the researcher only examined social identity in terms of race or gender, yet there are many other forms of social identity (e.g., religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and SES). Furthermore, causal relationships cannot be definitively established due to the cross-sectional nature of the data. Another limitation reported was the study excluded other potentially significant individual trait variables like personality dispositions, altruistic motivations, or personal moral imperative. Nonetheless, Fabian's finding that SJSE was related to social justice outcomes provides further support of the need for training programs to facilitate SJA skills, which students will later put into action. This also continues to demonstrate the gap in the existing literature evaluating both SJAC and SJSE in the same study.

Comparable studies were conducted with a focus on multicultural self-efficacy. In a quantitative dissertation study, McCannon (2019) sought to investigate whether counselor multicultural training and multicultural competence predicted multicultural self-efficacy as well as whether client-counselor racial/ethnic match moderated the relationship in counseling professionals working with youth living in at-risk circumstances. The sample included 61 counseling professionals who work with youth living in at-risk circumstances in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The participants completed an online survey consisting of the

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Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey, Counselor Edition-Revised (Kim et al., 2003), which measures counseling professionals' multicultural competence and the Multicultural Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Racial Diversity Form (Sheu, 2005), which measures counseling professionals' multicultural self-efficacy. A hierarchical multiple regression analyses was used, and results indicated client-counselor racial/ethnic match and counselor multicultural competence were statistically significant predictors of counselor multicultural self-efficacy (McCannon, 2019). Additionally, a second statistically significant model in predicting counselor multicultural self-efficacy was the combination of counselor multicultural training, multicultural competence, and client-counselor racial/ethnic match. Finally, in terms of the moderating variable, client-counselor racial/ethnic match had moderating effects on the relationship between counselor multicultural training, multicultural competence, and multicultural self-efficacy.

A handful of limitations were reported in the study (McCannon, 2019). First, the sample was small, lacked diversity, and was gleaned from narrow inclusion criteria. In addition, there was difficulty in discerning if the counselors who reported being racially/ethnically matched to their clientele were actually culturally competent or simply being aware of their own culture. Further, the inability to assess cultural nuances accurately within the participants was a documented limitation. Next, the use of a dichotomous, categorical variable to assess counseling exposure instead of continuous variable limited the findings. Last, choosing multicultural training as a predictor variable for multicultural self-efficacy in conjunction with competence was hypothesized to have a separate effect on SJSE; however, the constructs had a joint effect, suggesting the similarity of the constructs. Notwithstanding, the findings offered further insight into the training needs of counseling professionals working with youth living in at-risk circumstances.

In 2016, Albert conducted a similar quantitative dissertation study as McCannon's 2019 study employing a correlational research design examining the relationship among dimensions of multicultural self-efficacy and school counselors' leadership practices. Albert (2016) hypothesized school counselor multicultural self-efficacy—knowledge of multicultural concepts, using data and understanding systemic change, developing cross-cultural relationships, multicultural counseling awareness, multicultural assessment, and applying racial and cultural knowledge to practice—predicted their leadership practices. The nationwide sample included 212 school counselors, and data for the study were collected using a sociodemographic questionnaire, the Leadership Practices Inventory, Self-Form (Kouzes & Posner, 2013), and the School Counseling Multicultural Efficacy Scale (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008). Findings from this study revealed positive, statistically significant correlations between school counselors' multicultural self-efficacy and leadership practices with their multicultural self-efficacy accounting for over a third of the variance in school counselors' leadership practices (Albert, 2016). This suggested a strong relation between school counselors' multicultural capabilities and their leadership practices. A few limitations were reported, which included the use of self-report measures, the leadership measure not being specific to school counselors, and generalizability was impacted due to the sample including only members from ASCA and lacking diversity. Regardless, findings from Albert's (2016) study suggested school counselors' multicultural self-efficacy predicts their engagement in leadership practices.

A review of the literature connecting competence, empowerment, self-efficacy, and SJA rendered one result in a similar field. Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) surveyed graduate students in a master's in social work (MSW) program at Indiana University to try and understand the changes in the students' perceptions of their empowerment as social workers, their

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commitment to SJA, and the connection between worker empowerment and commitment to SJA.

The researchers also explored the association of worker empowerment and commitment to client

empowerment through SJA with locus of control as well as the relationship between BJW and

empowerment. To measure the constructs, the researchers used four instruments: the Social

Worker Empowerment Scale (Frans, 1993a) was used to measure the dependent variable of

empowerment among social workers; the SJAS (Van Soest, 1996) was used to measure the

dependent variable of student commitment to client empowerment; the Counselor Locus of

Control Scale (Koeske & Kirk, 1995) measured the independent variable of worker locus of

control; and BJWS (Rubin & Peplau, 1975) measured the independent variable of believing that

the world is just. Initially, 85 of the 89 students completed the survey during their first month in

the graduate program (Van Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006). The same students were given the survey

2 years later during the month prior to graduation, but only 52 of the students completed it.

Results from this study demonstrated that not only did most new MSW students in this cohort

hold important beliefs about social worker empowerment and commitment to client

empowerment through SJA in the beginning of their studies, but their sense of empowerment as

social workers and their commitment to client empowerment was strengthened by their social

work education.

Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) study had several limitations:

- small sample size from one school;

- self-report measure with a pretest-posttest intervention, which could result in
  response shift bias;

- lack of a comprehensive instrument to measure commitment to empowerment
  practice and use of empowering interventions;

- no outcomes data on clients; and

- the data does not explain particular aspects of the graduate educational experience that might have led to the increased social worker empowerment and commitment to SJA.

However, findings from the study support results from previous research on similar constructs (Van Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006). For example, other studies suggested social worker self-efficacy and empowerment develop as MSW students and social work practitioners increase their knowledge and skills of practice (Frans, 1993a, 1993b; Frans & Moran, 1993; Holden et al., 2002). Overall, Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) study demonstrated the impact of empowerment, self-efficacy, and competence on SJA practice in the field of social work.

Calls for school counselors to be leaders are not new in the school counseling literature (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Curry & DeVoss, 2009; Mayes et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2009; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; Sink, 2009; Young et al., 2015). The ASCA (2019a) National Model emphasizes the themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. In the Education Trust's (2009) definition of school counseling, school counselors are firmly positioned in the role of leaders and advocates to support all students. As previously mentioned, multicultural counseling is described in the literature as a close companion and complement to social justice (Ratts, 2011; Ratts et al., 2016), with social justice heavily revolving around advocacy (Ratts et al., 2016). Although there is a vast amount of literature recognizing the importance of SJA in school counseling (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Dixon et al., 2010; Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; House & Hayes, 2002; J. A. Lewis et al., 2003; Ratts &

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Greenleaf, 2018; A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al., 2010a; A. A. Singh, Urbano et al., 2010b; C. B. Stone & Dahir, 2006), there is a need to expand knowledge of practice.

Ultimately, the goal is for school counselors to engage in SJA practices, however, challenges of working with clients from diverse backgrounds as well as barriers to SJA practices have been established in the literature (Constantine, 2001; D. Griffin & Steen, 2011; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Ratts (2011) identified the need for a counselor to possess SJAC in order to engage in SJA practices, while other researchers argued that developing school counselors' SJSE is imperative to SJA practice as well (Fabian, 2012; T. González, 2012; J. Miller, 2008). Yet there are no studies to date empirically examining how SJAC and SJSE work together (Cooper, 2015; Fabian, 2012; McCannon, 2019; L. C. Sullivan, 2019). Moreover, even though it important for school counselors to practice SJA, someone that is disempowered may not fully understand societal injustice and may naïvely cause harm through his or her activities on behalf of a marginalized community. In essence, school counselors' perceptions of their levels of structural and PE could help identify another factor affecting their SJSE, but no studies have been done linking these constructs in the school counseling literature.

The present study can add to the literature by understanding the characteristics that are significant antecedents to a school counselor's SJSE, which is important to SJA practice. Additionally, results of the current study will help inform professional development for practicing school counselors as well as ASCA, ACA, and graduate programs on how to better train, educate, and support current and future school counselors. Furthermore, though school counselors are the population of focus in this study, this research can also enlighten school administrators to the importance of empowerment of school counselors utilizing best practices, ultimately assisting the school district to provide quality education.

In conclusion, the growing body of literature demonstrating the *clogs* in the current education system is exigent and irrefutable. America's schools are lacking the quality education their students so desperately need and deserve. Just like oppression is systemically and perpetually embedded within the school system, the profound effects of the inequitable education received will be systemic and cyclical in nature as well, moving from the individual, to society, and to future generations. In response to this crisis, school counselors are receiving the high call to use their training, dispositions, and central placement within schools to be the change agents for the underserved. The first step in assuming this role is for school counselors to develop a strong sense of SJAC by identifying and minimizing barriers, subsequently increasing their SJSE. Through employing SJA practices and collaborating with others, school counselors can beget educational reform; thus, improving the overall wellbeing of marginalized students and society.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher sought to explore whether relationships existed among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. This chapter is an overview of the research questions, procedural information regarding the research design adopted for use in this study as well as overviews of the statistical analyses, data collection protocols, and ethical considerations. The focus of the current study was answering the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence on the self-perceived levels of social justice self-efficacy in school counselors?

2. To what extent does structural empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

3. To what extent does psychological empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

Research Design

This researcher followed a non-experimental relationship-based research design to explore whether relationships existed among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. This was accomplished by using a quantitative approach employing multiple regression and moderation analyses. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the effects of the moderating variables. This moderation analysis allowed the researcher to test for the influence of SE and psychological empowerment on the relationships between SJAC and SJSE. This not only provided data on the effect but also the nature of the relationship.

Participants

The sampling method in this study was a combination of snowball and purposeful sampling and included a convenience sample of K-12 licensed or certified school counselors

with at least 1 year of experience. This sampling method was chosen due to the ease of access to participants, the availability of participants, and the quickness of gathering data. Participants were recruited through ASCA Scene—a resource for school counselors to share information and network, email, social media—Facebook and LinkedIn, and the following counseling-related listservs: CESNET, COUNSGRADS, and DIVERSEGRAD-L.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power3 (Faul et al., 2007) to ensure an adequate sample size to represent this population of practicing school counselors. An α-level of .05, effect size of .15, and a power of at least .80 were used to calculate sample size when conducting a multiple regression analysis with a total of three predictor variables—SJAC, SE, and PE (Faul et al., 2009). Effect sizes of .2, .5, and .8 are recognized as small, moderate, and large, respectively (Cohen et al., 2003). A conservative effect size of .15 was selected to detect a small to moderate impact for multiple regression analyses (Kissil et al., 2015; Matthews et al., 2018). The power analysis revealed a power of at least .80 would be achieved with a minimum of 111 participants. Therefore, a minimum number of 111 participants were obtained to ensure adequate statistical power in this study.

Instrumentation

In the present study, four established instruments were utilized to measure the constructs of SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. Each of the four measures were selected due to their targeted focus on the variables and empirical support for their psychometric properties. In addition to these assessment measures, demographic information were also obtained at the beginning of the survey, which included participant's age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, years of experience as a practicing licensed or certified K-12 school counselor, description of current school setting (elementary, middle, high school, or private school), school geographic setting

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(rural, urban, suburban), school geographic region (Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin); Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont); South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia); West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming), political views, and amount of advocacy training completed in the past five years. Demographic information was used to describe the sample and was analyzed to ensure that it would not act as an additional significant variable. Collectively, the Qualtrics survey created for this study was composed of 106 questions that included 10 demographic questions, 43 questions that measured SJAC, 21 questions that measured SE, 12 questions that measured PE, and 20 questions that measured SJSE. The survey took an estimated 30 minutes to complete.

Social Justice Advocacy Competence

The independent variable evaluated in this study was SJAC, which refers to a counselor's ability to "explore client problems within the context of an oppressive society and to intervene more contextually and systemically" (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018, pp. 79-80). Additionally, competence entails possessing attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action in the content area (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). This was evaluated using the 43-item SJAS (Dean, 2009). Participants were asked to rate their level of SJAC on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all true*; 7 = *totally true*) in four different subscales of collaborative action, social/political advocacy, client empowerment, client/community advocacy, which were established through an

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explanatory factor analysis and are consistent with the ACA (2003) advocacy competencies. Items in the collaborative action subscale included statements like "I create written materials to raise awareness about issues that affect my clients" and "I collaborate with potential allies for social change." Next, items in the social/political advocacy subscale included items like "I contact my legislator regarding social issues that impact my clients" and "I engage in legislative and policy actions that affect marginalized groups." Client empowerment included eight items and contained statements like "I understand the effects of multiple oppressions on clients" and "I support my client's self-advocacy efforts." To end, eight items fell under client/community advocacy and include statements like "I use effective listening skills to gain understanding of community groups' goals." This researcher edited the instrument's items to reflect the role of a school counselor. For example, the statement "I work with clients to develop action plans for confronting barriers to their wellbeing" became "I work with students to develop action plans for confronting barrier to their wellbeing." Alpha coefficients for the scores of the four factors identified were: .92–collaborative action, .91–social/political advocacy, .76–client empowerment, and .76–client/community advocacy (Dean, 2009).

In constructing this instrument, content validity was established in two phases. In Phase 1, the instrument item development phase, the instrument was given to three practicing counselors, who were also doctoral students, to receive feedback on the clarity of the items and their experience completing the instrument. In Phase 2, the content validity was established by using a panel of experts who were professors and activists from five different universities. Construct validity was examined by establishing convergent validity with the following instruments using Pearson product moment correlation: the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale, the Miville-Guzman

Universality Diversity Scale–Short Form, and the Personal Belief in a Just World Questionnaire. The results indicated no statistically significant relationship between the SJAS and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, a correlation of .54 between the SJAS and the Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale, a .30 correlation with the Miville-Guzman Universality Diversity Scale-Short Form, and no statistically significant relationship with the Personal Belief in a Just World Questionnaire.

