

CHALLENGES OF UNDERSERVED STUDENTS IN DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS:  
INFLUENCE OF TRAINING ON SCHOOL COUNSELORS' SELF-EFFICACY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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### Abstract

A child's social, mental, and emotional well-being is significant to his/her daily functioning and academic achievement. Socioeconomic impoverished students are often burdened by traumatic experiences and stressors from their homes, communities, and school environment that can exacerbate academic difficulties. Schools in low socio-economic status (SES) communities are frequently coupled with educational disadvantages. Consequently, the lack of expectations, resources, training, and qualified staff often characterizes schools in these communities. For these reasons, these challenges require additional development of school counselors' capabilities. To serve all students, it is important for practicing school counselors to increase their awareness of the specific needs to improve the lives of underserved populations. The purpose of this exploratory and investigative study is to validate the claim that an evidenced-based training, introducing school counselors to strategies and interventions will affect counselors' knowledge, skills, confidence, and self-efficacy. This study aims to determine if training will lead to increased motivation, better delivery of counseling services that directly address the psychosocial, emotional, and mental health of students, and increased outcomes for those students. Data would be provided from North Carolina school counselors who are employed in disadvantaged schools, serving primarily underserved students.

*Keywords:* Self-Efficacy, school counselor, competency, interventions, training, underserved, at-risk, underprivileged.

### **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my best friend, better half, and loving husband, Ticarus, who have supported me throughout this journey. He surely had been affected in every way possible as a willing participant to join me in the struggle but continued to stay optimistic. He continuously offered words of encouragement and had been a source of motivation and assurance during the tough challenges. My husband was determined that I had finished what I had started as he was there to cheer me on every step of the way. I thank you for your thoughtfulness, understanding, and selfless acts during those critical moments.

I would also like to dedicate the completion of this dissertation to Jesus Christ my savior. Thank you for providing me with the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that guided me through those difficult times when I felt like giving up. Thank you for your strength, protection, and allowing me to discern my sense of purpose.

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**List of Abbreviations**

Achievement Orientation Model (AOM)

American Counseling Association (ACA)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP)

Counselor Self-Efficacy (CSE)

Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS)

Evidence-based interventions (EBI)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Intelligence quotient (IQ)

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

National Certified Counselor (NCC)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)

North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

School Counselor Self-Efficacy (SCSE)

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

Student Success Skills (SSS)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

There are various community and school related factors that increase the risk for students to develop difficulties with their emotional, social, or behavioral development. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: 1) To provide historical and theoretical background on counseling for underserved and at-risk students, and 2) to explain in detail the motivation for this study, the problems it will attempt to solve, and its significance. For this dissertation, a student is at-risk if he/she are identified by school personnel to have a history of negative and disruptive behaviors that impedes his/her chances of being successful in school (Morgan, 2009). They also acknowledged that students who had experienced difficulties with their emotional or behavioral health, absenteeism, displaying a lack of interest in academics, and conveying a disconnect from the school environment are all characteristics of at-risk behaviors. Minority racial status, poverty, single-parent households, poor living conditions, and poor health and nutrition are all indicators that a student may be considered at-risk (Morgan, 2009). The goal of this study is to determine if a targeted, evidence-based training can increase the perceived self-efficacy of school counselors that work with underserved and at-risk students.

### **Background**

Children can think intelligently and mature socially when they exhibit good mental health. Those who experience adversities may find it tough to stabilize the development of good mental and emotional health, and academic needs. This could be related to changed patterns in family dynamics, community violence, existing lifestyle, and schooling (Morgan & Gayer-Anderson, 2016). Regardless of the demographic of the students and their unique challenges, it is the responsibility of all educators to become competent with the diverse population they serve.

Being able to identify at-risk students is a more important task that is confronted in education. One of every five students confront encounters relating to their mental health displaying behavior problems such as inattentiveness, impulsivity, defiance, depression, anxiety, and social isolation (Weist et al., 2018). When a person experience a modification in their mood, thinking, and/or behaviors that negatively affect someone's quality of life is said to be a health condition of mental disorder (Seyf Hashemi, Yarian, Bahadoran, Jandaghi, & Mirmohammad Khani, 2015). The ability for all students to be served by a school counselor is expected as they deliver advocacy and possess sufficient characteristics of a strong educational leader, while demonstrating counseling knowledge and skills to manage students' emotional health concerns (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013). While children in today's society continue to transform socially and emotionally, identifying and addressing barriers has heightened the demands that necessitates school counselors to get prepared and gain knowledge regarding traumatic stresses that may negatively affect their functioning. Focusing attention on the student's needs could lead to immeasurable improvements in helping them gain confidence that can lead to increased psychosocial development.

The origins of the counseling field can be traced to the vocational concerns during the Industrial Revolution. Industrial growth led to many changes in the type of work available and new emphasis was placed on "vocational guidance" to help students navigate the new economic milieu (Schmidt, 2011). Schmidt cites George Merrill as one of the first people to experiment with vocational guidance at the California School of Mechanical Arts in 1985. The rise of intelligence tests and other methods of formal assessment influenced the counseling profession during World War I and World War II. However, practitioners, like Carl Rogers, forced school counselors to consider the personal and social development of students as well. School



counseling became widespread with the *National Defense Education Act* of 1958, which provided schools with funding and directions improving guidance and counseling services (Schmidt, 2011).

Research specific to “disadvantaged children” spiked in the 1960s. President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty led to increased research into the development of disadvantaged students by educators, psychologists, and policy makers. Much of this research was precipitated and informed by the increased emphasis on Intelligence quotient (IQ) testing and formal assessment, evaluating the development and lives of poor preschool children. The term “disadvantaged” was ultimately known to profile poor, urban, and black populations (Jackson, 2014). “Disadvantage” was later reorganized by the US Congress, introducing the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act renamed as Title I, that characterizes all children of low-income families.

However, much of this research was, and continues to be, less than ideal. Terms like “disadvantaged” and “at-risk” are amorphous and act as a catch-all for many different traits and concerns. For example, “Disadvantaged” and “at-risk” status is usually associated with low social class, nevertheless defining and delineating different social classes is difficult. Lui (2011) notes that accounting for social class is important for school counselors, but that social class distinctions can be made by “amount of income, type of occupation, level of education, location of residence” as well as “manners of speech, leisure activities, spending behavior, cars, jewelry, and other physical possessions. Each of these markers of social class can affect a child’s development in myriad ways. Furthermore, much of the research conducted during the War on Poverty may have pushed racial agendas or been mired in racial biases. As an example, Jackson specifically mentions an article published by Arthur Jensen, *How much can we boost IQ and*

*scholastic achievement?* The article, published in the Harvard Educational Review, explicitly argued that no interventions could overcome the biological fact that poor black children could not develop abstract reasoning skills (i.e. the skills that IQ tests are tailored to measure, Jackson, 2014). To overcome these complications and potential biases, new research is necessary.

Even though the terms “disadvantaged” and “at-risk” are loosely defined, school counselors are still obligated to meet the specific needs these students have. Consider that in 2007, 1.7 million US children had at least one parent in state or federal prison and most of these children live in low-income homes. These students are at-risk for behavior problems, substance abuse, truancy, school failure, adult offending and incarceration, increased likelihood of unemployment, and serious mental health problems (Irvin, 2013). It is believed that students that migrate from underprivileged families or uneducated backgrounds have fewer chances to succeed, just as students with a low social class portrays the lowest percentage of graduated students which obtains poorer achievement compared to students from a high social class (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017). Furthermore, most African-American, Latino, and American Indian students are actually in schools located in urban areas that “often lack the basic materials, such as updated books and clean facilities” (Miville, 2011, p. 177). School counselors must provide effective counseling to these students despite these difficulties. This study will seek to examine the lack of expectations associated with the lack of resources, trainings, and qualified staff that often characterizes schools in the SES community.

To determine if school counselors are effective providing service to disadvantaged and at-risk populations, there needs to be a criterion for determining if a counselor is effective in general. Because self-efficacy measures performance, school counselor’s abilities can be measured by way of self-efficacy to determine how it is related to competence and expertise.

This can be challenging since school counselors impact many facets of student achievement and development. School counselors are not only concerned with character development, “motivation, engagement, participation, self-efficacy, confidence, grit, and determination” for example (Aluede, 2017), but also measurable metrics like academic success and job placement. Aluede argues that future policy research on school-based counseling should focus on academic outcomes (test scores), learning related outcomes (motivation and attitudes toward school in general), vocational outcomes, and psychosocial outcomes. The underlying goal of school-based counseling is to help the student profit from schooling in order to learn all that is necessary to fulfill their potential and become useful in life (Aluede, 2017) and these criterion are a starting point to that end.

Along with measurable variables like the above, many other assessment instruments are used to attempt to determine school counselor effectiveness. These include portfolios, performance appraisal, supervisor evaluations, course-based assessments, exit interviews, and surveys (Tate, 2014). Tate contends that the psychometric instrument is an underutilized tool for determining school counselor competence, and a 2014 paper reviews 41 such instruments. Tate and his team found that of the 41 instruments reviewed, over one-third were measures of self-efficacy.

Research supports the concept that self-efficacy is an important factor when examining the effectiveness of both performance and effectiveness in school counselors (Sutton & Fall, 1995). In a study investigating the effectiveness of school counselors’ service delivery to meet American School Counselor Association (ASCA) guidelines, detected the need for appropriate training to include comprehensive practices, observational learning, and self-discipline can increase self-efficacy (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). They also indicated that implementing these

factors will create confident school counselors which will in turn increase programmatic service delivery while improving the development of students' social, academic, and career growth.

In high poverty schools, Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) indicated that school counselors are known to provide open services to students in the form of individual counseling, crisis intervention, or referrals to community agencies. With limited access to academic and social supports, Williams et al. (2017) denoted in an investigation conducted that it is vital for school counselors to become familiar with needs for students living in poverty. Findings exposed that interventions applied should commit to support assets and providing students with the necessary resources to defeat obstacles.

Children progress through life with many odds becoming vulnerable to the high crime rates, PTSD, starvation, physical and emotional abuse, lack of medical care, upsetting grief, and neglect. These prevailing difficulties present challenges that requires the enhancement of school counselor's abilities as this is an evolving and growing area of concern for adolescents and teenage children. Although school counselors from disadvantaged districts receive insufficient access to proper educational resources, it is critical school counselors learn to increase their self-efficacy for showing empathy and gaining awareness of students' struggles.

### **Problem Statement**

Though research has been done on counselor self-efficacy in general and improving outcomes for at-risk schoolchildren, there has been little research on the subjective mental state of counselors working with these students. Is there a connection between a person's emotional state and how they feel about their personal abilities? As school counselors work in a profession with the expectation of meeting high demands for students and their families, counselors can become mentally and physically exhausted. Having to immerse themselves in the difficulties of

others' emotional disorder is an added challenge that counselors must learn to manage. Coaston (2017) explained the increase risk of stress is likely for counselors they are constantly exposed to human sufferings and pain. They also explain determinants that influences distress of counselors to be factors of insufficient coping resources, lack of confidence, poor health regiments, or failing to take sufficient time from work.