This researcher considered using the Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment survey (Ratts & Ford, 2010); however, it has been minimally used in research with no reported psychometric properties. With the SJAS being the only known scale established in the literature to assess SJAC, further research and development of advocacy competency assessments is needed.

Employee Empowerment

M. Lee and Koh (2001) define empowerment as the "psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor" (p. 686). In a review of the literature on empowerment, Eljaaidi (2016) concluded there are two primary forms for measuring employee empowerment—SE and PE. Kanter (1993) defines SE as an organization's ability to offer access to information, resources, support and opportunity in the work environment. It focuses on the access and ability to mobilize power structures, particularly opportunity, support, information and resources from one's position in the organization to create and sustain the work environment and enhance organizational development (Kanter, 1977, 1993). SE is defined as one's perception that he or she has control over their environment and feels congruence between his or her values and those of the organization (Rappaport, 1987;

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Spreitzer, 1995b; Zimmerman, 1995). Therefore, to examine employee empowerment, it was necessary to include a measure for each form of employee empowerment.

Structural Empowerment

Researchers contend that when employees view their work environment as providing opportunities to bring about change, they feel personally empowered, in turn, leading to positive worker outcomes—lower levels of burnout, higher levels of self-efficacy, and so forth (R. Anderson, 2015; Hochwälder, 2007). For the purpose of this study, SE is defined as one's perception of his or her opportunity, access to information, support, access to resources, and formal and informal power within an organization.

This construct was evaluated using the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ-II) (Laschinger et al., 2001). The 21-item instrument uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *none* to 5 = *a lot* for the first 19 questions and a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* for the final two items. Participants were asked to rate their level of SE in a series of four subscales that reflect the dimensions of SE with sample items including "How much of each kind of opportunity do you have in your present job" (opportunity), "How much access to information do you have in your present job" (access to information), "How much access to support do you have in your present job" (support), and "How much access to resources do you have in your present job" (access to resources); two subscales which measure formal and informal power as theorized by Kanter (1993) with sample items including "In my work setting/job: the amount of variety in tasks associated with my job is" (formal) and "How much opportunity do you have for these activities in your present job: being sought out by peers for help with problems" (informal); and two remaining questions

addressing feelings of overall empowerment with a sample item of "Overall, my current work environment empowers me to accomplish my work in an effective manner."

This researcher edited the instrument's items to reflect a school setting and a school counselor's role. For example, the item "How much opportunity do you have for these activities in your present job: collaborating on patient care with physicians" became "How much opportunity do you have for these activities in your present job: collaborating on student care with administrators." An overall empowerment score was created by summing and averaging the responses related to each subscale followed by summing the six main subscales. Higher scores represented stronger perceptions of working in an empowered work environment. The final two questions were added by Laschinger et al. (2001) as a global measure of empowerment. The global measurement was added to this study as a validation index, and the score was determined by summing and averaging the responses to these two questions. Validity and reliability data found in the CWEQ-II User Manual (Spence Laschinger, 2012), indicated that construct validity was established by Laschinger et al. (2001) with an initial confirmatory factor analysis, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the CWEQ-II subscales being reported as .81 for the opportunity subscale, .80 for the information subscale, .89 for the support subscale, and .84 for the resources subscale. As for the informal and formal power subscales, the job activities subscale had a reliability of .69, while the organization relationship subscale had a reliability of .67. The added two-item global measure demonstrated a reliability of .87 (Laschinger et al., 2000). Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were reported as 0.79 to 0.82 for the entire instrument (Laschinger et al. 2001).

Psychological Empowerment

PE was the second moderating variable and is defined as one's perception that he or she has control over their environment and feels congruence between his or her values and those of the organization (Rappaport, 1987; Spreitzer, 1995b; Zimmerman, 1995). This was evaluated using the PES constructed by Spreitzer (1995b). Participants were asked to rate their level of PE through the four dimensions of PE conceptualized by Thomas and Velthouse (1990): meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. This 12-item instrument was composed of three items for each dimension of PE using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Sample items are "The work I do is meaningful to me" (meaning), "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job" (competence), "I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work" (self-determination), and "I have significant influence over what happens in my department" (impact). It is scored through taking the mean of the subdimension means. Higher scores indicated more perceived PE.

Reliability data for two sample populations tested by Spreitzer (1995b) demonstrated solid reliability for the overall 12-item measure with a sample from the industrial arena providing a Cronbach's alpha of .72 and the second sample from the insurance industry showed a Cronbach's alpha of .62 (which is below the conventional cut-off of .70) when the subdimensions were factored in total. Moreover, since two administrations of the instrument were given to the same population 5 months apart with little mortality impact (Creswell, 2013), results of the insurance industry sample revealed strong test-retest reliability of each of the subdimensions with validity estimates for the dimensions around .80.

Social Justice Self-Efficacy

The dependent variable in the moderation analysis was SJSE. M. J. Miller and

Sendrowitz (2011) defined SJSE as:

An individual's perceived ability to engage in social justice advocacy behaviors across

intrapersonal (e.g., "examine your own worldview, biases, and prejudicial attitudes after

witnessing or hearing about social injustice"), interpersonal (e.g., "challenge an

individual who displays racial, ethnic and/or religious intolerance"), community (e.g.,

"support efforts to reduce social injustice through your own local fundraising efforts"),

and institutional/political (e.g., "leading a group of co-workers in an effort to eliminate

workplace discrimination in your place of employment") domains. (p. 162)

This was measured using the 20-item SJSE subscale from the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009). The

SIQ measures level of interest in and commitment to engaging in social justice. The SIQ contains

53 items with 10-point Likert-type response options (0 = *very low interest*; 10 = *very high*

interest), including subscales measuring SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice

interest, social justice commitment, and supports and barriers to social justice engagement. M. J.

Miller et al. (2009) reported an internal consistency estimate of .94 for the total scale.

To assess participants' SJSE, they were asked to rate their level of confidence in

performing SJA behaviors on a 10-point Likert-type scale (0 = *no confidence at all* and 9 =

complete confidence). The four domains assessed included the intrapersonal (e.g., "how much

confidence do you have in your ability to examine your own worldview, biases, and prejudicial

attitudes after hearing about social injustice") with a reported internal consistency estimate of

.80; interpersonal (e.g., "how much confidence do you have in your ability to challenge an

individual who displays racial, ethnic, and/or religious intolerance") with a reported internal

consistency estimate of .88; community (e.g., "how much confidence do you have in your ability

to reduce social injustice through your own local fundraising efforts") with a reported internal

consistency estimate of .86; and institutional/political (e.g., "how much confidence do you have

in your ability to lead a group of coworkers in an effort to eliminate workplace discrimination in

your place of employment") with a reported internal consistency estimate of .92. Individual

items were summed and then averaged, with higher scores reflecting increased confidence in

performing SJA behaviors. M. J. Miller et al. (2007) reported internal consistency ranging from

.94 to .96 for the SJSE score.

Procedure

The 106-item survey were distributed at large through ASCA Scene, email, social media,

and the following listservs: CESNET, COUNSGRADS, and DIVERSEGRAD-L. The initial

request for participation was disseminated upon the receipt of Institutional Review Board

approval from Duquesne University. Subsequent requests were issued in weekly increments for a

total of 2 weeks. Upon receiving the study materials, all participants were asked to review a

statement of consent to participate in this research study. The email to potential participants also

contained a brief description of the research study and an embedded link to the survey.

Participants indicated consent by selecting "agree" at which point the participant was presented

with the survey.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants followed a link to complete the survey using a Qualtrics web-form. Upon

their completion, data from the surveys was collected and stored in a Qualtrics password

protected server-storage system. Access to these data and the survey design was restricted to

only the researcher of the study and the four committee members affiliated with this dissertation.

Before data were analyzed, criteria were set for eliminating or retaining cases. Participants needed to (a) provide informed consent, (b) identify as a practicing, K-12 licensed or certified school counselor with a minimum of 1 year of experience, (c) complete the demographic questionnaire, (d) complete all the items on the four instruments, and (d) appear to expend sufficient effort.

This researcher utilized SPSS 27 and PROCESS, which is a macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2018) that conducts observed-variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis. SPSS and PROCESS was utilized to analyze data from the survey scales measuring SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. Specifically, these scale items were evaluated using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, the latter of which focuses primarily on correlations and multiple regression procedures. To examine the research questions, hierarchical multiple regression analyses was conducted that tested the hypothesis that school counselors' SJSE is a function of SJAC, and more specifically whether SE and PE moderate the relationship between SJAC and SJSE.

Analysis of moderating variables is recommended when a third variable is thought to strengthen or weaken the relationship between predictor and criterion variables (Frazier et al., 2004). Using moderation, researchers investigated interactions among variables and assumed one variable affects the relationship between the other variables (Cohen et al., 2003) regarding the strength of an effect between the predictor and criterion variables. This method was chosen because of its ability to determine how much variation in school counselor SJSE might be explained by SJAC, SE, and PE, while accounting for the unique contribution of each predicting variable (Cohen et al., 2003). The current researcher hypothesized that the effect SJAC has on

SJSE for school counselors would depend on their self-perceived levels of SE and PE, thereby justifying the use of moderation analysis.

In the first step, the three independent variables of SJAC, SE, and PE were included. To avoid potentially problematic high multicollinearity with the interaction term, the variables were centered and an interaction term between both SJAC and SE and SJAC and PE was created (Aiken & West, 1991). Next, the interaction term between both SJAC and SE and SJAC and PE was added to the regression model with the dependent variable of SJSE. The last step was testing the interaction, and if the interaction was significant, then moderation was supported. If a significant moderated relationship was identified, this researcher examined the strength of relationships between SJAC and SJSE within the individual groups of SE and PE using a simple slopes analysis. To accomplish this, data were separated by group (SE and PE) and then individual regression equations were estimated with SJAC regressed on SJSE.

Demographic information was used to describe the sample and was analyzed to ensure that it would not act as an additional significant variable. If any demographic variables significantly correlated with any of the central variables of study, the above analyses that tests the research questions was re-run, with these demographic variables included as covariates.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

To guarantee confidentiality, the researcher ensured that participants' names, places of employment, and other identifying data did not appear on the survey instrument at any time. Further, no data were collected, analyzed, or stored that in any way linked a participant to their survey response data. Participants had the right to withdraw at any point prior to completion of the survey without penalty and could do so simply by exiting out of the survey. If participants chose to withdraw prior to the completion of the survey, those answers were not included in the

final analysis. Upon completion, participants no longer had the ability to withdraw due to the anonymous nature of the survey. In other words, there was no way to associate a participant with his or her survey; thus, those specific data could not be removed. Responses appeared only in statistical data summaries. Given the strict measures to ensure confidentiality and the inherent nature of the data being entirely comprised on self-reports, there was no foreseeable risk posed to the participants, but a possible benefit included the opportunity to reflect on their attitudes regarding themselves and their students, which could be beneficial for professional growth and development. All procedures were submitted for approval to the Duquesne University Internal Review Board upon the approval of the dissertation committee.

The following chapter presents the results of this methodological process and provides a series of data tables that graphically or numerically summarize the more pertinent aspects of the statistical regression analyses conducted in order to answer the research questions posed regarding the potential roles of SE and PE as moderating variables in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The following chapter contains the results of the current study designed to characterize the relationship among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. This chapter will provide a detailed descriptive and inferential analysis and summary of the participants' demographics, the data cleaning, statistical code implementation, research questions addressed by this study, and exploratory data analysis to ensure the appropriate assumptions of the method were met. Both significant and nonsignificant results are presented. Data were collected through an online Qualtrics survey, which was exported and analyzed using SPSS 27. The PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5.2. was used in the analysis to conduct observed-variable moderation (Hayes, 2018). A total of 427 surveys were collected during the data collection period, and of these, 218 had to be removed due to not meeting the inclusion criterion or their data were incomplete/invalid. After cleaning the data, 209 (48.9%) of the original 427 participants were included in the final analysis.

Research Questions

The current study examined the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence on the self-perceived levels of social justice self-efficacy in school counselors?

2. To what extent does structural empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

3. To what extent does psychological empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

Four instruments were used to determine the relationship between SJAC and SJSE moderated by SE and PE—the SJSE subscale of the SIQ, the CWEQ-II, the PES, and the SJAS.

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Pre-Analysis Data Cleaning Procedure

Before descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed, pre-analysis data screenings and testing for covariates were conducted in order to improve data quality. Pre-analysis data screening was completed to ensure accuracy of the data collected, determining if any missing data were present, and assessing any extreme values such as outliers to help ensure valid results of the statistical analyses (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). Criterion were set for either eliminating or retaining cases to be included in the final analysis. The inclusion criteria were (a) participants provided informed consent, (b) participants indicated they were practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with a minimum of 1 year of experience, (c) participants completed the demographic questionnaire, (d) participants completed all items on the four survey instruments (i.e., the SJSE subscale of the SIQ, CWEQ-II, PES, and SJAS, and (e) participants appeared to expend sufficient effort to generate a "maximally valid response" (Alwin, 1991, p. 17).

After data cleaning, of the original 427 recorded participants, four cases were eliminated because they did not provide consent. Further, 108 cases were eliminated as a result of respondents withdrawing prior to completion of the demographic questionnaire or one or more survey instruments. Additionally, although these participants made it to the end of the combined survey, 56 cases were removed because respondents did not complete all items. Lastly, 50 cases were eliminated due to suspected satisficing.