School counselors are responsible for effective counseling for all students in the school setting. Consequently, little research includes how increases in school counselor self-efficacy might improve the field of school counseling for at-risk students specifically. Many counselors in training come from middle-class or better socioeconomic status and may not have experience engaging with at-risk students. Research for improving the outcomes of underserved and disadvantaged students has focused on updating coursework, using data more effectively, and practicum-based training. This is troubling, as past research has shown that trained counselors completing their practicum in disadvantaged schools expressed amazement at the differences between their coursework and what they really encountered in schools. They also report troubles connecting with the student and staff at schools in disadvantaged urban areas (Martinez, Dye, and Gonzalez, 2017). Due to school counselors' having limited experience, low self-efficacy, and a lack of training could restrict the quality and performance school counselors may provide to students. Training dedicated to improving counselor self-efficacy with disadvantaged students might alleviate those issues. As the needs of these students expand, thus the training of school counselors should as well to include specific knowledge, competences, and character needed to appropriately serve all students. However, the problem is there is not currently enough research that present methods for increasing school counselor self-efficacy when working with disadvantaged students in impoverished schools.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects that a targeted, evidence-based training will have on school counselor self-efficacy. This study will be targeted specifically towards school counselors working in impoverished schools with at-risk students. The study will use the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) and the School Counselor Self-Assessment (Department of Public Instruction, 2013) to determine if the professional development training that is focused on providing service to at-risk, disadvantaged students will increase the self-efficacy of school counselors. The counselors will complete the SCSE scale and the School Counselor Self-Assessment prior to the training and then the SCSE scale after training to see how their perceived self-efficacy has changed.

Barnes (2004) defines self-efficacy as “an individual’s perception of his or her competence to conduct counseling” (p. 56). She elaborates that “counselor self-efficacy (CSE) beliefs are independent assessments of competency in counseling; people with strong CSE believe they are highly qualified to counsel, whereas individuals with weak CSE do not believe they possess appropriate skills to perform counseling” (Barnes 2004, p. 56). Though the link between self-efficacy and increased counselor skill and performance is unclear, there is evidence that increase self-efficacy is related to improvements in counselor training, development, and anxiety. Just as Mullen and Lambie (2016) explained, the findings from the study performed indicated that with appropriate trainings, the theory of increased self-efficacy has proven that school counselors were more prone to take on challenging tasks while providing greater interventions to students. Gunduz (2012) also supports this claim through experimental studies that school counselors’ trainings, workshops, and professional development should be attended regularly to increase self-efficacy. More research is needed to see if and how increased self-

efficacy improves specific counseling skills. Nonetheless, it is expected that an increase in self-efficacy will lead to counselors providing counseling services with more confidence.

### **Significance of the Study**

According to a 2011 report by the National Center for Children in Poverty, forty-five percent of the children in the United States live in low-income families. Twenty-two percent live in poor families—where total household income is less than \$22,350 a year (Addy, 2013). The children in these families are likely to attend disadvantaged schools in urban or rural areas. These schools are often over-crowded, have less experienced teachers, and have higher teacher turnover overall. Many counselors may not want to work in these type schools, and those that do want to work in the schools may feel unprepared. Those counselors who chose to work with disadvantaged students but do not come from a disadvantaged background themselves may harbor biased beliefs about poverty that prevent them from providing the best counseling services possible (Stewart, 2015).

Underserved students present unique issues as well. Students' ability to perform at appropriate levels are often interrupted by many challenges and the complexities of issues they encounter daily (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, and Noguera, n. d.). As it was established above, many of these students come from low-income, potentially dangerous communities and unstable family structures. The stress and instability can lead to distraction, behavioral issues, and lackluster performance in school. This study aims to establish how much influence a training that is dedicated to improving counselor self-efficacy has to improve counselor performance in disadvantage schools. Counselors will have more knowledge and confidence supporting underserved students as this may lead to increased academic, social, and vocational outcomes.

There are also important policy considerations. If studies can demonstrate that training focused on increasing counselor self-efficacy can improve counseling services and student outcomes in disadvantaged schools, governments and other institutions may be more likely to dedicate time and money towards counseling research and training. The outcomes of disadvantaged students are of ethical and social justice importance. The development of methods that can improve those outcomes is of vital importance in the United States and world-wide (Lee, 2017).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for the study are listed below:

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and professional development training pertaining to their abilities in working with underprivileged students?

**RQ2:** Do the scores differ significantly for those who completed only the pre-assessment?

**RQ3:** Does multicultural training impact school counselors' self-efficacy in the area of professional development?

**RQ4:** Does a significant correlation exist between school counselor's self-efficacy levels and them obtaining valuable knowledge during a professional development to address the diverse range of issues underprivileged students present?

**RQ5:** How will gaining awareness and learning various evidence-based counseling techniques impact school counselor's competence reports?



### Definitions

1. ASCA National Model: A framework that delivers a systematic, comprehensive school counseling program that promotes unbiased and rigorous education for all students. School counselors are made responsible for designing, implementing and educating all parties involved in ensuring the success of all students (Fye, Miller, & Rainey, 2017).
2. At-risk: This descriptive word is frequently used referring to children who display adverse characteristics under undesirable circumstances that impede their learning experience such as ethnic minorities from low social backgrounds, having inadequate grades, truancy, and behavior challenges (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011).
3. Competence: It involves the potential of someone developing adequate knowledge and skills to appropriately deliver professional service (Fernandez et al., 2012).
4. Comprehensive School Counseling Program: A structured, program-centered curriculum that focuses on three developmental domains of academic, social/emotional, and career advancement of all students that is driven by student data (Fye et al., 2017).
5. Disadvantaged: Elementary and secondary schools who represents the majority of students from low income families, undergoing low-achievement, utilizing Title I funds to offer additional learning opportunities and academic support (Shaha, Glassett, Copas, & Ellsworth, 2015).
6. Motivation: A desire that influences the behaviors and/or actions of a person based on the desired outcome (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010).
7. Perceived Self-Efficacy: The belief about one's abilities to deliver specific tasks that impacts performance through logical, motivational, and decisional practices (Bandura,2012).

8. **Quantitative Research:** A methodical investigation of interest performed by gathering measurable data from participants. The results are then computed performing statistical techniques which are depicted in the form of numerically (Astroth & Chung, 2018).
9. **School Counselor:** A licensed counselor who has been trained to work in a school setting whom job duties necessitate offering students social, emotional, and educational support (Fye, Miller, & Rainey, 2017).
10. **Self-Efficacy:** A person's beliefs or judgments to measure their degree of motivation and determination to complete a task. It can also be defined as one's subjective assessment of his or her competence to accomplish a function (Bandura, 1997).
11. **Underprivileged:** The condition of experiencing the lack of, being in a social and economic disadvantage compared to others in society (Faustina, 2017).
12. **Underserved:** Pertaining to the background of low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students who do not have the opportunity through the lack of exposure and resources with a higher risk of not being able to excel academically (Brown-Robertson, Ntembe & Tawah, 2015).

### **Summary**

This quantitative study will seek to measure the association of skilled practices, being exposed to interventions, and school counselor self-efficacy. There are many factors to why students become inadequate as these influences contribute to increasing student's risk of school failure and jeopardize their productive educational outcomes. For this reason, it can be difficult for school counselors to appropriately intervene offering this population of students with valuable support and interventions that meet their challenges.

Because low expectations guide cultural norms of students living in underprivileged communities, school counselors will need to recognize the oppositions that exist in serving at-risk children. The implementation of motivation and confidence is needed for school counselors to successfully execute a positive culture of student development that provide effective support for disadvantaged students. Dealing with the various issues that underprivileged students present requires knowledge and ability of the school counselor to implement quality practices and interventions. Applying quality practices to support student success and progress through educational development can be also be achieved by utilizing Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) interventions. Through the professional development training, school counselors' self-efficacy will be measured to determine if there will be an improvement in the performance levels in educationally disadvantage schools.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Examining concerns related to the possibility of school counselors increasing their self-efficacy and abilities are explored in this chapter. Literature is examined that look at these areas to determine the effect that a targeted, evidence-based training will have on school counselor self-efficacy. The literature will investigate the relationships amongst demographic variables, self-efficacy, and performance assessing activities performed through which would hopefully positively influence at-risk students in disadvantage schools. This chapter reviews the theoretical background and supporting studies that investigates the theories of: (a) school counselors' self-efficacy, (b) factors of environment that obstructs academic success and (c) program development service delivery.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Working towards maintaining quality mental health for all students is a common goal in the field of education. It is the obligation of the school districts to staff schools with competence school counselors who are sufficiently equipped to address the broad set of student needs. It is the responsibility of all educators to become competent and increase their awareness to identify the unique challenges of the disadvantaged population of students. As expected, students will naturally advance more than others, specifically when the conditions of a student's home and neighborhood environments does not support educational success (Barile et al., 2012). Being able to identify those types of at-risk students is a more important task confronted in education. The theory of focusing attention on the student's needs could lead to immeasurable improvements in helping them gain confidence needed to liberate them from emotional or behavioral challenges.

Placing emphasis on student needs will allow adolescents and teens the opportunity to explore innovative curricula that is intended to empower and encourage children to excel in their social life, sports, school, and become respectable citizens that lead healthy, productive lives. Implementing a needs assessment would address presenting problems and school counselors can work towards creating a district where the youth are encouraged to foster positive engagements to overcome adversities. Fahey (2007) stated that boredom and taking care of oneself can increase the possibility of a child being influenced to consume drug and alcohol use by as high as fifty percent. Due to the serious delinquency and violence that could potentially occur amongst youth subjected to such risk factors, introducing students to constructive equal opportunity resources could help strengthen this issue.

Employing quality school counselors are of great importance to the field of education as they work to facilitate a productive educational culture which include providing students with support to overcome barriers that impedes their success (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013). Coaching students through difficulties encourages positive change in youth by educating and supporting favorable experiences. School counselors are to provide a safe, fun and nurturing environment to assistant youth from all demographic dimensions to develop character and obtain the skills required to mature into productive, civil minded, and responsible individuals. In working with underserved students, Brown-Robertson, Ntembe, and Tawah (2015) conveyed how such children are afforded considerably fewer resources, consequently being subjected to being at risk for not being provided sufficient opportunities. Accordingly, it is vital for school counselors to demonstrate competence and skills necessary to effectively address and treat the unique needs of the underprivileged student population. Successfully implementing educational school programs and meeting student's personal and social needs are essential to increasing their

levels of achievement; making school counselors a critical factor in the management, assessment, and placement of students in education programs and providing access to economic or psychological resources (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). The ability for all students to be served by a school counselor is expected as counselors deliver advocacy and possess suitable characteristics of a strong educational leader, while demonstrating counseling knowledge and skills to manage students' emotional health concerns (DeKruyf et al., 2013). According to the Department of Public Instruction (2013), school counselors are required to become involved in the leadership, advocacy, and collaboration with school personnel to execute a school counseling program.

### **Related Literature**

As students with demanding needs require more support, school counselors should be skillfully trained to appropriately serve those students. The professional growth of school counselors permit them to build self-confidence as they increase their expertise to support students as well as others in the community directly related to the students. As school counselors believe in their abilities, they learn to execute behaviors required to accomplish a desired outcome, which is referred to as self-efficacy (Mayer, 2010).

Applying school counselors' expertise and training experience, they present students with an opportunity to develop emotionally. For that reason, school counselors influence student achievement, which is an important matter of which school counselors must also direct their attention. High school graduation rates in underserved populations are an increasingly disturbing issue that also necessitates acquiring demanding and comprehensive development of skills, and beliefs. DePaoli, Balfanz, Bridgeland, Atwell, and Ingram (2017) reported that African Americans, Hispanic/Latino, and low-income students contribute to less than seventy percent of

the graduation rates. Professional development training opportunities compel the need to improve their performance, which in turn will improve the performance of student achievement that increases graduation rates.

### **North Carolina Statistics**

For the purpose of this research, emphasis is placed on traditional public schools in North Carolina during the 2018-19 school year. The state of North Carolina is comprised of 115 urban areas; (19 urbanized areas and 96 urban clusters) and is made up of 39.8% rural population. (US Census Bureau, 2010). With 18% signifying the national poverty line, North Carolina has an increased rate of its population surviving poverty than the entire United States.

North Carolina operates 118 unified school districts. Data indicated that low SES students make up 51% of children who attended public schools. Along these lines, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> highest among the 50 states, North Carolina public schools are comprised of 53% of students who live in poverty (Public Schools First NC, 2016). This article continues to disclose the latest statistics related to the demographics of low SES students living in North Carolina. They are as follows: 54% city, 43% suburban, 57% town and 49% rural containing 27% of ages 0 – 5 and 23% for ages 6 – 17.

All schools in North Carolina receives a grade of A – F based on their yearly performance. Eighty percent of the weight is rated based on test results (end of grade, end of course, graduation rate, bound for college/workplace) and 20% of the weight calculated from the school's growth measured by EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System) (Public Schools First NC, 2016). Thus, resulting 98% of schools that represent poverty by at least 50% or more earned an annual grade of an F (See Figure 1). Public Schools First NC (2016) indicated that funding is provided to help reduce child poverty by 60% by introducing children to

programs that will benefit them in the future. Although schools are there to assist student to excel and discover a life beyond poverty, the problem is known to be larger, requiring further actions to be implemented.

Percent of schools by low-income percent by letter grade. Excludes alternative schools and schools with insufficient data.

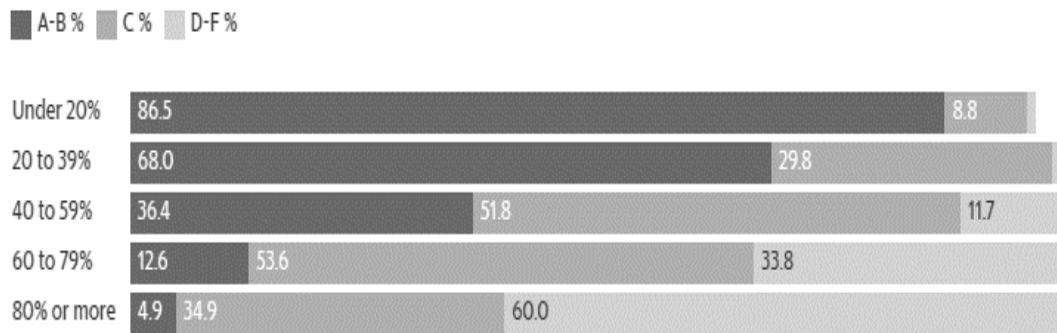


Figure 1. NC School Performance Grades 2018 – 2019 by Income Level  
 N & O analysis of Public Instruction, Hui, K. & Raynor, D. (2019)

**Urban and Rural School Communities**

Neighborhood disadvantages of the urban community is characterized by high rates of poverty, high proportion of minorities, high rates of unemployment, large proportion on public assistance, high volumes of single-parent or female-headed households, and chronic community violence (Sternthal, Jun, Earls, & Wright, 2010). This article indicates that urban communities are also accompanied by undesirable conditions of social disorder that include crime, children being exposed to family violence, poor health, using or selling of substance, and prowling of individuals which triggers additional dangers.

Children living in poverty necessitates lots of additional support to be successful in school. According to Miranda, Radliff, and Della Flora (2018), there is a need for urban schools to increase mental health services offered to students. Research indicates that students from urban schools are known to experience a reduction of educational outcomes due to structural barriers (educational inequalities, poor conditions, income gap) that increases the achievement



gap (Martinez et al., 2017). This article also recognizes other barriers of school-based racial prejudice, a small amount of support from the home environment or neglect, and fewer constructive school experiences compared to students from other schools. The persistent challenge of attempting to close the achievement gap in urban schools constructed the need to form the educational reform movement (Miranda et al., 2018) having the potential to establish solutions for schools in poverty districts. Because urban schools have unsatisfactory academic achievement and a need for quality mental health care, being able to deliver mental health services to students in urban schools are essential for underserved populations.

### **Rural Communities**

Rural communities undergo economical struggles, demographic isolation, unstable community foundation, and reduced population (Grimes, Spencer, & Jones, 2014). Just as urban school districts, rural schools also present exceptional challenges related to a lack of funding for resources, employment, and professional development (Wilson et al., 2015), making it difficult to attract and retain qualified school personnel. Furthermore, as school funding in rural districts continue to be scarce, teachers are often required to organize instruction for multiple subjects and various grade-levels which prevent teachers from extending individual attention to students (Public Schools First NC, 2016).

With 57% of school districts classified as rural, statistics reported that out of approximately 12.4 million children living in the United States, nearly one quarter of those children attend public schools in rural areas (Schafft, 2016). Because of school size, rural areas often enhance their school community affiliation. Compared to urban schools, rural schools have the advantage of populating 64% of its schools with 400 or fewer student with urban schools only at a rate of 39% (Schafft, 2016). Research proves that students from lower SES

backgrounds benefit from attending schools with less students as it presents opportunities for social and academic gains.

Due to the geographical regions of rural communities, transportation issues, and other considerations, rural neighborhoods often have limited availability to connect with government services, community, and private resources (Grimes, Spencer, & Jones, 2014). Consequently, school counselors are often the main source accessible for mental services in rural communities.

### **Underperforming Schools**

The dynamics of a school consist of the characteristics of the student body, which includes their academic abilities and socioeconomic status; infrastructural features, that involves amenities and attractiveness; and school resources, such as quality personnel and textbooks. To ensure student success, schools need every available resource to guarantee that students receive appropriate provisions to make certain that school counselors are able to provide guidance to reduce emotional distress, reduce truancy, graduate students, and prepare for college and/or career, just to name a few. As the flaws of failing school systems became so rapid, politicians and educators searched for effective programs that would improve the education system (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009).

Race to the Top and the School Improvement Grant, described by Hines et. al. (2017), are two federal funded programs created by the Obama administration that mandated low-performing schools to design creative strategies to improve student achievement. The Title I School Improvement Grant program has allotted states to receive \$3.5 billion to be distributed to local school districts to turn around their lowest performing schools (Hines et al., 2017). The No child left behind (NCLB) act had prompted the educational system to discover evidenced-based solutions that provided assessments and accountability measures.

Mitcham, Portman, and Dean (2009) described a research that instructed one hundred and two counselors to rate their topics of concern in the urban schools. After collecting responses, the topics were concluded to be (1) low family functioning/parenting; (2) academic achievement; and (3) poverty. Six interventions were also recognized as developmental guidance areas of concern in the urban school districts. These interventions were documented to be (1) the use of culturally biased tests and curricula; (2) the effect of societal continuation of harmful racial and cultural stereotypes; (3) school climate; (4) an overrepresentation of African American students in special education; (5) an underrepresentation of African American students in gifted and talented education; and (6) African American students are often insufficiently funded. Mitcham et al. (2009) claims there are limitations placed on urban school systems. Allowing school counselors to identify problematic areas would enable the system to improve the resources and programs to better service underprivileged students. Advocacy of the school counselors can occur to concentrate on a systemic change (Mitcham et al., 2009). In high poverty schools, Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) indicated that personnel reported feeling unprepared to address the concerns of students who attend low poverty schools. As a result, they describe these schools as having the worst working conditions, unacceptable facilities, and fewer support.

An achievement gap exist that is related to socioeconomic class from low-income families to high-income families, which apparently becomes noticeable before children enter kindergarten and continues throughout k-12 education (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017). It is recognizable that the educational system serves two functions, the educational and selection function. The concept of selection functioning is known as the school system using a selection system to determine which school a student will be assigned, which differs in conditions of wealth, prestige, status, and power (Wiederkehr, Krauth-Gruber, & Darnon, 2015).

There are tons of research in education that attempts to close the achievement gap in the school system. The United States public school systems are operating with 51% of the children who reside in homes with families that are equal to or below the poverty line. According to William et al. (2017), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that students that descend from high-income families have a 16% higher graduation rate compared with their peers from low-income families. Students from high-income families have a 29% higher chance to enroll into college than those from low-income families. It is believed that students that migrate from underprivileged families or uneducated backgrounds have fewer chances to succeed, just as students with a low social class portrays the lowest percentage of graduated students which obtains poorer achievement compared to students from a high social class (Bray & Schommer-Aikens, 2015).

### **School Reform**

According to Fleischman and Heppen (2009), the employment of several approaches attempting to meet their goal, professionals indicated that school-based reform have minimum limited outcomes on educational enhancements. Sociologist feels that the focus should be on tightening the nation's educational gap that involves identifying the demands needed to lower the poverty level and to enhance the schools occupied by children of poverty. Fleischman and Heppen (2009) claims that a reform cannot be used alone to treat the issues of low reading and math scores, excessive dropout rates, the growing population of English-language learners, the lack of safety, the deficiency of effective teachers, and the attention and efforts needed to restructure underprivileged schools. The focus should be placed on the holistic outlook that may include combining various approaches.

### **Turnaround Schools**

Turnaround schools are defined as school that may require transformation by way of organization structure to produce quick yet effective outcomes in student achievement. It addresses the challenges of the school district instead of focusing on struggling students that attained functioning over a period of time. This procedure closes the achievement gap amongst demographic groups, improves student's academic performance, ensures students are college and career ready, and raises graduation rates. The turnaround philosophy requires principals to execute multiple duties that consist of directing the teachers, school counselors, and other school personnel to implement practices and interventions that are designed to transform the culture of the school that demands the students to produce academic excellence (Hines et al., 2017).

When school counselors assist low-income students and families, it allows school counselors to expand beyond delivering services to students. Because principals and counselors have the same goal pertaining to the educational achievement of all students, together, they have the capability to focus on main concerns and produce effective results for the whole school. With high hopes for students, schools, and themselves, Bridgeland and Bruce (2011) acknowledged that school counselors feel that the educational system often falls short of their goals. They urge for the system to consider making positive changes that offer resources to effectively encourage student achievement. Consequently, many school counselors believe that the education system is faulty as it requests changes that contribute to the reform of the system to defend and fulfill their mission.

### **Self-Efficacy**

The term self-efficacy introduced by Bandura is related to a person's way of thinking based on their efforts, decisions, and determination in spite of the situation or circumstances,

which was developed from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). The decision to commit to a task, the energy in carrying it out, and the level of performance is all influenced by self-efficacy, which predicts human behavior (Shkullaku, 2013). Self-efficacy involves developing confidence established by the performances and beliefs of an individual. The duty of self-efficacy predicts commitment to the performance amongst a variety of tasks and behaviors. Because self-efficacy measures performance, school counselors' performance can be measured by way of self-efficacy.

Literature has unmasked that self-efficacy can be determined by the competence of skills, prior experience, mental capacity, and motivation on future actions. Greason and Cashwell (2009) indicated that increasing self-efficacy is theorized to influence four key sources: a) skills proficiency, (b) compassionate experiences, (c) verbal encouragement, and (d) transformation of emotional motivation. In other words, self-efficacy is known to be the measure of development in the profession of counseling (Mullen, Uwamahoro, Blount, & Lambie, 2015).