According to Alwin (1991), satisficing refers to the expenditure of minimum effort to generate a satisfactory response. Upon analyzing the data, this researcher identified several suspected instances of "weak satisficing" and "strong satisficing" (Krosnick, 1991, p. 215). In "weak satisficing," "respondents execute all the different stages of processing, but do so less

thoroughly" (Roberts et al., 2019, p. 601). In the current study, the researcher identified response behavior indicative of weak satisficing, such as selecting the first acceptable response alternative and acquiescence, which is "the tendency to agree with assertions" (p. 601). In contrast, in "strong satisficing" "one or more stages of processing is skipped altogether" (p. 601). This researcher also identified response behavior suggestive of strong satisficing. Using Krosnick (1991), the current respondents showed evidence of

> . . . *endorsing the status quo* (a preference for the middle "keep things the same" alternative in questions asking about support for policy change); *non-differentiation* (the tendency to select the same point on a rating scale to rate multiple items presented with the same response alternatives); saying [neutral] instead of expressing an opinion; and "mental coin-flipping" (selecting response alternatives at random). (as cited in Roberts et al., 2019, p. 601)

As a result of suspected respondent satisficing, this researcher decided to omit all cases (50); thus, the final sample for this study included 209 participants, which is 98 more than what was required to ensure adequate statistical power.

<div align="center">

Descriptive Statistics

</div>

Sample

After cleaning the data, 209 participants remained in the study. Descriptive statistics of the sample were reported with means, standard deviations (see Table 3), and frequency distributions (see Table 4). The average age of the participants was 39 years old.

The average years of school counseling experience was about nine years. The average number of advocacy trainings of the participants was about three years. Age has a slightly

smaller sample size due to 10 missing values. However, age was not shown to be a significant covariate and cases were complete otherwise. Therefore, cases were not deleted based on age.

Table 3

Summary of Continuous Demographics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SE	SD
Age	199	25	64	39.31	.67	9.43
Years of Experience	209	1	29	8.9	.47	6.8
Advocacy Trainings	209	0	25	3.41	.25	.14

Additionally, the participants in the study were 87.6% cisgender female, 84.7% White Euro-American, and 95.2% heterosexual. Participants came from diverse school settings with 41.6% from elementary/primary schools ($n = 87$), 18.2% from middle/junior schools ($n = 38$), 23.89% from high schools ($n = 50$), and 16.2 % from other school settings ($n = 34$). The participants hail from diverse geographical locations with varying political views.

Study Variables

The predictor variables in this study were SJAC, SE, and PE. SJAC was assessed using the SJAS (Dean, 2009). The moderator variable of SE was assessed by the CWEQ-II (Laschinger & Havens, 1996). The moderator variable of PE was assessed by the PES (Spreitzer, 1995a).

The dependent variable was the SJSE, assessed by the SJSE subscale from the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009). For the total sample ($N = 209$), descriptive statistics were computed for the scales and subscales used in the study (see Table 5).

Table 4

Summary of Categorical Demographics (N = 209)

Demographics	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Gender				
Cisgender Female	183	87.6	87.6	87.6
Cisgender Male	18	8.6	8.6	96.2
Transgendered Male	1	.5	.5	96.7
Other	2	1.0	1.0	97.6
Prefer not to answer	5	2.4	2.4	100.0
Race/Ethnicity				
White/Euro-American	177	84.7	84.7	84.7
Black/African American	12	5.7	5.7	90.4
Hispanic/Latin American	8	3.8	3.8	94.3
Native American/Alaskan Native	1	.5	.5	94.7
Asian/Asian American	4	1.9	1.9	96.7
Two or more races	5	2.4	2.4	99.0
Other	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	199	95.2	95.2	95.2
Gay or Lesbian	4	1.9	1.9	97.1
Bisexual	3	1.4	1.4	98.6
Other	3	1.4	1.4	100.0
School Setting				
Elementary/Primary	87	41.6	41.6	41.6
Middle/Junior	38	18.2	18.2	59.8
High School	50	23.89	23.89	83.7
Combined K-12	13	6.2	6.2	90.0
Other	21	10.0	10.0	100.00
School Geographic Setting				
Urban	48	23.0	23.0	23.0
Suburban	94	45.0	45.0	67.9
Rural	67	32.1	32.1	100.00
School Region				
Midwest	50	23.9	23.9	23.9
Northwest	60	28.7	28.7	52.6
South	76	36.4	36.4	89.0
West	23	11.0	11.0	100.0
Political Views				
Very Conservative	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
Conservative	26	12.4	12.4	13.4
Somewhat Conservative	37	17.7	17.7	31.1
Somewhat Liberal	56	26.8	26.8	57.9
Liberal	68	32.5	32.5	90.4
Very Liberal	20	9.6	9.6	100.0

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Each Subscale and Total Independent and Dependent Variables

Variable	Subscale/ Subdimension	Minimum	Maximum	M	SE	SD	Variance
SJSE	Total Score	2.45	6.85	4.93	0.05	0.70	0.50
SE	Opportunity	2.00	5.00	3.90	0.05	0.69	0.47
	Access to information	1.33	5.00	3.46	0.05	0.81	0.66
	Access to Support	1.00	5.00	3.32	0.06	0.86	0.75
	Access to Resources	1.00	5.00	2.80	0.05	0.81	0.66
	Formal Power	1.33	5.00	3.17	0.05	0.77	0.60
	Informal Power	1.25	5.00	3.96	0.05	0.74	0.55
	Total Score	1.63	4.89	3.46	0.04	0.54	0.29
	Global Empowerment	1.00	5.00	3.60	0.07	0.97	0.95
PE	Meaning	1.00	7.00	6.23	0.05	0.81	0.66
	Competence	1.33	7.00	5.63	0.06	0.86	0.75
	Self-Determination	1.00	7.00	5.31	0.07	1.05	1.11
	Impact	1.00	7.00	5.13	0.08	1.25	1.56
	Total Score	1.33	7.00	5.58	0.05	0.77	0.60
SJAC	Collaborative Action	1.95	6.70	4.34	0.06	0.86	0.75
	Social/Political Advocacy	1.00	6.43	3.15	0.09	1.33	1.78
	Client Empowerment	2.88	7.00	5.22	0.05	0.75	0.57
	Client/ Community Advocacy	3.25	7.00	5.06	0.05	0.75	0.56
	Total Score	2.65	6.63	4.44	0.05	0.76	0.58

The CWEQ-II measured participant SE. The CWEQ-II has four subscales that reflect the dimensions of SE (i.e., opportunity, access to information, support, and access to resources); two subscales which measure formal and informal power as theorized by Kanter (1993); and two remaining questions addressing feelings of overall empowerment. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was computed for the scores of the six subscales and the total score. The alpha coefficients for the scores of the six subscales and the total scale indicate a sufficient internal consistency and reliability with opportunity ($\alpha = .676$), access to information ($\alpha = .818$), access

to support ($\alpha = .809$), access to resources ($\alpha = .741$), formal power ($\alpha = .581$), informal power ($\alpha = .752$), and the total scale ($\alpha = .876$). The response to items in each subscale were averaged to obtain the subscale score. All responses across all subscales, except Global Empowerment, were averaged to obtain the total score. Global Empowerment is a variable that was included in the original studies as a validation index (Laschinger et al., 2001) and was not needed in this study. Total scores for the current sample ranged from 1.63 to 4.89 ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .54$).

The PES measured PE through the four dimensions of PE conceptualized by Thomas and Velthouse (1990): meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was computed for the scores of the four dimensions and the total score. The alpha coefficients for the scores of the four dimensions and the total scale indicate a sufficient internal consistency and reliability with meaning ($\alpha = .851$), competence ($\alpha = .773$), self-determination ($\alpha = .891$), impact ($\alpha = .885$), and the total scale ($\alpha = .894$). The response to items in each subscale were averaged to obtain the subscale score. All responses across all subscales were averaged to determine the total score. Total scores for the current sample ranged from 1.33 to 7.00 ($M = 5.58$, $SD = .77$).

The SJSE subscale of the SIQ measured level of confidence in performing SJA behaviors. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was computed for the total scale. The alpha coefficient for the total scale indicates a sufficient internal consistency and reliability with ($\alpha = .917$). All responses were averaged to determine the total score. Total scores for the current sample ranged from 2.45 to 6.85 ($M = 4.93$, $SD = .70$).

Findings

This researcher utilized a web-based Qualtrics survey comprised of four instruments: the SJAS (Dean, 2009), the CWEQ-II (Laschinger & Havens, 1996), the PES (Spreitzer, 1995a), and

the SJSE subscale of the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009) to explore whether relationships exist among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. Prior to computing the moderation analysis, this researcher tested the following assumptions necessary for regression analysis: normal distribution of the predictor and criterion variables, linear relationships between predictor and criterion variables, reliability, and homoscedasticity (Cohen et al., 2003). Normality was assessed by visual inspection of Q-Q plots (see Figures 3–6). All variables appear to be normal. A Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was computed for each subscale/subdimension and total for each scale (see Table 6).

Due the significant Shapiro-Wilk statistic for PE, additional exploratory analysis was completed. One significant outlier was identified. This was noted during the analysis. As removing data points is a last resort, the analysis was completed with and without the outlier. The conclusion of the moderation analysis including PE remained constant with and without the outlier. All other included variables were normally distributed.