In recent years, school counselors' self-efficacy has been a persisting topic. It has surfaced as an important concern related to the study of counseling, in which the term of counseling self-efficacy was developed. School counselors' self-efficacy is defined as having the competence to deliver meaningful counseling practices to students and other stakeholders (Gunduza, 2012). As the expression was further investigated, Schiele, Weist, Youngstrom, Stephan, and Lever (2014) recognized that counseling self-efficacy is directly related to the counselor's level of training, supervision, self-concept, development, and expectation of counseling services. The self-efficacy in counselors are of significance to counselors' development. It is reported that counselor self-efficacy contributes to individuals experiencing further positive results, added positive self-evaluations, and less apprehensions involving counseling performance (Schiele et. al., 2014). The self-efficacy theory has recognized that

school counselors who maintain higher levels normally have a greater impact on their students, establishes higher expectations, displays greater commitment, flexibility, motivation, and determination (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). Therefore, linking elevated levels of counseling self-efficacy associated with greater achievement because it increases the enthusiasm to improve performance. According to Bray-Clay and Bates (2003), employing positive beliefs of self-efficacy can improve the execution in which educators are inclined to deliver skills to students in the classroom, and expanding their knowledge base. It regulates how useful a professional is willing to ensure the effectiveness of their knowledge being related to students. This involves the proper planning of the educational content and their ability to achieve the educational objective. Bray-Clark and Bates (2003) recognized that educators who exhibit elevated levels of self-efficacy deliver greater student achievement, with implications that it dictates overall school effectiveness.

Gaylor and Nicol (2016) introduced four foundational characteristics that have been identified to influence self-efficacy: (1) performance; (2) vicarious learning; (3) social persuasion; and (4) emotional and/or physical response. Self-efficacy can either be improved or reduced depending on (1) who is performing the task; (2) the effectiveness of others succeeding; (3) verbal motivation or discourage; or (4) the emotional reaction of engaging in it. To be effective in the skills needed to increase self-efficacy, counselors must integrate the help of teachers and parents to support the academic development of students.

The functioning of self-efficacy in school counselors is also vital to the development of career planning in high school. School counselors must be aware that learning experiences and self-efficacy are the two essential factors manipulating high school students' career growth (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Being able to increase self-efficacy through experiences while

strengthening counseling skills are believed to be the most critical and influential means of forming a sense of self-efficacy. Consequently, school counselors will become more efficient at presenting students with meaningful experiences (Greason & Cashwell, 2009).

Gunduza (2012) introduced burnout as a state of exhaustion that disturbs the performance and gratification received when nurturing the needs of students. The result of this mental state can reduce the confidence of school counselors, thus reducing their abilities and self-efficacy, which damages their talents and competencies. Prior theory and research have established self-efficacy as being an important factor of cognitive theory in facilitating motivation. Social cognitive theory is associated with the intellect to understand, predict, and change human behavior, which is an important component of self-efficacy (Harona, Marzuki, Jaafara, & Babaa, 2010). The social cognitive theory and self-efficacy is linked to counselor competency. Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich (2007) established the framework of contexts and factors of human functioning that is known to be linked with social cognitive theory along with its behavioral element self-efficacy, in which self-efficacy is associated with work performance characteristics.

A person's beliefs of efficacy can be shaped from various means of exposure. As behavior is determined by a person's beliefs, it is categorized as strategized behavior that is associated with a person's attitudes, beliefs, intentions, and actions. School counselor's beliefs were examined as Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) identified three relevant topics that were identified by school counselors and rated by importance. They comprise of (1) attaining achievement gaps using school data; (2) supporting students' academic progression; and (3) explore students' personal/social development. Based on Gunduza (2012), when school counselors receive social support, they produce higher scores in self-efficacy beliefs. It also



acknowledged that responses received from others influence the self-efficacy beliefs of school counselors.

Wiederkehr, Krauth-Gruber, and Darnon (2015) introduced the term meritocratic ideology which relates to the belief that an individual's abilities and talents places value on their success, because it is understood that an individual is rewarded based on their aptitude and efforts. Shkullaku (2013) stated that high self-efficacy is exemplified by individuals who work with difficult tasks until it is completed, most of the times low self-efficacy individuals end up giving up. People normally would avoid tasks that exceeded their abilities, but with high self-efficacy, individuals are inclined to accept and perform those activities. Shkullaku (2013) believed that a person's attitude and gender are persuasive to some extent regardless of their beliefs concerning self-efficacy.

Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2007) recognized five factors that can affect the attitudes of a school counselor. They consist of (1) role perceptions; (2) confidence in abilities;(3) commitment to advocacy; (4) attitudes about partnerships and families; and (5) perceived barriers. They also exposed that the attitudes of school counselors are related to them having confidence in their abilities which is positively associated to their perceived involvement. It is imperative for an individual to exemplify confidence for being able to apply control over their actions, motivations, and surroundings.

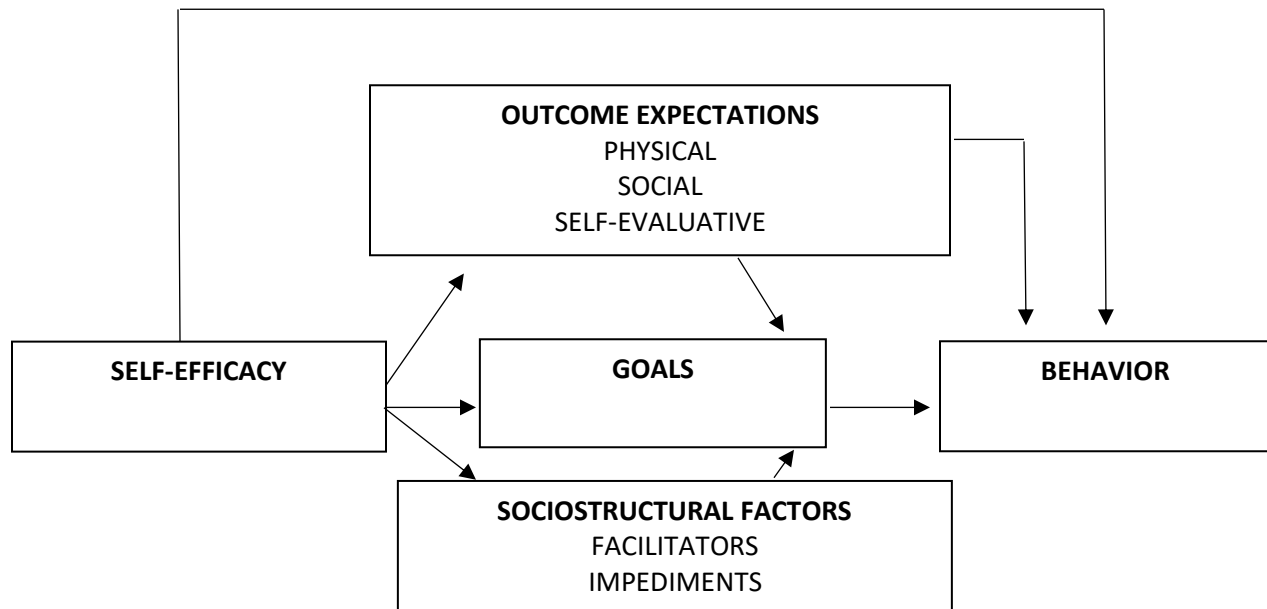


Figure 2. Figure of structural paths of influence from self-efficacy

### Student Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is also associated with student's ability to actively comprehend the information during the learning process. As students gain confidence to absorb the knowledge, it increases their involvement and willingness to learn. Mayer (2010) has conducted research that verifies student achievement is directly related to self-efficacy. When a student's self-efficacy increases, the influences are known to raise student's academic performances. This cognitive process inspires students to emerge themselves into the learning material, which allows students to develop effective academic results (Mayer, 2010). Students who signifies high efficacy work harder, attempt challenging responsibilities, and have confidence that they are capable of many accomplishments in the future. They are successful when they believe they can uphold the challenges of their schoolwork (Rowell & Hong, 2013).

Academic achievement has been found to be performed based upon the quality of self-efficacy. When student exhibit positive attitudes and interaction with the staff in the school environment, they are likely to exemplify high self-efficacy. This interaction will in turn lead to higher academic achievement. Self-efficacy has been reported to influence student's academic success (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003). Students often feel adequately qualified to achieve educational obligations in regard to high self-efficacy and academically make better preparations to meet their career expectations.

### **Student Performance**

Students have many psychological variables that influence their school performances. A huge amount of research has attempted to identify important factors that leads to student success by assessing variations that influence the elements of psychological and academic performances (Rowell & Hong, 2013). It would be appropriate for educators to understand the behavior of students who undergo such complexities without exemplifying feelings of resentment. Researched-based interventions have presented the strengths and weaknesses of students with expectations to develop improved results. Lashley & Stickl, (2016) asserted that data should be collected to include all aspects involving behavior, academic achievement, and attendance rates to provide more insight and different variations of student performance. According to Parris, Owens, Johnson, Grbevski, and Holbert-Quince (2010), African American children are more likely to live in impoverished communities. The absence of family resources is therefore likely to be related to a shortage of community resources. Consequently, exposing children to the vulnerability of high crime, starvation, lack of medical care, and insufficient access to proper educational resources. These associations are said to have an impact on school performance which is a guided factor that produces inequalities in underrepresented schools. For

this reason, gifted and talented students are often overlooked in underprivileged schools (Shadi. & Hassan, 2017).

### **Student Motivation**

School counselors must recognize personality behaviors of underperforming students. Some of those behaviors include anxious, depression, and low self-esteem. According to Renda and Villares (2015), students whom are at a risk of dropping out of school has similar recognizable characteristics that consist of (1) disliking school; (2) poor academic performance; (3) poor teacher relationships; (4) low socioeconomic status; (5) lack of motivation; (6) negative and challenging behaviors; and (7) poor school engagement. Year after year students drop out of school which leaves a large percentage of those students to not graduate or earn their diploma.

Motivation is found to be one of the most valuable elements that are desired for effective development of students' academic progression (Rowell & Hong, 2013). Having the lack of motivation to achieve academic goals are an ongoing issue that today's youth is being challenged with. Self-determination theory is comprised of three theoretical factors referred to as extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and amotivation (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006). Extrinsic motivation describes participating in an activity for the purpose of gaining a potential reward. However, intrinsic motivation is simply engaging in an activity for the enjoyment to explore or learn. The term amotivation is used to characterize those who lack motivation or is unwilling to participate in an activity (Legault et al., 2006). As the individual internalize the reason they performed in a certain manner, they begin to gain self-determination. The absence of motivation and developing boredom are effects of amotivation. In academic settings, Legault et al. (2006) links amotivation to poor adjustment, stress from school and pressures of studying, and high school dropout. Negativity results from having low self-determination of extrinsic

motivation. It leads to feelings of self-admiration, depression, and negative affect. When students experience negative school practices, they lose their motivation of desiring to make academic accomplishments. This disengagement can lead to student drop out.

They have a lack of motivation due to their beliefs that they lack ability, having low determination, lack of value on academic activities, and the types of academic tasks. Rowell and Hong (2013) identifies the factors that plays a part in the motivation and learning ability of students. They are as follows: school climate, educators' beliefs and perceptions, and family and social values.

Students are often seen by the school counselor to help them alter their self-defeating behaviors. According to Berger (2013), underperforming students become at-risk for dropping out of school or not following a pathway to college or career and eventually go on to earn lower salaries in the future. When school counselors identify these underachieving students, they make an effort to encourage the students to work harder to avoid school failure and dropout. School counselors have a unique position within the school that permit them to address the gaps in education as they provide support to their academic and personal needs. They have access to a tool called the Achievement Orientation Model (AOM) when aiding underperforming students in raising their levels of motivation. This framework evaluates the student's self-efficacy, goal valuation, and environmental awareness (Berger, 2013). Students who characterize self-awareness are inspired by their academic performance and academic endeavors (Kim, 2014).

Williams et al. (2015) enlightens that academics scores for low-income students are considerably lower than students who live in higher income families. Also, the dropout rate for students of higher income homes are known to be lesser than the dropout rate of students from families with lower incomes. Williams et al. (2015) informed school counselors to encourage

and support the academic achievement of students from low-income homes by (1) forming meaningful relationships; (2) inspiring the cultural wealth of students; and (3) providing mental health services in schools.