Figure 3

Normal Q-Q Plot of SJSE
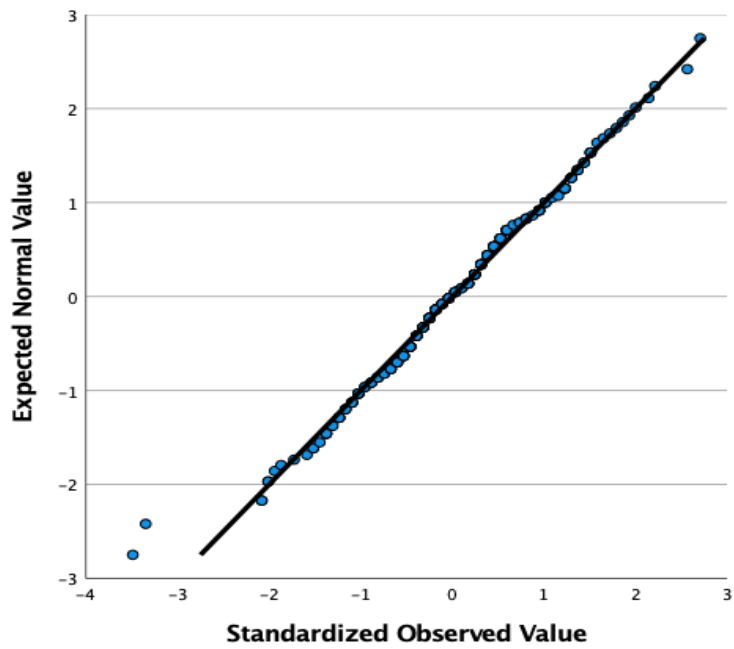
Figure 4

Normal Q-Q Plot of SE
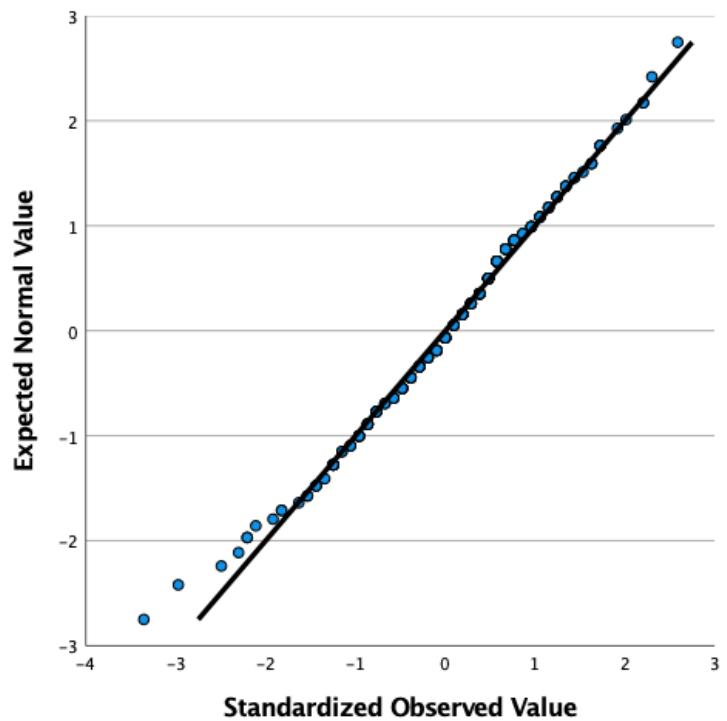
Figure 5

Normal Q-Q Plot of PE
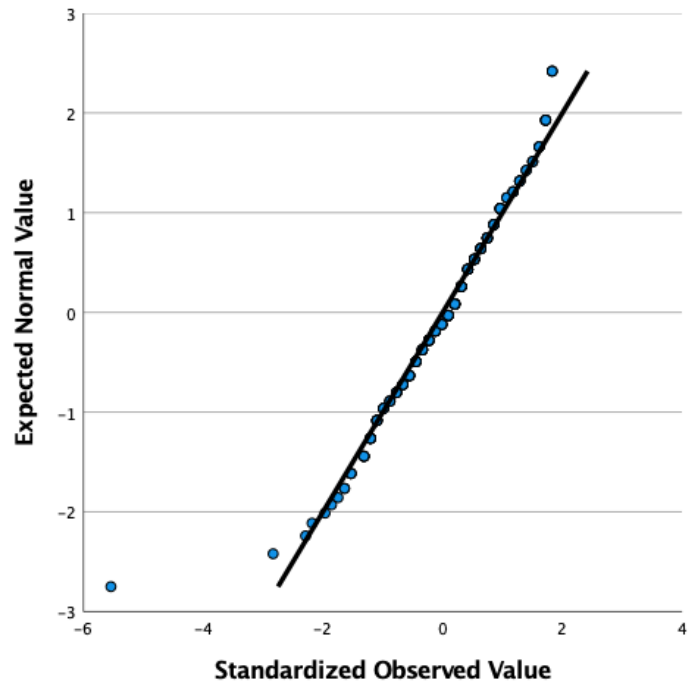
Figure 6

Normal Q-Q Plot of SJAC
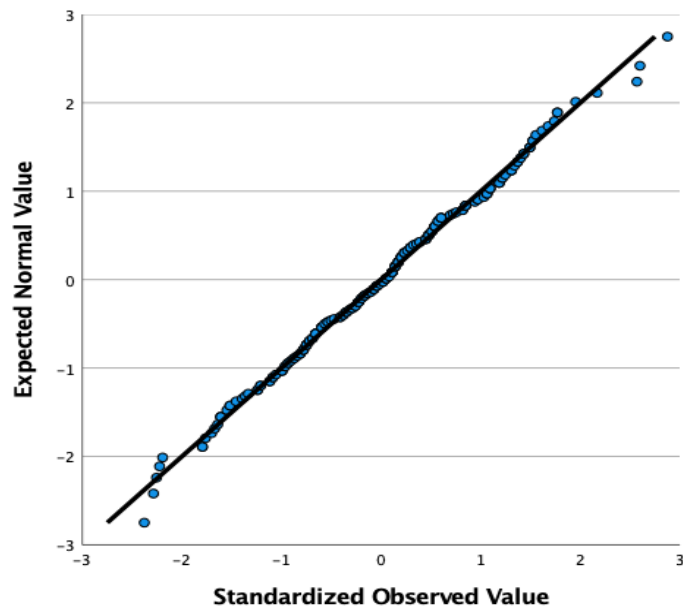
Table 6

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality

Scale	Subscale/Subdimension	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	*df*	Significance
SJSE	Total Score	0.991	209	0.198
CWEQ-II	Opportunity	0.956	209	0***
	Access to Information	0.975	209	0.001***
	Access to Support	0.97	209	0***
	Access to Resources	0.976	209	0.001**
	Formal Power	0.979	209	0.003**
	Informal Power	0.942	209	0**
	Total Score	0.992	209	0.292
PES	Global Empowerment	0.925	209	0***
	Meaning	0.818	209	0***
	Competence	0.933	209	0***
	Self-Determination	0.947	209	0***
	Impact	0.95	209	0***
	Total Score	0.952	209	0***
SJAS	Collaborative Action	0.993	209	0.42
	Social/Political Advocacy	0.966	209	0***
	Client Empowerment	0.989	209	0.121
	Client/ Community Advocacy	0.993	209	0.478
	Total Score	0.995	209	0.69

Note. Significance level: **< 0.005, ***< 0.001.

Linearity was assessed through partial regression scatter plots, which showed linear relations between each of SJAC, SE, and PE, and SJSE. Homoscedasticity was satisfied based on the fact that the variance of residuals around the regression line was the same across levels of predictor variables. Also, the variance inflation factor across all regression models were between 0 and 5, which satisfies the assumption (Cohen et al., 2003) with the exception of the interaction which is not unexpected and does not indicate a significant issue with multicollinearity. The validity and previously established reliability of each instrument were presented previously and in Chapter 3. Reliability scores for the current study scales and subscales (or subdimensions) are shown in Table 7. A zero-order Pearson correlation was completed to determine the intercorrelation between subscales/subdimensions and the total scale score. All were moderately

to highly significantly correlated. The reliability score was also higher for the total scale scores than the subscale/subdimension scores. For this reason, as well as keeping the investigation succinct and clear, all models were designed using univariate constructs for each scale.

Table 7

Reliability Scores

Scale	Subscale/Subdimension	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
SJSE	Total Score	.917	20
CWEQ-II	Opportunity	.676	3
	Access to Information	.818	3
	Access to Support	.809	3
	Access to Resources	.741	3
	Formal Power	.581	3
	Informal Power	.752	4
	Total Score	.876	19
PES	Global Empowerment	.879	2
	Meaning	.851	3
	Competence	.773	3
	Self-Determination	.891	3
	Impact	.885	3
	Total Score	.894	12
SJAS	Collaborative Action	.913	20
	Social/Political Advocacy	.886	7
	Client Empowerment	.821	8
	Client/ Community Advocacy	.677	8
	Total Score	.942	43

Exploratory analyses of variance were completed to identify any significant differences of SJSE between levels of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation, school setting, school geographic setting, school region, and political views to identify potential covariates. Both School Setting ($F = 3.600$, $p = 0.007$) and Political Views ($F = 4.259$, $p = 0.001$) were shown to have significant differences of SJSE between the levels of each variable.

School Setting and Political Views were therefore included as covariates in each analysis. Next, continuous demographic variables were evaluated to determine if they were covariates using zero-order Pearson correlations. Number of advocacy trainings was determined to be a

significant covariate of SJSE ($r = 0.240$, $p < 0.0001$) as shown in Table 8. Therefore, advocacy training, school setting, and political views were determined to be covariates.

Table 8

Correlation of Demographic Variables with SJSE

Variable		Age	Years Exp	Adv Train	SJSE M	SE_TM	PE_M	SJAC_TM
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.692**	0.034	0.005	-0.027	0.084	-0.016
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.637	0.944	0.705	0.238	0.817
	N	199	199	199	199	199	199	199
Years of Experience	Pearson Correlation	.692**	1	0.028	-0.016	-0.031	0.019	-0.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0.687	0.822	0.66	0.785	0.587
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209
Advocacy Trainings	Pearson Correlation	0.034	0.028	1	.240**	0.021	0.02	.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.637	0.687		0	0.766	0.776	0
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209
SJSE	Pearson Correlation	0.005	-0.016	.240**	1	0.115	.362**	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.944	0.822	0		0.097	0	0
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209
SE	Pearson Correlation	-0.027	-0.031	0.021	0.115	1	.617**	.215**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.705	0.66	0.766	0.097		0	0.002
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209
PE	Pearson Correlation	0.084	0.019	0.02	.362**	.617**	1	.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.238	0.785	0.776	0	0		0
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209
SJAC	Pearson Correlation	-0.016	-0.038	.315**	.683**	.215**	.277**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.817	0.587	0	0	0.002	0	
	N	199	209	209	209	209	209	209

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $N = 199$ due to missing values in *Age*.

Results by Research Question

To test the research inquiries of the effects of self-perceived levels of SJAC on the self-perceived levels of SJSE in school counselors, and more specifically whether SE and PE had any

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moderating effects on the relationship, multiple regressions were calculated. Predictor and moderator variables were centered prior to analysis to avoid multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). Separate regression models were conducted for the predictor variable (SJAC), moderator variables (SE and PE), and the interaction terms between the predictor and moderator variables.

The regression equations allowed for comparisons of each set of variables regarding the prediction of the criterion variable. Evidence of moderation was explored by examining the full models where the interaction terms were included. Moderation is likely to have occurred if an interaction term is a statistically significant contributor to the final regression equation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In addition, the final regression equations should explain more variance in the criterion variable than any of the preceding regression models. The individual variables were also examined for statistically significant contributions in the prediction of the criterion variable.

Research Question 1

What are the effects of self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence on the self-perceived levels of social justice self-efficacy in school counselors? The first research question was answered by correlating the SJSE scale score with the SJAS scale score. The model was adjusted for the identified covariates using a two-step linear regression model. Number of previous advocacy trainings, school setting, and political views were included in the model as covariates, as they all displayed a significant positive correlation with SJSE. The first step modeled the covariates only as predictors of SJSE and the second model evaluated the SJAC while controlling for covariates as a predictor of SJSE (see Table 9). SJAC significantly predicts SJSE, $b = .607$, 95% CI [.507,.706], $t = 12.049$, $p = .000$. The R^2 value (.489) indicates that this model explains 48.9% of the variance in SJSE scores. Therefore, there is a moderate positive

relationship between SJAC and SJSE meaning that, on average, as SJAC increases, SJSE increases.

Table 9

Regression of SJSE (Y) Predicted from SJAC (X)–Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the Estimate	R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	p
1	0.355	0.126	0.113	0.6689	0.126	9.851	3	205	0
2	0.7	0.489	0.479	0.51252	0.363	145.176	1	204	0
1 (Constant)	4.109	0.176			23.292	0	3.761	4.457	
Advocacy Training	0.041	0.013	0.211	3.205	0.002	0.016	0.066	0.24	
School Setting	0.054	0.035	0.101	1.532	0.127	-0.016	0.124	0.147	
Political Views	0.137	0.038	0.234	3.568	0	0.061	0.213	0.258	
2 (Constant)	1.828	0.233			7.859	0	1.37	2.287	
Advocacy Training	0.004	0.01	0.019	0.359	0.72	-0.017	0.024	0.24	
School Setting	0.035	0.027	0.065	1.288	0.199	-0.019	0.089	0.147	
Political Views	0.076	0.03	0.13	2.541	0.012	0.017	0.135	0.258	
SJAC	0.607	0.05	0.646	12.049	0	0.507	0.706	0.683	

Note. UnSt. = Unstandardized; St. = Standardized.

Research Question 2

To what extent does structural empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy? The second research question was answered by using a Hayes (2018) simple moderation model (model 1) of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE moderated by SE. The SPSS PROCESS model 1: simple moderation model was used with the centering option while controlling for the predetermined covariates of number of previous advocacy trainings, school setting, and political views. The regression

coefficient for the product (interaction) of SJAC and SE was statistically significant when compared to the 0.05 significance level (alpha* = 0.05, b = 0.1895, 95% CI [-.3478, -.0311], F = 5.5664, p = .0193) as shown in Table 10. The SJAC interaction with SE accounts for about 1.37% (R^2 = 0.0137) of the variance. The overall model is significant R^2 = .5034, MSE = .2580, $F(6,202)$ = 34.1276, p < .0001. This model with SE explains 1.4% more variance than the model with just SJAC. Yet, SE is not significant in the model. Thus, SE alone did not contribute to the model; however, it is a significant moderator of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE.

Table 10

Moderation Analysis of SJAC (X) on SJSE (Y) Moderated by SE (W)

Variable	Coeff.	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.5531	.1392	32.7080	.000	4.2787	4.8276
SJAC	.6058	.0513	113.8023	.0000	.5046	.7070
SE	-.0293	.0661	-.4432	.6581	-.1596	.1010
SJAC x SE	-.1895	.0803	-2.3593	.0193	-.3478	-.0311
School Setting	.0385	.0270	1.4269	.1552	-.0147	.0918
Political View	.0747	.0297	2.5166	.0126	.0162	.1333
Advocacy Training	.0004	.0103	.0411	.9673	-.0198	.0207

While the moderation analysis indicated SE was a moderator of the relationship between SJSE and SJAC, it does not indicate the details of how SE moderates SJSE and SJAC. For this reason, a simple slope analysis was completed in PROCESS. The plot is generated from the PROCESS Output where the interaction is probed by estimating the conditional effect of X on Y when W is equal to the mean, a standard deviation below the mean, and a standard deviation above the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 7 demonstrates the effect of SE on the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. At lower scores on the CWEQ-II, the relationship between

SJAC and SJSE is stronger. However, at higher scores on CWEQ-II, the relationship between

SJAC and SJSE is weaker.

Figure 7

Slopes of SJAC as a Predictor for SJSE with SE as a Moderator
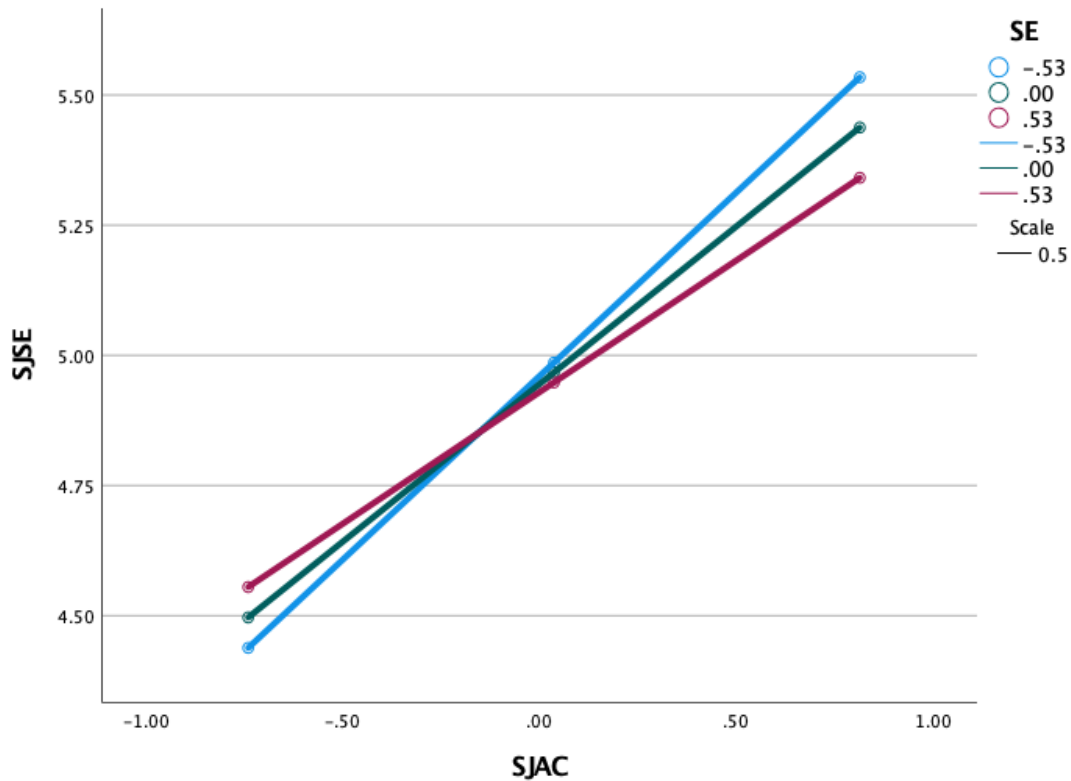
Research Question 3

To what extent does psychological empowerment moderate the relationship between

social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy? The third research question

was answered by using a Hayes (2018) simple moderation model of the relationship between

SJAC and SJSE moderated by PE. The SPSS PROCESS model 1: simple moderation model was

used with the centering option while controlling for the predetermined covariates of previous

advocacy trainings, school setting, and political views. The regression coefficient for the product

of SJAC and PE was not statistically significant, $b = -0.1052$, 95% CI [-.2133,.0030], $F =$

3.6747, $p = 0.0567$ (see Table 11). The interaction between SJAC and PE accounts for about

.84% of the variance. However, the overall model is significant $R^2 = .5397$, MSE = .2392,

$F(1.202) = 39.47$, $p < .0001$. This model with PE explains 5.07% more variance than the original

model with SJAC alone and 3.63% more than the moderation model with SJAC and SE. PE is a

significant contributor to the model ($p = 0.0008$ compared to alpha* of 0.007) but not as a

moderator of the SJAC and SJSE relationship. When looking at the direct effect of PE on SJSE,

the positive coefficient of PE indicates, on average, as PE increases SJSE increases.