There are numerous researches that have been consistent with findings that students who are academically motivated normally see the value in school and their learning capabilities. According to Berger (2013), some factors that determine the success of students include community influences, socioeconomic status, and family background. Being able to identify their difficulties will help diminish the negative influences during transformation development. Webb and Brigman (2006) discussed that students gaining confidence in their abilities has the potential to increase if school personnel would allow academics to be learned in a caring, supporting, and encouraging environment where students feel comfortable when mistakes are part of the process, as well as if small improvements are applauded. When students gain more confidence, they are willing to put forth more efforts, which is known to increase academic performance and social outcomes.

### **Student Achievement**

Repeated evidence proves that factors of social class and gender are constant predictors of school performances (Wiederkehr et al., 2015). Much frustration has been expressed pertaining to the inadequacy of school performance and undesirable outcomes of Black students, resulting in high drop-out rates and low college attendance rates. Research has investigated the factors, categorizing school influence to be the source of weak performances from African American students. Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) shed light on the reasons for the achievement gap between African American students and White students. The school factors included (1) lack of rigor serving this population of students; (2) lack of access to technology-

assisted instruction; (3) having fewer qualified teachers; (4) having low numbers of experienced teachers; and (5) lack of safety. Consequently, students fail to reach their potential which impacts and reinforces the achievement gap (Ford et al., 2008).

Rumberger and Palardy (2005) recognized students' outcomes which are determined by their individual demographic characteristics consisting of (1) ethnicity and gender; (2) family characteristics; and (3) academic achievement and retention. Engagement, achievement, and dropout has also been discovered to be related to student outcomes. The characteristics described influences individual student achievement, as well as being influenced on a comprehensive or social level.

Students are more likely to acquire more knowledge, receive higher grades, and go on to earn higher education when they are more engaged at school. Nevertheless, there are many students who attend school, but do not engage themselves in their education. It leads researchers to believe that the most urgent and persisting problem in education is not low student achievement, but student disengagement (Park, Holloway, Arendtsz, Bempechat, & Li, 2012).

### **School Counseling**

School counseling is contingent on the ASCA National Model to establish programs that focuses on the professional identity of school counselors. The program is utilized to emphasize school counselor's commitment to enhancing students' academic achievement. It is imperative to incorporate school counseling in America as it is critical to high school graduation rates and college enrollment (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). In today's society, children are at-risk of receiving lower educational proficiencies than their parents. To increase academic achievement of all students, ASCA requires all school districts to place into effect a comprehensive school counseling program (Williams et al., 2015). Implementing a comprehensive developmental

guidance program influences the academic achievement of students while student counseling enhances school behavior, attendance, raises achievement levels, increases students' self-esteem and opinions toward school. It recognized that high school counselors challenge their students to excel to greater heights as they prepare for their future and ultimately will raise their expectations. Utilizing school counseling programs, they are known to decrease classroom interruptions in an effort to support teachers in providing quality education for achieving high success rates in students (American Counseling Association, 2007).

Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) acknowledged that school counselors must possess competencies of leadership, advocacy, and cultural competence to work in the urban school setting. School counselors conduct leadership roles within disadvantage schools, bridging the gap between families and teachers by (1) sharing information that counteracts teachers' views of poor families and prevent criticizing; (2) modeling how to reach out to families and build on their strengths; and (3) mediating between the conflicting potentials of the home and the school. The leadership role also consists of school counselors being able to train teachers to effectively communicate with parents and students who are from low-income communities (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Nevertheless, barriers that can hinder the execution of leadership and prevent expanding the school counseling role consist of feeling insufficiently trained, lacking skills; limited communication amongst the staff, students, and their families due to the school's broken routines and policies; misunderstanding of school counselor's expectations from other staff; and the absence of time to devote to new responsibilities.

Dahir and Stone (2009) introduced a six-step action research model that is activated to permit school counselors to utilize information collected from data (e.g. attendance, promotion rates, graduation rates, and discipline infractions) to distinguish the needs of the school, guide



collaboration, and plan practice procedures using data results. The six-step action model, identified by the acronym MEASURE engages the process of mission, elements, analyze, stakeholders unite, results, and educate. This organized process is used to assist school counselors in improving procedures by analyzing school-based problems, creating a plan of action, and observe the progression.

### **The Role of the School Counselor**

School counselors devote most of their time on academic and personal-social counseling (Anctil, Smith, Schenck, & Dahir, 2012). School counselor's work activities are measured in three domains. It consists of (1) facilitating student development of decision-making skills; (2) identifying student support systems; and (3) planning and conducting classroom guidance lessons (Anctil et al., 2012), but being able to facilitate student's educational and vocational development is the most important task of school counseling (O'Donnell & Logan, 2007).

As with all areas of education, school counselors are mandated to display evidence of useful practice. The profession of school counselors seeks individuals who wish to accept the distinctiveness to perform duties of an educational leader as well as a mental health professional. Dedicated school counselors often support students by employing meaningful proactive and preventative interventions. The self-efficacy of school counselors is deemed a critical variable. An investigation is warranted to identify important factors to determine if effective school counselors exemplify high self-efficacy to implement the interventions to continue the retention and graduation of all students. As the profession of school counseling evolves, the professional uniqueness may continue to change with it.

After the development of ASCA, additional expectations were established to enhance the delivery of the school counselor's mission (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). Being recognized as

professional educators who are qualified to deliver services to PreK–12th grade servicing students' academic, career and social/ emotional development needs (ASCA, 2016), they devote their talents of being highly motivated and creative to promote student achievement. School counselors are powerful student advocates, leaders, and collaborators who work toward the goal of producing change, taking responsibility for results, and having a strong involvement in the school's improvement efforts (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011). The role of leadership, advocacy, systemic change, and collaboration were adopted to improve the platform of school counseling. According to the American Counseling Association (ACA) (2007), after being trained and gaining experience, school counselors are believed to be the most prepared school based professional to work with at-risk youth. ACA (2007) reported that school counselors contribute to high academic achievement as students produce significant results through (1) earning excellent grades, (2) being better prepared for the future, (3) receiving valuable career and college information, and (4) having a positive school climate. School counselors are expected to meet expectations by maintaining accountability, being proactive and preventive in focus, and assists others in developing skills that are delivered in a holistic approach.

### **School Counselor Development**

The improvement of student achievement, quality of instruction, academic motivation, or the achievement gap will continue to be persistent until attitudes and/or beliefs from our educators are changed and until the negative stereotypes of our underprivileged schools are abolished (Ford et al., 2008).

Originated from Bandura, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is an attribute of career development, which highlights the significance of self-efficacy in someone's selection of behavior (Tang et al., 2008). Future counselors are trained through counselor development

programs that are constructed to educate and prepare them to develop skills, talents and experiences. Counseling students become aware of self-efficacy through their educational experience which is then transferred to job-related development and performances. The participants of a study reported by Hayden, Cook, Gracia, Silva, and Cadet (2015) indicated that they developed self-efficacy by completing a data-driven research project. It permitted them to apply data with their population to see the effects of their work. When looking at data from a population that is not familiar, it allowed counseling students to witness the gaps from the urban population and determine what interventions are necessary for implementation.

The theory of self-efficacy is determined to be a methodological overview for distinguishing attitudes toward someone's assertions to accomplish professional goals (Mullen et al., 2015). Individuals become aware of self-efficacy through programs that prepares them to become confident in their abilities to accomplish a task of becoming motivated to alter behaviors (Lam, Tracz, & Lucey, 2013). Of the researches conducted pertaining to counseling, it has been determined that there is a relationship amongst what individuals become aware of from their preparedness and self-efficacy (Sawyer, Peters, & Willis, 2013).

### **Perceived Challenges for School Counselors**

Working with underprivileged children can be a demanding task for school counselors. Socio-economic challenged students often struggle to stay prepared for school, as they need extra support and resources to be successful. The perceived challenges that typically becomes a barrier with children in economically disadvantaged school districts fall into five areas: (1) social and emotional needs (2) behavioral (3) academic, (4) basic needs, and (5) parental support. Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, and Pituch (2010) affirmed this observation stating that sufficient evidence validated that underprivileged children are exposed across generations of struggles pertaining to

socioemotional, physical, and cognitive problems which includes difficulties in depression and anxiety. On a regular basis, school counselors encounter students who have difficulty meeting these needs as counselors attempt to allocate resources to connect them with short-term support until they are linked with an agency or treatment that can offer long-term care.

Children report to school with issues related to their parents being poorly educated, having deficits in parenting skills, fighting addiction, or having employment problems. These perceived challenges for underprivileged students often cause them to move repeatedly. The unstable living arrangements causes problems when children constantly transfer schools which interfere with their ability to be prepared and successful in school. To assist these children with their unique needs, Martinez et al. (2017) recommend school counselors to become skilled in (1) cultural competence, (2) promote encouragement, (3) systemic perspective, (4) advocacy, and (5) leadership. As these students are identified and their issues addressed, it provides them with optimism for a better future.

### **School Counselor Competencies**

There are specific fundamental skills and competencies that every school counselor should possess to support students in their day-to-day and long-term challenges. These skills comprise of a progression of competencies needed to perfect the skill. As a school counselor, they are charged with being able to monitor and evaluate their success to carry-out ongoing strategies and make adjustments to areas that need improvement. Public Schools of North Carolina have developed standards for school districts to be able to support, monitor, and evaluate school counselors. The standards are presented as follows: School Counselors will (a) demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, (b) promote a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, (c) understand and facilitate the implementation of a

comprehensive school counseling program, (d) promote learning for all students, and (e) actively reflect their practice. In obtaining these abilities, school counselors will be equipped to uphold North Carolina State Board of Education's guided mission of preparing all students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century of graduating students to be globally competitive and prepared for life (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2008).

ASCA is a structure model that promotes a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program. All professional school counselors are supported by sharing the same vision despite of their setting, experience level or needs (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, ASCA suggest school counselors to be equipped in being able to meet obligations and competencies of acquiring the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes to:

- School Counseling Program: Plan, organize, implement and measure the progression of a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model.
- Foundations: Establish the fundamentals of a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.
- Management: Manage a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.
- Delivery: Deliver a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.
- Accountability: Monitor and evaluate the processes and results of a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

In utilizing leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, the demands for the 21st Century education calls for new roles and responsibilities of all school counselors. NC Department of

Public Instruction (2013) presented areas of competence that school counselors should become familiar for being able to execute an effective school counseling program:

- Human growth and development
- Core components for helping relationships
- Culture diversity
- Societal change and trends
- Student learning and academic success
- Evaluation of student needs
- Group and individual counseling techniques
- Career development
- Use of data
- Use of technology
- School counselor role of leadership, advocacy, and systemic change
- Legal and ethical guidelines
- Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders
- Research and program evaluation
- School culture and mission
- Interaction with other educational professionals

### **Training for School Counselors**

The growth and development of a counselor is a continuous and lifelong process. Wilson, Schaeffer, and Bruce (2015) noted that across the profession of counseling, school counselors obtain less guidance compared to other professional counselors. A deficiency exists involving school counselors to receive supervision that focus on the improvement of their personal growth

and counseling skills. It is observed that a potential barrier to counseling students in poverty may result in counselor's beliefs (Martinez et al., 2017). Counselors begin to form their opinion of their profession during their training programs and believes that the dynamics of their efforts in the helping profession is different than others as their identity highlights developmental, prevention, and wellness (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014).

Martinez et al. (2017) suggested that training programs for school counselors must educate counselors how to be culturally competent. Students who attend disadvantage schools normally is attached to a negative stigma and often do not receive appropriate services. Because school personnel have low expectations for their students, students appreciate school counselors who and are inclined to promote and encourage positive expectations. Therefore, it is imperative that faculty who serve the low-income population of students receive appropriate training. It is suggested that school counselors become competent at analyzing their social problems. The key to become an effective school counselor, they must have an open mind for being able to view the student's perceptions with respect and geniality while encouraging their strengths and needs that exist in the student's life.

A counselor's personal identity begins to be shaped from within through training that contains the features of their professional identity. Counselors begin to develop expertise and curiosity in their abilities relating to specific areas as they gain experience (Moss et al., 2014). School counselors receive additional training through continuing education as it is an important requirement in the school counseling standards. As counseling self-efficacy is taught, it begins to regulate the functioning of trainees and their responses. Self-efficacy is developed from their experiences of observation, social support, and emotions (Mullen et al., 2015). This is necessary to ensure that school counselors are functioning from an effective model across school

environments and school levels. Counseling trainees learn to respond to the needs of students who attend urban schools and gain effective experiences. It would be beneficial for those counselors to study the multicultural competencies to develop the self-efficacy of urban counselors (Hayden et al., 2015).

### **Interventions**

Evidence-based interventions (EBI) are intended to meet the needs of all students social, emotional, and behavioral development. They are introduced to students as programs and methods designed to provide treatment in changing the targeted behavior. The interventions implemented are documented evidence that has been proven to be effective. Hicks, Shahidullah, Carlson, and Palejwala (2014) defined EBI as comprehensive and organized prevention and intervention programs that have been previously researched and demonstrated to supply effective outcomes. These interventions increase awareness and impacts academic achievement.

### **Student Success Skills**

School counselors teach an evidenced-based intervention program to Grades 4 - 10 called Student Success Skills (SSS) (Webb & Brigman, 2006). This program teaches learning skills required to increase academic success that is developed through cognitive, social, and self-management skills. Students who attended the program were found to increase skills in student engagement. School counselors would be able to elevate students in achievement and behaviors if they received proper training in research-based counseling (Campbell & Brigman, 2005). Komarraju and Nadler (2013) presented that students can be trained to strengthen their self-efficacy and their beliefs. Students with self-confident prefer challenges and new knowledge as well as receiving decent grades, exceeding other students' abilities, and demonstrating their intellect through their schoolwork. They are more likely to present higher levels of academic



performance. They do not ask to receive assistance from peers or instructors due to being self-motivated.

Power, Goodyear, Maybery, Reupert, O’Hanlon, Cuff, and Perlesz (2015) acknowledges resilience that consist of behaviors that can help or delay individuals being able to cope with difficulties and stress associated with life dynamics and the communities around a family. Therefore, family resilience includes a systemic understanding of resilience that could benefit a family unit to be a source of support for each other. This consist of delivering quality and strength that allows students to grow and progress through significant life challenges. A child/parent bond can be strengthened as connections are built with the family, friends, and service providers. Regardless of their circumstances, resilient students are identified as upholding their achievement motivation in high regards.

### **Multitiered Systems of Support**

The multitiered systems of support (MTSS) is a high-quality, organized system of instruction implemented to deliver targeted support to meet the needs of students who struggle with displaying positive emotional/behavioral performance (Weist et al., 2018). It is structured to transform the approach schools typically aid students while enhancing the functioning of the “whole child” as well as increasing academic growth. A holistic approach is necessary when making an inference as to why a student is not being successful in school. Determining possible causes that may impact the student’s functioning can include medical illnesses, family crisis, community violence, or other traumatic experiences. Targeted Interventions to treat the student’s concerns are systematically delivered in the educational setting constructed by the student’s level of need. This data-driven process identifies student’s needs, frequently documenting and monitoring their performance for the need to make determinations to adjust treatment or goals

for proficiency. Educators in urban school districts experience difficulties implementing the system as they encounter challenges from the school system's lack of clarity and consistency in their structures. However, MTSS remains to be the method of choice (Braun et al., 2018).

The MTSS system operates from tiers ranging from Tier 1: Core Intervention Supports; Tier 2: Targeted Supplemental Intervention; to Tier 3: Intensive Interventions. These tiers of support increase in intensity, progressing from one level to the next. Tier 1 is basic in support and is designed to proactively construct a positive and safe learning environment for all students (Weist et al., 2018). If the student's occurrences are short-term, it may be beneficial to keep the student in Tier 1 and introduce other provisions that focuses on the student's immediate need. Students will advance to Tier 2 if they show a greater need than what is offered from Tier 1. That decision is made from examining data results for at-risk students and detecting a lack of progression at Tier 1. Tier 2 focuses more on specific skill development strengthening the supplemental support. The interventions are practical for students needing limited assistance (Braun et al., 2018). Educators employed at urban schools stated that although interventions are effective, once a student transitioned to Tier 2, students are often at that level longer than necessary (Braun et al., 2018). Tier 3 is an intensified level of instruction that offers evidenced-based interventions, effective supplemental support, as well as core academic and behavior training. For Tier 3, often involves increasing the treatment offered in Tier 2 by increasing the number days and intervals the interventions are applied or requiring individual sessions.

MTSS is established as an ongoing programmatic system of development utilized to support the continuous improvement through documented data to build the mental capacity and maintain change of all students. Counselors, psychologist, teachers, and others must work together to implement the student's intervention plans. Because all practices vary in

effectiveness, the selection of interventions are critical to ensure the validity of the program. Consequently, professional development is required to guarantee staff members are prepared to deliver interventions, effectively monitor the progress, and revise the program as needed. Its success is based upon the support from all school personnel involved.

### **Summary**

Chapter two introduces the theoretical concepts and supporting empirical research pertaining to the interest of this study. It seeks to correlate the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and their performance working in disadvantage schools aiding to support underserved children. Chapter two reviews the study of self-efficacy of how it relates to the skill of performance in the profession of school counseling. It also examines the professional roles, responsibilities, and standards of the profession as it relates to strengthening confidence to carry-out new and difficult tasks. In contrast, how would failing to satisfactorily complete a task or challenge impact school counselor self-efficacy. Artino (2012) explained that the most effective method of development is to gain a strong sense of self-efficacy through mastery experiences.

There are a variety of professional developments that is offered to school counselors. The various methods of professional development can be offered through trainings, supervisions, professional learning communities, mentoring, and much more unique styles. Consequently, school counselors should possess particular competencies in order to be effective at delivering evidence-based services to students who attend underserved schools. This chapter also outlines the usefulness of attending professional development trainings to learn approaches of evidence-based practices to gain developmental abilities needed to effectively implement techniques that support students in their quest to produce quality social engagements. Professional development can include skills to develop, coordinate, implement policies and strategies as well as offer

meaningful tools necessary to deliver effective instructional programs. By utilizing these professional practices, it is questionable if school counselors will produce a change in their practice, confidence, or performance. More importantly, this research seeks to investigate how professional development influences school counselors' interest to recognize the factors that lead to students being at-risk and gaining the confidence to successfully implement the most appropriate interventions that will reduce the child's symptoms to maximize their achievements.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

Chapter three reviews the method, research design, and procedures that were applied in this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine the association of the program development training that the school counselors completed to conclude if the direction of awareness gained from the training will increase school counselors' self-efficacy and competency to effectively meet the needs of underprivileged students. This investigation sought to verify the theoretical hypothesis that school counselors' level of confidence, as measured by the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) will be influenced by the effectiveness of the program evaluation and school counseling activities performed (as measured by the School Counselor Self-Assessment). All information is converted to report the data utilizing an online survey tool of Qualtrics.

Specifically, this study analyzed the hypothesized relationship that school counselors' perceived self-efficacy with underprivileged students increases after implementation of the professional development training. School counselors who have elevated self-efficacy scores, have increased levels of program delivery activities in which has increased their confidence for improved service delivery. It is hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between professional development training and increased self- efficacy. The data will be explained representing the population as a whole in terms of percentages, central tendency, range, and standard deviation (Watson, 2015).

### **Design**

As counselors become trained, they are expected to acquire skills in counseling and utilize interventions to address individual behaviors to improve mental health outcomes;

therefore, the independent variable, training received, would be investigated in this study. It is to be determined if the independent variable has an effect on the dependent variables, self-efficacy and performance.

This study employed a quantitative, exploratory and investigative study in nature. This program development project included pre-test /post-test surveys, with paired and independent *t* - test statistical methods. The use of quantitative method was used to investigate the correlation between variables by generating and analyzing numerical data through statistical analysis (Watson, 2015). Responding data was collected from the represented population sample size of (N=34), in which the results were depicted mathematically.

Utilizing an exploratory approach is concerned with investigating, gaining further insight into the subject. The exploratory method was demonstrated by identifying limitations of the research in which challenges, probabilities, or conditions of interest is likely to exist, also by discovering relevant factors or variables that might be of significance to the research (De Langhe & Schliesser, 2017). However, data findings were reported making use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

This study was designed to investigate the impact of the Multitier Systems of Support intervention training, linking the relationship amongst the school counselors' self-reported demographic variable (free/ reduced lunch), the School Counselor Self-Assessment, and self-reported School Counselor Self-Efficacy rating scale. This training was designed to support school counselors in learning ways to address at-risk students and incorporate interventions to confront challenging situations that will impede student's daily functioning. It is to be determined if school counselors would increase their knowledge and insights to demonstrate competence in relation to servicing diverse students. Moreover, will this research prove if

enhancing performance and techniques when working with these students is a contributing factor of increasing self-efficacy.

### **Research Questions**

Table 1 shows the research question in correlation with its hypothesis question. The research questions for the study are as follows:

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and professional development training pertaining to their abilities in working with underprivileged students?

**RQ2:** Do the scores differ significantly for those who completed only the pre-assessment?

**RQ3:** Does multicultural training impact school counselors' self-efficacy in the area of professional development?

**RQ4:** Does a significant correlation exist between school counselor's self-efficacy levels and them obtaining valuable knowledge during a professional development to address the diverse range of issues underprivileged students present?

**RQ5:** How will gaining awareness and learning various evidence-based counseling techniques impact school counselor's competence reports?

### **Hypotheses**

The alternate hypotheses for this study are:

**H<sub>a1</sub>:** School counselor perceived self-efficacy in working with underprivileged students will remain the same after implementation of professional development training workshop.

**H<sub>a2</sub>:** The scores on the pre-assessments will demonstrate not to be significantly different between the pre-assessment and post-assessment.

**H<sub>a3</sub>:** Professional development training will not increase school counselor awareness to develop preferred competencies needs.

**H<sub>a4</sub>:** School counselors' knowledge of underprivileged students will not be significantly different when implementing quality practices and interventions.

**H<sub>a5</sub>:** There will not be a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale after attending the evidence-based professional development training.

Table 1

*Correlation of Research and Hypothesis Questions*

Research Questions	Hypothesis(es)
RQ1: What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and professional development training pertaining to their abilities in working with underprivileged students?	<b>H<sub>a1</sub>:</b> School counselor perceived self-efficacy in working with underprivileged students increases after implementation of professional development training workshop.
RQ2: Do the scores differ significantly for those who completed only the pre-assessment?	<b>H<sub>a2</sub>:</b> The scores on the pre-assessments will demonstrate will be a significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment.
RQ3: Does multicultural training impact school counselors' self-efficacy in the area of professional development?	<b>H<sub>a3</sub>:</b> Professional development training will increase school counselor awareness to develop preferred competencies needs.
RQ4: Does a significant correlation exist between school counselor's self-efficacy levels and them obtaining valuable knowledge during a professional development to address the diverse range of issues underprivileged students present?	<b>H<sub>a4</sub>:</b> Implementing quality practices and interventions increases school counselors' knowledge of diversity amongst underprivileged students.
RQ5: How will gaining awareness and learning various evidence-based counseling techniques impact school counselor's competence reports?	<b>H<sub>a5</sub>:</b> There will be a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale.