Table 11

Moderation Analysis of SJAC (X) on SJSE (Y) Moderated by PE (W)

Variable	Coeff.	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.4614	0.135	33.0503	0	4.1953	4.7276
SJAC	0.5522	0.0508	10.8685	0	0.452	0.6524
PE	0.1685	0.0493	3.4208	0.0008	0.0714	0.2656
SJAC x PE	-0.1052	0.0549	-1.917	0.0567	-0.2133	0.003
School Setting	0.0444	0.026	1.7033	0.0901	-0.007	0.0957
Political View	0.0904	0.0287	3.1512	0.0019	0.0338	0.147
Advocacy Training	0.0048	0.0098	0.4869	0.6269	-0.0146	0.0242

Analytic Summary

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to characterize the relationship

among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. In a sample of 209

practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with a minimum of 1 year of experience,

statistical results identified the relationship between SJSE and SJAC moderated by SE, but not

PE. It is a moderated relationship between SJAC and SJSE adjusted for advocacy training,

school setting, and political views. Inclusion of SE provides a minimal (1.37%) improvement in

the model fit. However, the inclusion of PE provides a larger (5.07%) improvement in the model fit suggesting PE does play a role in SJSE. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of major findings as they relate to the relevant literature, of what implications may be valuable for practice and training, of limitations of the study, and of areas for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore whether relationships existed and the nature of the relationships among self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence, social justice self-efficacy, structural empowerment, and psychological empowerment of practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with at least one year of experience. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as they relate to the relevant literature, and identifies implications for practice and training, limitations of the study, and areas for future research. It is organized into five sections: descriptive summary of findings, discussion of findings, limitations, recommendations for future research, and closing with a summary.

Descriptive Summary of the Findings

In this quantitative study, the researcher sought to explore whether relationships existed among self-perceived levels of school counselors' SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE. The focus of the study was answering the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of self-perceived levels of social justice advocacy competence on the self-perceived levels of social justice self-efficacy in school counselors?

2. To what extent does structural empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

3. To what extent does psychological empowerment moderate the relationship between social justice advocacy competence and social justice self-efficacy?

Data for the study were gathered via online survey methods where a final sample of 209 participants was obtained. Participants were practicing K-12 licensed or certified school counselors with at least 1 year of experience. A wide range of age, years of experience, number of advocacy trainings in the past 5 years, school setting, school geographic setting, school region,

and political views of the school counselors were represented in this sample. Other demographic information collected included race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender, but the sample lacked diversity in these areas with the majority identifying as White/Euro-American, cisgender female, and heterosexual.

In addition to the demographic questionnaire, participants were asked to complete the SJSE from the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009) to assess for level of SJSE, the CWEQ-II (Laschinger & Havens, 1996) to assess for level of SE, the PES (Spreitzer, 1995a) to assess for level of PE, and the SJAS (Dean, 2009) to assess for level of SJAC.

Exploratory analysis of variance analysis and Pearson correlations were conducted to test the need for inclusion of any covariates in the primary data analysis. School setting, political views, and number of advocacy trainings in the past 5 years all displayed statistically significant results. Therefore, school setting, political views, and number of advocacy trainings were entered in the first step of the model to control for their effects on the dependent variable (SJSE).

A series of moderated hierarchical linear regressions were analyzed to examine the nature of the relationships among the variables followed by an investigation of moderating effects. Data analysis provided evidence that SJAC serves as a statistically significant predictor for SJSE. Further, SE moderated the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. Finally, although PE was not a moderator in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, it was an important contributor to school counselor SJSE.

Discussion of Findings

Results will be discussed in relation to how each research question was answered. These results will also be placed in the context of past and current school counseling and counselor

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education literature. In addition, using the lens of the theoretical and conceptual framework, implications for practice will be discussed.

Social Justice Advocacy Competence

Research Question 1 inquired about the effects of self-perceived levels of SJAC as measured by the SJAS on the self-perceived levels of SJSE as measured by the SJSE subscale from the SIQ in school counselors. A review of the literature established that competency should have a statistically significant main effect in the prediction of self-efficacy. The findings of the analyses revealed that for this study, school counselor SJAC had a statistically significant positive relationship with school counselor SJSE. This indicates that, on average, as school counselors' SJAC increases so does their SJSE. This is the first empirical study investigating SJAC and SJSE of school counselors; therefore, further research is necessary.

Interpretations

Two of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided the current study were the ACA (2018) advocacy competencies and Bandura's (1986a) social cognitive theory, specifically, self-efficacy theory (1977a). The ACA (2018) advocacy competencies focus specifically on awareness, knowledge, skills, and action that counselors should develop to address systemic barriers and issues facing students, clients, client groups, or whole populations. One can develop competence through practice and experience (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Additionally, self-efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977a). Thus as counselors gain experiences in given situations, they will gain self-efficacy in carrying out the situations for the future (Bandura, 1986a; Barbee et al., 2003). For this study, school counselors' self-reported awareness,

knowledge, skills, and behavior were statistically significant predictors for their beliefs in their own mastery and execution of school counseling advocacy competencies.

Since there are no studies evaluating the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of school counselors to compare the current study's results to, results of the study were compared and consistent with previous research investigating similar constructs and populations. According to Arrendondo and Rosen (2007), one needs to focus on knowledge and skill acquisition to increase self-efficacy. Researchers Biron and Bamberger (2010) also concluded performance-related effects may be less a function of an increase in self-efficacy and more a function of enhanced learning and competency development. In addition, Gill et al. (2004) performed an intervention with pre-service teachers involving them reading text that refuted procedural (traditional) instruction and promoted constructivist instructional strategies by providing scientific evidence of their effectiveness. This challenging experience and newfound knowledge led to heightened self-efficacy beliefs which points to how an educational experience that challenges conventional thinking can increase self-efficacy. Ultimately, the conclusions of these studies support the findings of the current study and suggest that developing SJAC is important to increasing SJSE.

Moreover, comparable studies investigating the relationship between multicultural competence and multicultural self-efficacy were reviewed (Bakioğlu & Türküm, 2020; Frans, 1993a, 1993b; Frans & Moran, 1993; Holden et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2004; McCannon, 2019; K. M. Williams, 2016). McCannon (2019) found multicultural counseling competence as a strong predictor of multicultural self-efficacy. This is consistent with the results found in the present study with the constructs of SJAC and SJSE and suggests the positive relationship between SJAC and SJSE is common across similar constructs (MCC and MSE) with a comparable population (counseling professionals) working with like people (youth living in at-risk

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circumstances). Another study inspecting the relationship between counselor self-efficacy, multicultural competence, gender roles, and mindfulness of counselor candidates found counselor candidates' gender roles and mindfulness significantly predicted their counseling self-efficacy through the mediation of multicultural competence (Bakioğlu & Türküm, 2020). This finding from similar constructs of MCC and counselor self-efficacy (CSE) with counselor candidates in accordance with the current study implies the positive relationship between SJAC and SJSE is common regardless of population or domain of competence and self-efficacy being investigated.

Similarly, Liu et al. (2004) found that with psychology graduate students, multicultural competence is the strongest predictor for multicultural research self-efficacy, followed by training and experience, which only strengthens competence. This is consistent with the hypothesis driving the present study in positing that as a school counselor's SJAC increases, so does their SJSE. Other studies suggest social worker self-efficacy and empowerment develop as MSW students and social work practitioners increase their knowledge and skills of practice (Frans, 1993a, 1993b; Frans & Moran, 1993; Holden et al., 2002). Though the studies were conducted using social work students and practitioners, one can make the connection to school counselors and the present study's finding of the positive relationship between a school counselor's SJAC and SJSE. Finally, K. M. Williams (2016) examined self-perceived multicultural competence and self-perceived racial microaggression as predictors of career counseling self-efficacy among counselors of color. The analysis showed stronger career counseling therapeutic process and competency self-efficacy beliefs were significantly predicted by self-perceived increases in multicultural competency skills (K. M. Williams, 2016). These findings connect to and further illuminate the predictive relationship between SJAC and SJSE.

While SJAC was found to be a statistically significant predictor of SJSE based on this study's participants, the directionality of competency and self-efficacy has had varying results in past research. Primarily, Bandura's (1986a) self-efficacy theory posits that self-efficacy leads to competency. Over the years, numerous studies' findings have supported Bandura, for example, multicultural counseling self-efficacy predicting multicultural counseling competence (Barden & Greene, 2015; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Matthews et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2010) and experience, training, and self-efficacy influenced disabilities competence (Cannella, 2015). Nonetheless, the results of the current study of SJAC predicting SJSE signifies a different perspective. This might be the result of the sensitive nature of social justice and the polarity of the political climate during data collection. With the increased emotions surrounding the social injustices and the election, school counselors may have been more intimidated. For example, they may believe that in order to feel self-efficacious, they need a stronger sense of competency, or else they will be judged, thus impacting how school counselors responded to the items.

Because of the ambiguity about the direction between competency and self-efficacy, the recent literature focusing on similar constructs showing a perspective that differed from Bandura's (1986b) hypothesis that self-efficacy precedes competency, and the notion that self-efficacy is domain specific (Bandura, 1994), this researcher hypothesized competency, which is comprised of both knowledge and behaviors, leads to self-efficacy. The findings supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that SJAC played a predictive role in the SJSE of practicing, licensed, or certified, K-12 school counselors.

Implications for Practice

Given that SJAC had a positive direct relationship with SJSE, this finding has certain implications for school counselor educators, school districts, clinical supervisors, and school

counseling professionals alike. It suggests if one promotes SJAC, this will lead to SJSE. The literature is rich with suggestions about how to promote competency. Retaining SJAC is a lifelong task, which requires school counselors to engage in continuing education, social justice supervision, and exposure experiences (ASCA, 2016a). The interventions can be framed into Bandura's (1994) four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states, with a fifth source added by Maddux and Kleiman (2009)—imaginal experiences.

Mastery Experiences. Bandura (1994) defined mastery experiences as experiences one gains when they take on a new challenge and are successful at doing so, and they are the most influential on a person's self-efficacy. To build school counselor SJAC, it may take focusing on personal identity and becoming more aware; new and challenging experiences, training, and collaboration; autonomy in decision making; and sometimes a shift in perspective. This can be accomplished through setting and meeting attainable SJA goals, seeking out experiences to meet these goals, continued SJA practice, and reflective practices. In order to evaluate and reflect on their multicultural and SJACs, school counselors can apply Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which involves (a) a new experience or situation is encountered, followed by (b) observation and reflection on the experience, which then leads to (c) forming new ideas or modified ideas, leading to (d) active experimentation where the learner applies the ideas to the world around them to see what happens. School counselors could pair the experiential learning cycle with Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle in which they can describe the experience, identify feelings and thoughts about the experience, evaluate the experience, analyze or make sense of the experience, think about what was learned and what they could have done differently, and finally, creating an action plan for future situations.

For practicing school counselors, mastery experiences can begin with school counselors setting and meeting attainable goals surrounding SJA, like write one reflective journal entry per week in which they reflect on any potential implicit and/or explicit biases that came up over the past week or that they may have observed by others. In addition, school counselors use the goals to seek out new and challenging experiences involving SJA, which will lead to them teaching themselves that they are capable of acquiring new skills, followed by continued practice. With the support of the school district, examples of this could be conducting workshops and/or delivering presentations to stakeholders around SJA and engagement in continuous related professional development furthering their understanding of SJA.

Alternatively, failures undermine self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994), which may further illuminate the present study's findings. For example, school counselors are not only being called to be social justice advocates by their code of ethics and the ASCA National Model (2019a), but this has also become the expectation of school district administrators, parents, students, and community members alike. With the increased expectations and polarity in the political climate, school counselors may be fearful of failure in SJA. That is why it is vital to start small by setting a few attainable goals surrounding SJA combined with reflective practices.

Vicarious Experiences. Vicarious experiences involve observing other people successfully completing a task (Bandura, 1994). Peer modeling can be used to increase school counselor SJAC in which they seek out supervision and observe peers who identify as having high levels of SJSE. By seeing other school counselors persist and succeed in the face of a challenging task, such as SJA, one will likely absorb some positive beliefs about the self that he or she can do it too. Vicarious experiences can also be what a school counselor hears and reads. Therefore, finding SJA literature, podcasts, webinars, and/or videos followed by reading and

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listening to them can help to increase SJAC and SJSE. Further, school counselors could tape themselves applying SJA in their work and later critiquing the tape or video, thus, increasing their awareness and skills.

Social Persuasion. Bandura (1994) defines social persuasion as receiving positive verbal feedback when completing a difficult task. Essentially, individuals who are convinced by others that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to put forth greater and continued effort (Bandura, 1994). For example, school counselors may present long-term and more effort in SJA if they are persuaded by others that they can do so. In a school environment, support from administrators, faculty, parents, students, and the community as well as setting clear expectations surrounding SJA are both key to engaging in SJA work (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). If a school counselor is not receiving the necessary feedback, one can seek it out through supervision. Consequently, discouragement has the opposite effect. Therefore, it is essential for key stakeholders to be careful not to discourage school counselors when they are trying to grow in their SJAC and SJSE.

Physiological and Emotional States. According to Bandura (1994), the last source of self-efficacy is physiological and emotional states. They can impact a person's self-efficacy through both the intensity of them and how they are perceived. In practice, when school counselors experience feelings of excitement prior to introducing a new SJA practice, or feelings of pleasure and satisfaction from the delivery of a successful SJA counseling intervention, their self-efficacy is boosted. On the other hand, if a school counselor is struggling with anxiety, he or she may find it impossible to build competency or self-efficacy. That is why it is extremely important for school counselors to manage their physical and emotional health when attempting challenging situations, like practicing SJA, and this will ultimately improve their SJSE. This can

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be done through a holistic wellness approach, focusing on maintaining balanced spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health.

Imaginal Experiences. Maddux and Kleiman (2009) posited a fifth source of self-efficacy. Imaginal experiences are visualizing self-behaving effectively or successfully in a given situation (Maddux & Kleiman, 2009). For example, school counselors can make a list of SJA practices followed by closing their eyes and visualizing themselves completing each task successfully. If they do this enough, eventually, their SJSE will rise. Again, like with the goals, it is crucial to start with less complex SJA practices. School counselors can use the ACA (2018) advocacy competencies to guide them in what to visualize, like building relationships with trusted community members and businesses within the communities in which they work.

Implications for Training

According to the results, increased SJAC predicts increased SJSE. Therefore, increasing competence through increased training could be beneficial to increasing SJSE. For school counselor educators, the finding suggests the importance of training standards and increased SJA coursework in developing school counselor SJAC, which greatly impacts SJSE. Advocacy trainings being a covariate in the present study demonstrates training's impact on the relationship between SJAC and SJSE as well. Further, increased SJSE through increased SJA training and SJAC will continue to serve students after their master's training is complete. As such, the results of this study suggest that accrediting and standardizing bodies (e.g., CACREP, APA, ASCA, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) increase the SJA training standards in their programs as a direct way to increase SJAC and SJSE in school counseling trainees.

Applying the lens of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994) to training for school counseling educators and students, one experience that has been deemed effective by the literature is service learning. Service learning in higher education consists of an educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that is aligned with course objectives and meets community needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). This experience not only provides an opportunity for further understanding of the course content and some practical application, but it also provides a view into the profession and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. In counselor education programs, examples of service learning include practicum and internships (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). However, pre-practicum service learning has been effective in helping students decrease anxieties, and promote counseling self-efficacy, as well (Arnold & McMurtery, 2011; Barbee et al, 2003; Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009).

If school counselor education programs are looking for ways to increase competency, attention should be paid to the students' practicum and internship experiences and supervision. Recent studies using guided MSJCC training for school counseling practicum students reported participant growth in self-efficacy and confidence (Hayden et al., 2015), as well as multicultural and advocacy skills (Cook et al., 2015; Cook et al., 2016). A combination of intentional placement at sites where successful systemic-level interventions are taking place; selection of site supervisors who align with social justice principles (Bemak & Chung, 2008); SLOs focusing on meeting specified, measurable goals at their sites; clear expectations, constant reinforcement, and encouragement from faculty supervisors; engaging students in reflective activities to explore their privilege and the social injustices of marginalized populations they serve; and implementing SJA-focused summative and formative assessments throughout the practicum and internship courses can all help raise SJAC and SJSE.

Employee Empowerment

In trying to explain the relationship between SJAC and SJSE better, this researcher explored to what extent SE—as measured by the CWEQ-II (Laschinger et al., 2001) and PE—as measured by the PES (Spreitzer, 1995) moderated the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of school counselors. A review of the literature suggested both SE and PE may have a statistically significant moderating role in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. For the current study, the findings of the analyses revealed school counselor SE was a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. Further, when interpreting the simple slopes analysis, since the interaction between SJAC and SE was negative, the increase of SE decreases the significance effect of SJAC on SJSE. This means that when a school counselor perceives one's own sense of SJAC as low, SE helps to explain a factor that may be lacking in his or her sense of SJAC and SJSE. However, if a school counselor perceives one's own sense of SJAC as high, SE does not matter as much because the school counselor is still better equipped to be self-efficacious.

Concerning PE, for the current study the findings revealed school counselor PE was not a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. This suggests PE does not impact the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. Because the moderation was not significant, this researcher investigated the direct effect of PE on SJSE, and the results indicated school counselor PE was a significant predictor of their SJSE. This indicates, on average, as school counselors' PE increases, so does their SJSE. Also, when looking for the best model to explain the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, the model including PE was the most significant, explaining about 54% of the variance. In the current study, this means PE should be included in the model because it was the best variable to explain the relationship between SJAC

and SJSE. Again, this is the first empirical study investigating the moderating effects of SE and PE on the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of school counselors; therefore, further research is necessary.

Interpretations

The last piece of the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the current study is empowerment. In the current study, this researcher explored whether school counselors' perception of their work empowerment (condition) impacted the relationship between school counselor SJAC (qualities) and their SJSE (belief) in their abilities to practice SJA. M. Lee and Koh (2001) defined empowerment as the "psychological state of a subordinate perceiving four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact, which is affected by empowering behaviours of the supervisor" (p. 686). This implies that the behavioral (delegating) piece impacts the perceptual (enabling) component of empowerment, which speaks to the two major perspectives: SE (Kanter, 1993) and PE (Spreitzer, 1995b ; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Based on the literature, both structural and PE are vital in creating a process of personnel taking the initiative to respond autonomously to and to take responsibility of job-related challenges with the motivation and support of management to perform related roles and responsibilities in the workplace (Wang & Liu, 2015; Wong & Laschinger, 2013).

Structural Empowerment. SE, the behavioral component of empowerment, is the perception of one's opportunity, access to information, support, access to resources, and formal and informal power within an organization. It focuses on the access and ability to mobilize power structures, particularly opportunity, support, information, and resources from one's position in the organization to create and sustain the work environment and enhance organizational development (Kanter, 1993). In the past, researchers have found self-efficacy

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perceptions may be enhanced through SE (Ahearne et al., 2005; Earley & Lind, 1987; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Glew et al., 1995; Hochwälder, 2007), or through a similar construct of social supports (M. J. Miller et al., 2009). For this study, a school counselor's perception of one's opportunity, access to information, support, access to resources, and formal and informal power was a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between one's self-reported awareness, knowledge, skills, and behavior (SJAC) and his or her beliefs (SJSE) in their own mastery and execution of school counseling skills through a multicultural and SJA lens. Essentially, the less SJAC, SE helps to explain a factor that may be lacking in a school counselor's sense of SJAC and SJSE. However, the higher SJAC, SE does not matter as much because the school counselor is still better equipped to be self-efficacious. A plausible explanation for this is when one has external supports, like SE—opportunity, access to information, support, access to resources, formal, and informal power (Kanter, 1993; Laschinger et al., 2001), his or her reliance on internal supports, like SJAC, may not be needed as much to feel more self-efficacious (Ahearne et al., 2005; Earley & Lind, 1987; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Glew et al., 1995).

Since there are no studies evaluating the relationships among SJAC, SE, and SJSE of school counselors to compare the current study's results to, results of the study were compared to previous research investigating similar constructs and populations. A highly related construct to SE is administrative support, which can be characterized by emotional support (trust), informational support (opportunities for growth), appraisal (guidance and feedback), and appreciation (Cancio et al., 2013). For example, low self-efficacy (Atici, 2014; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; I. A. González , 2012; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) and low administrative support (Ashton et al.,

1983; Atici, 2014; Denham & Michael, 1981; Hilts et al., 2019; Sutton & Fall, 2005) have been identified as barriers to engaging in challenging and preferred practice. The literature also correlates administrative support to higher levels of teacher self-efficacy (Balfour, 2001; Combee, 2014; Ewy, 2007; Otto & Arnold, 2005; Thornton et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and school counselor self-efficacy (Ashton et al., 1983; Denham & Michael, 1981; I. A. González, 2012; Sutton & Fall, 1995). This literature helps to explain the findings of the present study suggesting that SE (or administrative support) plays a role in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. It is also important to note that while SE was not found to be a significant predictor of SJSE on its own, SE still plays a clear role in the SJSE of school counselors in that with school counselors low in SJAC, SE may be important in predicting SJSE.

The present finding can also be further illuminated through the counselor developmental literature on cognitive complexity. Within the counseling profession, cognitive complexity is seen as the ability of a counselor to be able to take multiple and increasingly complex views of a client and then integrate those views into a whole—for example, case conceptualization (Welfare & Borders, 2010), which is very comparable to what SJAC entails. The role cognitive complexity plays in understanding counselor development can be explained by Perry's (1970) scheme of cognitive and intellectual development, which involves nine conceptual categories or "positions" students move across in their development—moving from a dualist authoritarian-based scheme to gradually accepting multiple perspectives and moving towards a more relativistic stance with guidance from an authority no longer being sought. Perry (1981) later refined this theory to include four categories: dualism, multiplicity, relativism, and committed relativism. The dualistic developmental orientation would be students who see the world in a simplistic black or white view and who rely heavily on authority figures to guide them in

knowing what is right and what is wrong (Washburn, 2015). This connects to the present finding in that with low SJAC, there is more reliance on an authority figure (SE) to belief in self (SJSE).

Focusing on school counselors, supportive colleagues, administration, and school climate were found to be predictors of high self-efficacy for school counselors (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Although SE was not the exact construct being investigated, there is overlap. Results from the study suggested school counselor self-efficacy may be influenced by school climate, particularly colleague and administrative support, which is congruent with prior research (Ashton et al., 1983; Denham & Michael, 1981). Lastly, in her quantitative dissertation research study, I. A. González (2012) continued M. J. Miller et al.'s (2009) investigation by examining how factors such as colorblind racial ideology, SJSE, social justice outcome expectations, social justice social supports, and social justice social supports and barriers related to social justice interest and commitment in urban school counselors. Findings from the study pointed to the notion that when school counselors have social justice supports, they are more likely to be committed to SJA efforts through SJSE. Findings from both Fall and Sutton (2005) and I. A. González (2012) are consistent with the results of the present study. Again, while SE on its own was not a significant predictor of SJSE for the school counselors in this sample, the entire model (SJAC and SE as predictors for SJSE with SE as a moderator) was found to be statistically significant indicating SE appears to play at least a minor role in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE.

Based on the current study's participants, while SE was found to be a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, it was not a significant predictor of SJSE. Additionally, adding SE into the model only explains 1.4% more variance than the model with just SJAC. The impact SE has on self-efficacy has had varying results in past research. Although some studies have found SE to have a positive effect on self-efficacy in

varying populations, M. Lee and Koh (2001) claim self-efficacy can be increased without the

presence of empowering supervisors. M. Lee and Koh's hypothesis can also help to explain why

SE did not play as much of a role when school counselors had higher levels of SJAC. All of this

implies that there are other ways for school counselors to increase their SJSE, and it is not reliant

on SE. Ultimately, with the literature establishing the importance of SE to self-efficacy, the

connection between administrative support and competence, and the significance of cognitive

complexity to self-efficacy, this researcher hypothesized SE to be a moderator in the relationship

between SJAC and SJSE. The findings supported this hypothesis, demonstrating SE plays a

moderating role and is an additional factor to help explain the relationship between SJAC and

SJSE of practicing, licensed or certified, K-12 school counselors.

Psychological Empowerment. PE, the perceptual component of empowerment, is

defined as one's perception that he or she has control over their environment and feels

congruence between his or her values and those of the organization (Spreitzer, 1995b;

Zimmerman, 1995). According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995b), PE is a

four dimensional construct consisting of (a) competence, which is an individual's belief in their

abilities to perform their work well; (b) meaning, consisting of the value a person ascribes to

their work; (c) self-determination or choice, refers to employees' autonomy (i.e., the degree to

which they have control over their work); and (d) impact, the ability to influence outcomes (e.g.,

immediate work environment, co-workers, and organization as a whole).

Because PE and SJSE are constructs that have some theoretical overlap, with results of

the Pearson correlation indicating a statistically significant moderate positive association

between the PES (Spreitzer, 1995b) and the SJSE subscale of the SIQ (M. J. Miller &

Sendrowitz, 2011), $r = .353$, $p < .001$, it is important to differentiate the two. PE is an important

condition specific to one's work environment (M. Lee & Koh, 2001). Conversely, Bandura (1982) theorized self-efficacy is a domain or situation-specific construct. While PE is more of a general understanding of one's ability, SJSE is specific to engagement in social justice efforts. Therefore, school counselors could have high levels of PE overall; yet, the same school counselors could also have low levels of SJSE in terms of their ability to engage in social justice-specific behaviors or domains. Moreover, a further explanation of the Pearson correlation results could be the definition of the competence dimension of PE and the definition of self-efficacy are similar—they focus on a person's belief in his or her abilities. Still, PE contains the three additional dimensions of meaning, self-determination, and impact. For example, a school counselor can be self-efficacious, but have a weak perception of impact or choice in his or her work role. This will prevent the school counselor from feeling empowered.