### **Participants and Setting**

NC Department of Public Instruction (2019) reported having 3,966 full-time guidance personnel during the 2018-2019 school year. Unfortunately, school counselors are listed as "Guidance" on this document due to how data must be reported to the federal government. This report also confirmed the state having 2,462 Title 1 schools in North Carolina within the 118 counties. School counselors were solicited from both a convenience and simple random sample of counselors who currently work at an elementary, middle, or high school, employed at any district in the state of North Carolina. The school counselors were invited from a list of school counselor Facebook forums, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) listserv, and school system networks to participate in completing the required questionnaires and to take part in a professional development, *MTSS: Establish Readiness and Sustainability for Building an Intervention System for School Teams* training. The current database of Facebook school counselors consisted of more than 2600 members from various states. The invitation posted to the forum was directed to all North Carolina school counselors requesting them to take part in the research by clicking on a direct link to the consent form that led them to the surveys. Another method for inviting additional North Carolina school counselors occurred by placing an advertisement in the NCDPI school counselor monthly newsletter. Also, connections were made in some districts as the advertisement was sent directly to specific individuals. The rationale for inviting all North Carolina members through different means were based on the goal of acquiring an appropriate sample size to perform the SPSS statistical analyses.

### **Sample Participants**

The target sample number consisted of the complete school counselor population of 3,966, which is statistically applicable, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal

consistency. Lakens (2013) informed that effect sizes are valuable for three reasons. Effect sizes allow researchers to present the significance in a standardized metric. The significance of results can be given instead of only reporting the statistical significance. Next, researchers are able to draw conclusions by relating effect sizes with other studies. Lastly, effect sizes from previous studies can help to determine future needs of a study to obtain a statistically significant result.

A simple random sample was necessary to investigate the target population of school counselors who work at disadvantaged schools. A total of 34 participants were obtained from the sample population of school counselors. School counselors were required to complete a demographic survey collecting specific information to identify whether the individual qualified to fully participate in the research through its entirety. The targeted population was identified based on the school counselor working at an underprivileged school, identified by the percentage of students who received free or reduced lunch. This indicator was significant to this study as it is linked with the number of school counselors who met the target population sought, resulting in 26 participating school counselors to complete the pre-assessment through its entirety. Jung and Lee (2011) confirmed that social and behavioral researches often contain data sets with small samples. The sample population comprised of 25 (96.2%) females and 1 (3.8%) male including 34.6% White/Caucasian, 57.7% Black/African American, 3.8% Latino/Hispanic, and 3.8% American Indian. In addition, participant ages included 11.5% (3 participants) in the 18 to 29-year old range; 34.6% (9 participants) in the 30 to 40-year-old range; 26.9% (7 participants) in the 41 to 50-year old range; and 26.9% (7 participants) in the 51 to 60-year old range. The sample also concluded school counselors representing 15 individual counties, with a large percentage (30.65%) from one county and a representation from all three school levels with 8 (30.8%) elementary, 8 (30.8%) middle, and 10 (38.5%) high.

The post- assessment which was designed to compare the same individual's responses to the pre-assessment, resulted in 22 completions. After cleaning the data to determine if there would be no statistical significance, it was revealed that 17 participants concluded to have completed both pre-and post-assessments through its entirety. Each participants' overall performance on the pre- and post-assessments will be interpreted to determine the impact of attending an evidenced-based professional development training and to understand the significance of the scores.

### **Instrumentation**

**Demographic Questionnaire.** The demographic survey was comprised of nineteen multiple-choice, binned response options requesting information about the demographic variables pertaining to the experience of the school counselor and the population of the school (See Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire served two main purposes: screening participants and collecting other related information. Demographic inquiries are designed to help the researcher discover which factors may affect participants' responses. School counselors' years of experience will determine the influence on the relationship of self-efficacy and knowledge. With this information, relationships of each variable were evaluated between the independent variable from scores on the self-efficacy scale and ASCA self-assessment instruments. In a study that was performed to measure health literacy in a global research, McClintock, Schrauben, Andrews, and Wiebe (2017) evaluated health behaviors in a targeted population to distinguish if their ability to obtain and understand health literacy varied by demographics of country, education level, and age. At the conclusion of the study, they concluded that the measure of health literacy displayed consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.72$ ), in content validity.

**The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE).** This assessment is a mediating factor of measuring the performance of school counselors created by Bodenhorn, and Skaggs. The SCSE consist of 43- items that are self-reported on a Likert scale using a 5-point response selection of (*1=not confident, 2= slightly confident, 3- moderately confident, 4= generally confident, 5= highly confident*) (See Appendix C). The instrument comprises of five sub-scales: Personal and Social Development (12 items); Leadership and Assessment (9 items); Career and Academic Development (7 items); Collaboration (11 items); and Cultural Acceptance (4 items). This instrument was designed specifically for school counseling as it correlates with the mission of ASCA (See Table 2); incorporating the expectations of advocacy and accountability to enhance the profession of counseling (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). In a research that measured school counselors' belief about their ability to accomplish a desired task and facilitate counseling and educational services for students reported the SCSE subscales for Cronbach's alphas being: (a) Personal and Social had an alpha of .86, (b) Leadership and Assessment had an alpha of .88, (c) Career and Academic had an alpha of .84, (d) Collaboration had an alpha of .80, and (e) the Cultural Acceptance scale had an alpha of .59; concluded with an Cronbach's alpha of .95 for the overall internal consistency reliability (Mullen & Lambie, 2016).

**School Counselor Self-Assessment.** In July 2012, the North Carolina State Board of Education Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina School Counselors became an official document for school counselors to rate their own performance outlined in Appendix B. It highlights five standards, indicating whether school counselors exhibit leadership, collaboration, and advocacy; school counselors promote a respectful environment for diverse population of students; school counselors understand and oversee the execution of a comprehensive school counseling program; school counselors promote learning for all students; and school counselors actively reflect on

their practice (See Table 3). Items are self-reported on a Likert scale using a 5-point response selection of (*1=Not Demonstrated, 2= Developing, 3- Proficient, 4= Accomplished, 5= Distinguished*).

The objective of the self-assessment is to gauge performance based on the standards. Ultimately, aligning content standards with performance, the self- assessment will be utilized to improve growth for achieving the goal of raising achievement and closing gaps (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2013). For example, a research was performed in a large suburban city in Georgia where more than 50% of the students received free/reduced lunch. Although programs were developed from the ASCA National Model, each district has flexibility in how they delivered their program, which prompted the need to evaluate their school counseling program for accountability of meeting the needs of the student. Even though the results are restricted in generalizability, the data supplied provided increased insights. Utilizing a survey with measurements on a 4-point Likert scale, consisted of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree resulted in a participation rate of 62%. Data revealed the overall perceptive, proving the program to be advantageous at meeting students' needs; however, improvements to the program were detected to implement more relevant interventions that can be applied to improve the development of the program (Sherwood, 2010).

Table 2

*Training Correlation with Concepts Measured by SCSE*

SCSE Subscale	Training Component
Personal & Social Development	The content of this training offers personal & social development as the course provide school counselors an opportunity to increase self-efficacy behaviors that influences the effectiveness of students. This module also offers several social skills development tips.
Leadership & Assessment	The implementation of a leadership team is suggested to encourage the establishment of a strong foundation necessary to support the state's perspective. School counselors and school personnel will assess areas where change is necessary while they learn possible occurrences that may provide solutions and learning how to implement the invention effectively. Leadership will be demonstrated by conducting a needs assessment to collect information about beliefs, knowledge, and skills needed to develop a professional development plan.
Career & Academic Development	<p>This module explains that all components described in the implementations of this training is supported to ensure college, career and community readiness for all students. This training is defined in tiers meaning that instruction varies in intensity, which includes general academic, behavioral and social-emotional instruction and support designed and differentiated for all students.</p> <p>Ranging from Core (Tier I) instruction to Intensive (Tier III) instruction, academic teachings should be aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and the behavioral and social-emotional instruction should be aligned with locally developed expectations.</p>
Collaboration	This professional development promotes the implementation of a leadership team and having the representation of its members from across all disciplines and departments of the school taking the initiative to strengthen the development of collaboration, school, and program.
Cultural Acceptance	It introduces cultural acceptance by way of recognizing that expectation, rules and routines differ between environments. It demonstrates ways to define your school environment and to develop a matrix of interventions to create a responsive system that students can quickly access.

Table 3

*Training Correlation with Concepts Measured by NC School Counselor Self-Assessment*

Standard	Training Component
Standard 1 – Demonstrates Leadership, Advocacy, & Collaboration	This module introduces and explains data decision rules that guides procedures that direct actions around data. Leadership is demonstrated by designing rules based on best practice and unique circumstances. It offers instructions to develop decisions based on data for addressing at-risk students based on the percentage of students demonstrating risk and what resources are available. It also teaches how to gauge the effectiveness of the interventions being implemented.
Standard 2 – Promote Respectful Environment for Diverse Population of Students	Strategies for defining school wide and classroom expectations, rules and routines are included in this training. It defines minor and major problem behavior; core behavior, social-emotional teaching plan is described. This module identifies how to examine data of monthly problem-solving core behaviors. It also incorporates a system of supports for students with behavioral and social-emotional needs.  MTSS is utilized to identify and evaluate students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). It also includes a guide for determining eligibility in the disability category.
Standard 3 – Understand and Facilitate Implementation of Comprehensive School Counseling Program	It brings awareness to school personnel by assessing at-risk students and categorizing behaviors based on student’s grade level. An awareness of indicators is identified that may be present such as home factors, transience and mental health concerns. look at universal data for student risk.  The module provides possible techniques for The School Counseling program as it provides instruction and intervention plans that recognizes and measures “root cause” of reasons why students are not meeting expectation.  This program introduces, outlines, and explains social-emotional practices for success.
Standard 4 – Promote Learning for All Students	This program demonstrates key factors that indicate when a student or group of students may be at risk and explains the approach in which schools and districts address at-risk students may vary.  The devotion of providing resources, support and intervention programs to only those students still showing risk despite strong, effective core instruction is justified.
Standard 5 – Actively Reflect on Their Practice	Analyzing the participation of an ongoing assessment by identifying ways to monitor the progression of skills being taught to at-risk students. School counselors will be able to establish performance outcomes and learning experiences that influence self-efficacy.

### Procedures

This study engaged both convenience and simple random sampling for selecting participants. Elfil and Negida (2017) described convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling method of utilizing participants that are easily available, accessible, and inexpensive. Simple random sampling, a probability method, is explained as a process that involved selecting the whole population of sample participants allowing every person to have an equal opportunity to partake in the study. Convenience sampling was necessary when making personal school system networks and utilizing Facebook forums. Wijnhoven and Bloemen (2014) informed us that studies involving social media has the potential to include skewed sampling without properly pairing the demographics to the target population. Simple random sampling was employed when all school counselors were emailed the NCDPI newsletter through the listserv online directory.