Empirically, researchers have found a connection between PE and self-efficacy (Bal Taştan, 2013; Fay, 2004; Hochwälder, 2007). For this study, a school counselor's perception of one's belief in ability to do the job well, value found in work, control over work, and ability to influence others (PE) did not act as a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between one's self-reported awareness, knowledge, skills, and behavior (SJAC) and his or her beliefs (SJSE) in their own mastery and execution of school counseling skills through a multicultural and SJA lens. Thus, the effect of PE does not depend on SJAC and vice versa. A plausible explanation to this finding can be found through examining antecedents of PE. Seibert et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis investigating antecedents and consequences of PE and team empowerment in organizations. When comparing the antecedents of PE to what makes up competency, the only overlap was extensive training and information. Moreover, PE is socially constructed, which means it is fostered by a sense of community and support from peers (Corsun

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& Enz, 1999), not one's own perception of competence. This sense of community and support from peers can come from years of experience or membership in professional organizations. The average years of experience with the sample of school counselors in this study was 8.9 years. Also, it could be that the sample of school counselors in this study were highly affiliated with professional organizations, which offered them the support that fostered their development of PE. However, since this researcher did not ask about school counselors' membership in professional organizations, like ASCA, future research would need to be conducted to explore this notion.

Due to the lack of significance of the interaction, the direct effect of PE on SJSE was examined. The findings from this study revealed a positive relationship between PE and SJSE. This is supported by the literature in that PE directly connects to self-efficacy through its focus on employees' perceptions of competence, control, and influence (Rappaport, 1987; Spreitzer, 1995a, 1995b; Zimmerman, 1995). When employees view their work environment as providing opportunities to bring about change, they feel personally empowered, in turn, leading to positive worker outcomes such as lower levels of burnout, higher levels of self-efficacy, and so forth (R. Anderson, 2015; Hochwälder, 2007). Though the existing literature connecting PE to self-efficacy is limited, some researchers demonstrated the potential influential role PE has on one's self-efficacy.

Fay (2004) engaged in an examination of school counselors' perceptions of their change agency. The summarized results of this study established a connection between school counselor personal power or empowerment and self-efficacy. Another study examining perceptions of teachers' PE, self-efficacy, social support, and well-being rendered comparable results. Bal Taştan's (2013) hypothesized PE perception may apply its influence through individuals'

appraisals of themselves (self-efficacy) or their perceived social support from their colleagues or administration. Concerning self-efficacy, the finding showed PE has an antecedent role for self-efficacy perception, and the impact of PE on psychological well-being is increased through self-efficacy, which further supports prior research (Bandura, 1986b, 2000; Jex et al., 2001; Nielsen et al., 2009; O'Leary, 1992; Parker, 1994). Although PE was not a moderator in the current study, the present evidence suggests it plays a role in the SJSE of school counselors. Because this researcher did not set out to investigate relations between PE and SJSE specifically, this finding should be viewed as preliminary and worthy of future investigation.

With the literature establishing the importance of PE to self-efficacy, this researcher hypothesized PE to be a moderator in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. The findings did not support this hypothesis. However, based on this study's participants, while PE was not found to be a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, it was a significant predictor of SJSE. Additionally, when looking for the best model to explain the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, the model including PE was the most significant, explaining about 54% of the variance. This means PE should be included in the model because it was the best variable, in this study, to help explain the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of practicing, licensed or certified, K-12 school counselors. Again, this is t=he first empirical study investigating the moderating effects of SE and PE on the relationship between SJAC and SJSE of school counselors; therefore, further research is necessary.

Implications for Practice

Empowerment consists of SE (behavioral) and PE (psychological). The models that included SE and PE separately were significant models in trying to understand the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, which indicates both SE and PE play a role, whether indirectly or

directly, in increasing SJSE. For SE, the findings of the present study suggest the combination of SJAC and SE is important to understanding the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. In particular, when school counselors have lower SJAC, SE indirectly becomes more integral in the relationship. On the other hand, for PE, the finding that PE does not interact with SJAC implies the two variables may not be significant to each other when trying to better understand SJSE. However, because PE was found to have a significant positive direct relationship with SJSE, PE still contributes to the understanding of SJSE.

Given that SE and PE were factors in statistically significant models for predicting school counselor SJSE, the findings have certain implications for school counselor educators, school districts, school counselor supervisors, school counselors in training, and practicing school counselors alike. According to Sue and Sue (2016), someone that is disempowered may not fully understand societal injustice and may naïvely cause harm through his or her activities on behalf of a marginalized community. Hipolito-Delgado and Lee (2007) discussed the importance of applying the lens of empowerment theory to school counseling practices. A definition of empowerment given by L. M. Gutiérrez (1995) was the basis of discussion, "the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situations" (p. 229). Adhering to empowerment theory can assist school counselors in becoming "more active in the process of liberating the students of marginalized communities by promoting personal empowerment of students, promoting community empowerment, and engaging in activism on behalf of their students" (Hipolito-Delgado & Lee, 2007, p. 329).

Structural Empowerment. The present study's finding that SE is important to the relationship between SJAC and SJSE when someone does not have high levels of SJAC has

several implications for practice. Thus, fostering SE may indirectly lead to higher levels of SJSE. With enhanced SE, school counselors who are part of a supportive environment decreased the importance of SJAC in relation to one's belief in his or her SJA abilities. This is especially true in the case of school counselors who may begin with low levels of SJAC. Therefore, it is important for school district administrators to put assessments in place to evaluate school counselor SJAC. Then, using the data obtained, administrators and school counseling directors should aim to increase school counselor SE for those school counselors who rated themselves as having low SJAC. Over time, this may help to increase both school counselor SJAC and SJSE.

Further implications of this finding can be derived from the literature on cognitive complexity, supervision, and the working alliance. Duys and Hedstrom (2000) and Little et al. (2005) found course work can help to develop cognitive complexity. For example, school counselor training and supervision can focus on SJA role-playing followed by feedback in order to increase competency and self-efficacy. In addition to coursework (Duys & Hedstrom, 2000), another way to develop cognitive complexity is through supervision (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Perry's (1981) levels of development, discussed earlier, were applied to counseling students in the integrated developmental model of supervision, which stresses the importance of assessing a therapist's developmental level while at the same time providing the optimal supervisory environment for progression through those levels (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Kaufman and Kaufman (2006) posit the supervisor-supervisee relationship is central to effective supervision and to create meaningful change (Bordin, 1983). The supervisory working alliance consists of (a) supervisor and supervisee having a mutual understanding and agreement of the goals sought in the supervisory process, (b) both parties sharing an understanding and agreement of the tasks in the supervisory relationship, and (c) a strong bond (Bordin, 1983). Thus, in order to increase

school counselor SE, which plays a role in their SJSE, school counseling supervisors and school district administrators should pay attention to fostering a strong working alliance with their school counselors. Further, D. E. Hunt (1966) hypothesized cognitively complex helpers would be better able to select more efficacious methods of helping than those with low levels of complexity. This is similar to the finding in the current study that with high SJAC, SE does not seem to matter in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE; however, with low levels of SJAC, SE is more significant to a school counselor's SJSE.

Concerning school district administrators with school counselors low in SJAC, it may be important for administrators to provide additional support, structure, and challenge to their school counselors. Then, eventually, the school counselors will grow in their SJAC and SJSE, leaving them less reliant on administrative support (SE). This falls in line with the integrated developmental model, as students move past that initial pulling away from their supervisor, they then begin to grow more comfortable with their own work and are able to use their supervisor as an as-needed resource for improving their work (Stoltenberg et al., 1998).

In addition, applying Blocher's (1983) theory on a cognitive approach to supervision to the supervision of school counselors can be helpful. For the purpose of simplicity, this researcher is including all parties that would engage in a supervisory relationship with the school counselor under the umbrella of supervisors (i.e., supervisors of practicum and internship, school district administrators, and school counseling directors). Blocher's theory claims the relationship between supervisor-supervisee and the format of supervision are both important. The relationship should entail mutual trust, respect, and concern, while the supervision format should either be one-on-one or small-group (Blocher, 1983). Also, other helpful practices for supervisors to encourage are taking notes, setting goals and objectives, recording self on tape, followed by

reviewing all of these items with the school counselor. When critiquing the tape, it is important for the supervisor to be honest and direct. As far as the learning environment, supervisors should foster an environment of challenge, involvement, support, structure, feedback, innovation, and integration. Lastly, according to Blocher, specific characteristics for best practices in supervision include (a) application to one-to-one counseling, group counseling, and consultation; (b) the setting should allow for direct observation or recording; (c) the school counselor should allow time to take notes and analyze the recording before supervision; and (d) supervisor evaluation should be based on evidence of progress toward goals developed between the school counselor and supervisor.

Connecting Blocher's (1983) theory of supervision to the current finding that SE is important when school counselors have low SJAC, there are implications for all parties who provide supervision to school counselors. In order to foster an empowering environment (SE) for school counselors low in SJAC, supervisors should aim to do the following. First, school counselor training can include providing opportunities for the school counselor to meet with challenging student cases needing SJA. Next, supervisors should help school counselors to set reasonable expectations in the form of goals and objectives for themselves appropriate for their level of cognition. Then, supervisors need to provide support through warm, empathic, caring relationships, especially when anxiety and tensions could be high when dealing with SJA. Further, the supervisor can negotiate and implement a learning contract through setting a few developmental tasks along with a learning strategy to complete that task. For example, a supervisor might create the developmental task of seeking feedback from students regarding the impact of the school counselor's advocacy efforts on their behalf. A learning strategy to complete this task could be to develop an assessment to illicit such feedback followed by

administering it to the students. Then, in one of the supervision sessions, the supervisor and school counselor can review the results and talk about their implications.

The next way supervisors can create an empowering environment (SE) for school counselors low in SJAC is through the supervisor giving specific, immediate, and thoughtful feedback to the school counselor about his or her observed performance. To continue the previous example, if the results of the advocacy assessment of students indicated the school counselor was not effective in his or her advocacy efforts, the supervisor can help to identify areas for growth and model advocacy practices. Following feedback, supervisors can then organize a school counseling session where the school counselor will practice the newly learned advocacy activity. Lastly, through consistent integration of all aforementioned strategies by the supervisor and school counselor, this will continue to affirm and reinforce desired patterns of SJA behavior. This nurturing of new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting will likely increase a school counselor's sense of SE, which will ultimately further develop higher levels of SJAC and SJSE.

Several indirect ways to enhance school counselor SE were identified in the literature. Because SE integrates both relational and motivational aspects, attention needs to be paid to both enhancing the relationship between school district administrators and school counselors and school district administrator empowering behaviors (M. Lee & Koh, 2001). Edwards et al. (2014) provided several suggestions for principals to improve their relationships with the school counselors: (a) increasing communication by meeting on a regular basis to discuss ideas for the program, accomplishments, and so forth; (b) increasing collaboration by appointing the school counselor to leadership roles within the school; (c) being aware of the school counselor's roles and responsibilities assigned by ASCA (2019a), followed by respecting them; and (d) supporting

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and advocating for the school counselor by helping to remove barriers that prevent them from

their counseling duties (e.g., going to the board to request additional counselors to keep the

student-to-counselor ratio down; reassigning things like test and 504 coordination to other school

personnel; finding other individuals to perform duties such as cafeteria duty, dismissal duty,

etc.).

Results from a study conducted in 2008 examining school counselor and principal

relationships (Finklestein, 2009) helped to inform *Enhancing the Principal-School Counselor*

Relationship Toolkit (The College Board, 2011), which was designed "to help principals and

school counselors build effective relationships in which communications are open and fluid, all

professionals trust and respect one another, all professionals serve in leadership roles, and

planning involves close collaboration" (p. 9). The toolkit accomplishes this through assessments

and worksheets to help foster communication, trust and respect, leadership, and collaborative

planning. The activities can be completed alone or in a team (e.g., the school counselor,

principal, teacher, etc.) for the sole purpose of understanding the greatest needs in the school and

then developing a better working partnership to meet those needs (The College Board, 2011).

Focusing on empowering behaviors, school district administrators can help to foster

higher perceived SE by periodically assessing the work environment for empowering structures.

To create an empowering work environment specific to SJA, school district administrators need

to provide school counselors with opportunities that allow for their professional and personal

growth; provide them with the appropriate resources to accomplish the work; provide access to

information necessary for their day-to-day tasks, and access to support systems. This could be

accomplished by holding meetings between administrators and school counselors to encourage

school counselors to express their needs and problems, offer professional development that

contributes to professional growth and knowledge in SJA, develop a support system in the school and school district that encourages administrative and peer support, foster good communication systems, and assure that appropriate resources are available for the school counselors to adhere to the ASCA (2019a) national model. In addition, school district administrators should reflect on their leadership skills and seek ways to improve them, so they are better prepared to create empowering environments for staff (Greco et al., 2006).

Psychological Empowerment. Given the third finding that PE is not important to the relationship between SJAC and SJSE but did have a positive direct relationship with SJSE, this finding has certain implications for school counselor educators, school districts, clinical supervisors, and school counseling professionals alike. It suggests with enhanced PE, school counselor perception of the organization being empowering increases the capacity for growth in one's own belief in his or her SJA abilities. Since PE involves the psychological state of a school counselor perceiving one's meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact, attention needs to be paid to enhancing each of these dimensions (M. Lee & Koh, 2001). One might be competent, but if they have a weak perception of their ability to influence the environment, autonomy in work role and so forth, a person's overall PE will not be increased.

In their research investigating antecedents and consequences of PE and team empowerment in organizations, Seibert et al. (2011) identified four precursors to PE: (a) high-performance managerial practices (open information sharing, decentralization, participative decision making, extensive training, and contingent compensation); (b) socio-political support (extent to which elements in the work context provide an employee with material, social, and psychological resources); (c) leadership (a supportive, trusting relationship with one's leader); and (d) work design characteristics (competence should be enhanced by work that is more

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challenging along with feedback regarding the results of one's effort). High-performance managerial practices affect all four domains of PE by improving performance through increasing the amount of information and control employees have over their work; the level of work-related knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by employees; and the level of motivation employees have to achieve the goals of the organization (Seibert et al., 2011). For example, school district administrators can provide additional resources and autonomy to school counselors to help increase PE.

Socio-political support is likely to enhance PE perceptions of meaning, self-determination, task competence, and impact as well. In schools, this might take the form of support and appreciation from faculty and the school district. Such support also sends the message to the school counselor that the self-determined goals and strategies will be accepted. In addition, the availability of resources, power, and influence allow school counselors to feel competent in their work and that their work will impact others. Next, promoting effective forms of leadership and supportive peer relationships within the work unit should also play an important role in empowering employees. Through school district administrators supplying information about strategic or operational goals, this may allow school counselors to see the value of their work, which increases meaningfulness. Additionally, school district administrators can allow the school counselors to participate more and have greater control over their work, likely increasing their feelings of self-determination and impact. Further, through providing feedback, coaching, and role modeling, school district administrators can improve school counselor self-efficacy (competence). Finally, work design characteristics like more challenging work, feedback about one's efforts, autonomy, and task significance can increase school counselor PE.

Overall, the identified antecedents of PE highlight implications of training for school district administrators. Focus needs to be paid to increasing their awareness of the importance of PE and how to foster it. Ultimately, the findings of the present study demonstrate that it may not be so much about the specific resources. It is more about the school counselor's perception of having the space and support to implement needed SJA practices.

Preliminary Social Justice Advocacy Framework for Schools

When combining the present study's findings, the theoretical and conceptual framework, and the practical applications, the need for a SJA framework for schools was illuminated. The present study can be the foundation of the framework, shedding light on the intended use, vision and mission, objectives, scope, and components to include in the model. However, future research is needed to develop, implement, and evaluate its effectiveness fully.

The SJA framework can be used to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee. Through a systemic approach, school counselors can take charge in establishing diversity, equity, and inclusion committees from state, region, district, to building levels. The formation of and leadership role within the committees will promote SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE through the provision of resources, delegation of responsibilities (power), exchange of ideas, networking, supervision, promoting SJA learning and/or practice opportunities, sharing success and failure stories, support, encouragement, etc. Teams of school counselors can use their training, positionality within the school district, as well as their networking, coordination, collaboration, consultation, communication, curriculum, and counseling skills to form and lead these committees comprised of key stakeholders, like administrators, school board members, teachers, parents, students, community members, politicians, etc. They will all work toward the common goal of providing equitable and inclusive services to all students.

Limitations

There were several methodological limitations within the current study. Consequently, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results. The first limitation category involves measurement error, defined as the "observational gap between the ideal measurement and the response obtained" (Groves et al. 2009, p. 51). According to Biemer and Lyberg (2003) and Groves et al. (2009), measurement error arises from a variety of sources: characteristics of the method of data collection and the survey setting, the respondent, and the design of the questionnaire.

Under measurement error, this researcher employed a web-based survey to gather data due to the increased likelihood of obtaining a higher number of respondents in a faster, less expensive, and reliable manner (Lefever et al., 2007). However, concerns have been raised about the self-administered nature of web-based surveys and errors arising from the respondent— motivation, comprehension, social desirability bias, and so forth or from the instrument— appearance on different devices, poor wording or design, technical flaws, and so forth (Biemer & Lyberg, 2003; Couper, 2000; Krosnick, 1991), thus, potentially reducing the quality of respondent data (Lefever et al., 2007).

When analyzing the combined instrument used in this study, reliance on self-report measures was a limitation due to social desirability bias. The topic of social justice has earned much attention in the counseling literature and media (Vera & Speight, 2003). School counselors are also expected by ASCA (2019a) to be social justice advocates who promote equity for all students. Moreover, SE is defined as an organization's ability to offer access to information, resources, support, and opportunity in the work environment (Kanter, 1993). Even though satisficing theory was applied to the pre-analysis data screening stage, one can infer that

participants would respond to the SJAS, SJSE subscale of the SIQ, and the CWEQ-II in a manner that is more favorable and not indicative of their true feelings as they may be fearful of judgment from peers and or repercussions from the organization (i.e., administration). Though participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and participants were never asked to include any identifying information about themselves or their schools, it is unclear as to the degree to which social desirability impacted the results, thus potentially limiting the research. In addition, assessing competency through a self-report measure is problematic because one's perception of competency may be very different from his or her actual competence.

Another potential limitation connected to measurement error and the respondents involves possible survey fatigue. During the survey construction stage, this researcher did not want to jeopardize the reported validity and reliability of each instrument (i.e., the SJAS, CWEQ-II, PES, and SJSE subscale of the SIQ) or compromise the constructs being measured (i.e., SJAC, SE, PE, and SJSE). Therefore, this researcher chose to include all original items from the scales in the final combined instrument along with 10 items from the demographic questionnaire. Although participants were offered compensation for completing the survey via a lottery-style drawing for a $150.00 Amazon gift card, the combined instrument was composed of 106 questions. While participants were informed of the number of questions on the instrument in the informed consent agreement, survey fatigue could have influenced the results.

Some demographic limitations were also present in this study in regards to the self-identified gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation homogeneity of the sample. First, the majority of participants in this study identified as cisgender female (87.6%), White/Euro-American (84.7%), and heterosexual (95.2%). Even though school counselors are largely White, middle-class, females (ASCA, 2020a), the results may not be generalizable to all race/ethnicities,

sexual orientations, and genders. An additional demographic limitation was the multiple choice nature of the political views question. This forced participants to select one option when political views can change based on what a person is being asked about. For example, when asked about the political party they vote for, school counselors may choose conservative; yet, when asked about their political views surrounding social injustices, their answer might be more liberal.

The instrumentation employed in this study was also a limitation. First, it is important to note the limited data on the validity and reliability of the SJAS (Dean, 2009). The scale was created for a dissertation after a comprehensive, multidisciplinary review of the SJA literature. It would be helpful for future researchers to conduct an exploratory factor analysis on the scale to investigate the validity of the measure. Next, the SJAS is a somewhat outdated measure of SJA that used the former ACA advocacy competencies (J. A. Lewis et al., 2003) which have since been updated (ACA, 2018). In addition, the SJAS contains 11 negatively worded items which can cause confusion for the respondents (DeVellis, 2017). It is recommended that future researchers revise those items to be positively worded. Next, the SIQ instrument has only been used in two research studies (M. J. Miller et al., 2009; M. J. Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011); thus, its construct validity needs further exploration. Last, this researcher had to edit items on the SJAS, CWEQ-II, and the SJSE subscale of the SIQ to reflect the role of a school counselor and a school setting, to clarify some wording, and to create consistency among the separate instruments. This was done without testing if the changes influenced factor structure and or validity. These small working adaptations are very unlikely to undermine the psychometric viability of the scales. Nonetheless, because there is a lack of empirically supported instruments to assess SJAC and SJSE of school counselors, the survey instruments used in this study were deemed to be the best available at the time, despite these limitations.

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The last limitation worthy of noting concerns the lack of existing research studies on the research topic. The literature review revealed the extant studies on the need for school counselors to be social justice advocates. Yet, the empirical research was limited. Thus, it was hard to situate the results of the current study in the larger literature. Though this study contributed to the current literature, additional studies should focus on SJAC, SJSE, and factors effecting SJA practices of school counselors.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of the current study, there are a number of directions for future research. In the current study, the researcher focused on the predictive relationship between SJAC and SJSE with SE and PE as moderators. Derived from a thorough review of the literature, no previous studies have investigated these constructs together; therefore, the findings should be considered preliminary. It is recommended that this study be expanded and replicated to create more reliable and generalizable results that may have been unattainable due to the limitations mentioned above. For example, a majority of participants sampled in this study were cisgender female (87.6%), White Euro-American (84.7%), and heterosexual (95.2%); thus, further research with a more diversified sample is needed and could lead to different results. Additionally, adding a scale or more open-ended questions when asking about one's political views could lead to varying results as well.

The growing amount of literature on SJA and school counselors addresses the need for school counselors to be social justice advocates and provides theoretical frameworks and practical strategies to help implement SJA. This conceptual and qualitative research is helpful in understanding the depth of the problem and actions and skills related to SJA; but the information makes it difficult to generalize or make conclusions and lacks examination of current school

counselor attitudes, beliefs, and practice. If school counselors are to be change agents in their schools, promoting equitable services to aid in all students' development and successful integration into society, it is essential to have a deeper understanding of their SJSE. However, empirical research examining potential predictors of and barriers to SJSE is limited. Thus, future research should investigate distinct aspects not covered within this inquiry. For instance, one area worth exploring is to examine how the results of the present study translates into school counseling SJA practices. This can be done through specifically investigating school counselor SJA behaviors to assess for competency, rather than a self-report measure. Their behaviors may be measured by examining artifacts connected to social/emotional, academic, and career-related outcomes data. Further, an empirical investigation using structural equation modeling and/or path analysis would provide a more thorough understanding of the relationships among the constructs examined in the current study. Conducting a longitudinal study using these analyses would provide data that may speak to the directionality of SJAC and SJSE, which can be used to inform training and practice. Last, the implications of SE shed light on additional variables that could be studied in relation to SJAC and SJSE—cognitive complexity, supervision practices, and working alliance.

Additionally, qualitative research can provide a richer understanding of several topics stemming from the current study. The first area worth exploring is the internal and external factors of school counselors that are successfully engaging in SJA practices. Questions relating to these school counselors' self-efficacy, training, outcome expectations, and principal expectations could be examined. This research can inform methods of school counselor training as well as professional development activities for practicing school counselors. Second, the present study also pointed to the need to include other populations like students, parents, and

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principals in the research surrounding SJA practices of school counselors. The research could explore their perceptions of the importance of social justice and school counselor social justice activities. Through examining the expectations of these populations, school counselors may have a clearer idea of the barriers surrounding SJA practice, the needs of these individuals, as well as the school counselor's role as a social justice advocate within the school system, all of which can help to increase SE.

Moreover, due to the instrumentation limitations, it is recommended that future research focus on further validating and potentially revising Dean's (2009) SJAS. At the time of instrument selection for the present study, the SJAS seemed like the most appropriate measure of SJAC, but there is limited empirical validity of this instrument. Too, revising the negatively worded questions may decrease respondent confusion. Also, the SJSE of the SIQ's construct validity needs further exploration, thus additional studies could be beneficial. Though the current study contributed to the limited existing literature on the SJAS and the SJSE subscale of the SIQ, more research will strengthen results gleaned using these instruments.

Further, another area of future research includes the measurement of SJAC and SJSE of school counselors. For the present study, the timeliest option for this researcher was to edit the SJAS (Dean, 2009) and the SJSE subscale of the SIQ (M. J. Miller et al., 2009) to include school counseling language. Though this study contributed to the limited existing literature on the instruments, this researcher recommends two newly developed and validated instruments specifically assessing the constructs of SJAC and SJSE related to the role of school counselors. The SJAC instrument could combine school counselor competencies as they relate to the ASCA (2019a) national model with the ACA (2018) advocacy competencies. The scale for SJSE of

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school counselors could implement the research that M. J. Miller et al. (2009) conducted on social justice activities and combine those with the ASCA (2019a) national model.

Finally, future research could focus on incorporating a higher quality of SJA training for practicing school counselors and school-counselors-in-training. This can be done by first developing a social justice training model for school counselors. This training model could then be implemented into professional development for school counselors to increase their SJAC and SJSE. Further, studies can be done to assess the effectiveness of such a model. Doing so would help to provide an effective developmental model for school districts to use in training purposes and to potentially increase school counselor engagement in SJA practices. It could also be adapted for training of other school personnel. In addition to the training model, an additional course focusing on SJA practices, current trends, and so forth can be developed and incorporated into school counselor education programs followed by a future study evaluating the effectiveness of the course in SJA practices.

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of self-perceived levels of SJAC on the self-perceived levels of SJSE of practicing school counselors, and the extent to which SE and PE moderated the relationship between SJAC and SJSE. The school counseling literature is full of publications that make the argument for incorporating SJA in practice, encourage training and skill development for social action, and outline standards and competencies that school counselors need to be effective advocates (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Cox & Lee, 2007; Dean, 2009; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; House & Hayes; 2002; A. A. Singh, Hofsess et al., 2010a; A. A. Singh, Urbano et al., 2010b; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Although the belief in SJA has been a force in the school counseling literature for a number of years, more research assessing school counselors' SJAC,

SJSE, and factors affecting SJA practice should be explored if the movement is to gain any credibility within the field (Ratts, 2009; S. D. Smith et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the primary aim of the current study was to add to current research on factors affecting SJSE and, ultimately, SJA practice to inform practice and training. The findings of the present study revealed a positive direct relationship between SJAC and SJSE, and the relationship between SJAC and SJSE was moderated by SE, but not PE. However, PE was still a strong contributor to SJSE. Therefore, because the role SJAC, SE, and PE play in the relationship between SJAC and SJSE, it is essential to find ways to increase a school counselor's SJAC, SE, and PE. Doing so can potentially help minimize the gap between SJA expectations of school counselors and the reality of practice.

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