Prior to data collection, Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research before communication was made with any school counselor to participate in the study (See Appendix D). On June 04, 2019, recruitment began by utilizing the School Counselor Facebook forums and emailing district networks and directors in various school districts to advertise the study and training component. In addition, an e-mail from the state's consultant was sent on June 27, 2019 to a list of school counselors in the NCDPI online directory on behalf of the researcher. The NCDPI School Counseling newsletter advertised the study, requesting volunteers to participate in a research study. All school counselors were sent an invitation asking them to voluntarily participate in the research. The invitation included the description, purpose, its importance to the advancement of school counseling, and their involvement in the study. Upon reading the invitation, if the counselor had wished to participate, a link was provided to



advance them to the consent form. Each school counselor was required to read and sign the consent form before proceeding to the next page to begin answering survey questions.

School counselors began their participation by completing a demographic questionnaire through a survey tool called Qualtrics. This survey assisted in selecting suitable participants that met the target population of servicing underprivileged students, involving all levels of school counseling were considered. The demographic survey consisted of four questions at the beginning of the survey to determine if the participant met the requirements of the target population sought. Those questions comprised of: (1) Are you currently a School Counselor, (2) Do you currently work in the state of North Carolina, (3) What is your age range, and (4) Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Depending on the responses of the participant, it was determined if they could advance through the remainder of the survey. For questions one and two, the answer must have been a *yes* to avoid the survey skipping to the end, qualifying the participant as being good candidates. Each participant must have been 18-years or older, hence, question three met the requirements of the IRB board. Question four was vital as to ensure that the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch met the servicing population of students. The questionnaire was terminated for those who do not meet the demographic requirement during the screening process. Next, the school counselor continued participation by completing two web-based pre-assessments (SCSE and School Counselor Self-Assessment) used for data collection to measure the reliability of overall competence and performance during counseling activities. Instructions for completing the questionnaires accompanied the assessments. The questionnaire and both assessments would remain private for each participant, no identification will be pursued.

Upon completion of the pre-assessments, a message prompted all participants to read the instructions to locate and complete the MTSS professional development training module. School counselors commenced to gaining knowledge through the MTSS professional development training by learning to identify and treat students who suffer from challenging situations while acquiring appropriate interventions of promoting awareness, improving responsiveness, nurture learning styles, support cultural diversity, and encourage individual learning needs. Each participating school counselor was allotted one -week to complete the MTSS module. It was projected that all school counselors learned important information to assist them in restructuring their interaction, prevention, and intervention strategies that will raise school counselors' self-efficacy. At the conclusion of the MTSS module, a certificate of completion was generated for the school counselor to submit to their Local Education Agency (LEA) for credit.

After the counselors had the opportunity to complete training, they then received an email with a direct link to access the SCSE post-test assessment. This assessment was intended to measure if performance and competence was influenced by the evidenced-based professional development training. Every week, a follow-up email was sent to any participants who had not completed the post-assessment. Participants were encouraged and offered to become part of a drawing to receive a \$50 Amazon gift card as an incentive to complete the surveys in a timely manner. Also, several other emails were sent (See Appendix H) through email and via the Facebook forums (See Appendix G) continuing to invite school counselors to participate if they had not already done so. Upon completion of both pre-and post-assessments, each participant received a message thanking them for their time and commitment to participate in the study.

Table 4

*Pre- & Post-test Assessments and Treatment*

Pre-Test Assessment	Treatment	Post-Test Assessment
Demographic questionnaire	Screening	Only administered as Pre-test
North Carolina School Counselors Self-Assessment	Professional Development	Only administered as Pre-test
School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE)	Professional Development	SCSE

**Data Analysis**

Survey data was collected in Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool. Data from the pre- and post- data sets were sorted, paired, and analyzed utilizing SPSS after being made available to school counselors for a period of nineteen weeks. Once all information had been collected, it resulted in 36 total participants responding to the survey. A data cleaning procedure, listwise deletion method was necessary that finalized a total of 26 eligible participants for statistical analysis. Another listwise deletion method was deemed to examine the data for violations of inconsistency before it was analyzed by eliminating participants who did not complete both the pre- and post-assessments, to evaluate possible group differences. The pairing of data required matching participants' utilizing SPSS software that concluded in 17 participants having completed both pre-and post-assessments.

Considering that there were 36 possible survey participants, 2 participant pre-survey responses were eliminated due to the participants responding to the pre-assessment twice, 2 participants that did not complete the entire surveys were also eliminated, and 6 participants eliminated for not passing the screening survey (3 not a school counselor in North Carolina, 1

not a school counselor, and 2 eliminated for low percentages of students having free/reduced lunch).

The data produced results having a total of 26 eligible participants, of those 26 eligible respondents, only 22 completed the post-survey, meaning there were nine more participants who completed the pre-survey and not the post-survey. Inconsistent data is caused by missing data or data that cannot be paired, therefore, participants who failed to complete requirements of the assessments were removed from the final statistical analyses. Of the possible 34 pairs, only 17 participants were matched, which was paired for further statistical analysis. The demographic characteristics of the sample population were expounded upon utilizing frequency distributions.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ 1:** What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and professional development training pertaining to their abilities in working with underprivileged students? Utilizing the paired samples *t* test, it examined the summary statistics of the pre- and post-assessments. For research question one, descriptive statistics correlation was reported for school counselors' self-efficacy as independently identified by the SCSE subscales. Descriptive statistics were organized by computing means, standard deviations, and maximum scores for subscales of self-efficacy which gives an indication of in what manner one variable may influence another.

**RQ 2:** Do the scores differ significantly for those who completed only the pre-assessment? Independent samples *t* test was used to analyze question two which is an analysis to assess the assumption of independence and assumption of normality.

**RQ 3:** Does multicultural training impact school counselors' self-efficacy in the area of professional development? **RQ 4:** Does a significant correlation exist between school

counselor's self-efficacy levels and them obtaining valuable knowledge during a professional development to address the diverse range of issues underprivileged students present? **RQ 5:** How will gaining awareness and learning various evidence-based counseling techniques impact school counselor's competence reports? The analyses of paired sample *t*-test were used to compare group means and determine if there were statistically significant differences among means of the SCSE. To reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis, a *t*-test was engaged for research questions three, four, and five to test the dependent variable to see if mean of self-efficacy responses were statistically significant.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

This chapter explains the data that was collected to correlate the associations between the development training for school counselors and school counselor's self-efficacy and the competence required to effectively meet the needs of underprivileged students. The findings of the data are based on whether a counselor's abilities to work with at-risk students before development training and after development training will change. Therefore, the goal is to check for any statistical change in the school counselor's abilities, competencies, motivation, confidence and perception. All variables were evaluated for significant outliers, variance, and linear relationships. The analysis also involved the use of statistical techniques; descriptive statistics such as mean and inferential statistics to draw conclusions from the data. Statistical results will accompany the research question and hypotheses of the study.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Analyzing descriptive data using the 26 eligible participants, the ages of the survey participants ranged from 18 to 60 years old. The ages ranging from 30 to 40 years old were amongst to most represented group (34.6%). Females represented (96.2%) and males (3.8%). The sample population of participants primarily consisted of African Americans (57.7%). The remaining participants were Caucasians (34.6%), followed by Latino and American Indian, both at (3.8%). Respondents to this study reported having a considerable number in years of school counseling experience ranging from 1 to 24 years (See Table 5). Years of experience ranging from 1 year to 4-years of experience represented the largest population in this study, (34.6%). There was a large number of survey respondents having graduated from a Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) program (80.8%).

Graduate programs that go through an extensive accreditation process to ensure delivery of high standards during counselor training is known as CACREP accredited. The additional certifications recognize counselors as understanding the importance of being an accomplished counselor and being able to enhance development and career opportunities as a counseling professional. Seven of the participants reported having teaching experience at (26.9%). Each school counselor reported being a certified school counselor, while a few have obtained additional licensure as National Board-Certified Counselor (11.5%), National Certified Counselor (NCC) (15.4%), and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) (3.8%). More than half of the counselors reported being members of their ASCA professional association (65.4%).

Table 5

*How many years have you worked as a school counselor?*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 – 4 years	9	34.6	34.6	34.6
5 – 9 years	8	30.8	30.8	65.4
10 – 14 years	4	15.4	15.4	80.8
15 – 19 years	1	3.8	3.8	24.6
20 – 24 years	4	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	26	100.0	100.0	

The average students per caseload held by school counselors was approximately 301-400 (42.3%) students (See Table 6), which does not corroborate with the recommendations of ASCA, although the national standards for school counselors prefer a 250:1 ratio (ASCA, 2016). The average number of students at one school was reported at having 501 - 900 students (34.6%).

Even though the majority of the respondents worked at high schools (38.5%), there is a large percentage of participants who reported having only one school counselor for the entire school (38.5%). Most importantly, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch concluded at (61.5%), with a mean score of grade C for school's current performance grade (46.2%) as indicated in Table 7.

Table 6

*Approximately how many students are assigned to each counselor?*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 – 200 students	2	7.7	7.7	7.7
201 – 300 students	5	19.2	19.2	26.9
301 – 400 students	11	42.3	42.3	69.2
401 – 500 students	7	26.9	26.9	96.2
501 – 600 students	1	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	26	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

*What is your school's current performance grade?*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A	1	3.8	3.8	3.8
B	2	7.7	7.7	11.5
C	12	46.2	46.2	57.7
D	7	26.9	26.9	84.6
F	2	7.7	7.7	92.3
UNKNOWN	2	7.7	7.7	100.0
Total	26	100.0	100.0	



### The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE)

The SCSE Scale is a self-report instrument that is composed of 43-items with the purpose to measure school counselors' self-efficacy. The SCSE scale consists of five subscales that contain: (a) Personal and Social Development (12 items), (b) Leadership and Assessment (9 items), (c) Career and Academic Development (7 items), (d) Collaboration (11 items), and (e) Cultural Awareness (4 items). The SCSE scale encompasses role specific statements that measure how confident the respondent feels about completing a task that is recognized in the statement. The Cronbach's alphas have been produced to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the SCSE scale. Concerning the five SCSE subscales, the Personal and Social Development scale had a Cronbach's of .883, ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = .612$ ), the Leadership and Assessment scale had a Cronbach's of .894, ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = .664$ ), the Career and Academic Development scale had a Cronbach's of .940, ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = .579$ ), the Collaboration scale has a Cronbach's of .926, ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = .638$ ), and Cultural Awareness scale had a Cronbach's of .843, ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = .738$ ). Each SCSE subscale had an acceptable internal reliability coefficient (See Table 8).

Table 8

*Cronbach's Alpha scores per subscale*

Scale (N = 17)	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Personal and Social Development	.883	.887	12
Leadership and Assessment	.894	.895	9
Career and Academic Development	.940	.942	7
Collaboration	.926	.927	11
Cultural Awareness	.843	.842	4

## Results

This section presents the results of the analyses discussed in chapter three. Five null hypotheses were developed to uncover what relationships, if any existed among the pre- and post- assessments of school counselor self-efficacy and the impact of attending evidence-based training. This provides assessment of the research questions under review and report the results of the statistical analysis.

### **Independent samples *t* test**

An independent samples *t* test was performed to assess whether the mean for the pre-assessment of the SCSE differed significantly for the group of 9 participants who only completed the pre-assessment compared to the 17 participants who completed the pre-and post-assessment of the SCSE. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was assessed by the Levene test. The five subscales scores for the of the independent samples *t* test of SCSE are reported as, Personal and Social Development,  $F = .000, p = .471$ , Leadership and Assessment  $F = 1.357, p = .369$ , Career and Academic Development  $F = .419, p = .432$ , Collaboration  $F = 1.526, p = .227$ , and Cultural Awareness  $F = .766, p = .368$ , which is an indication there was a significant violation of the equal variance assumption. Therefore, the difference between the two means are not significantly different. However, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that school counselor's confidence will increase after development trainings.

### **School Counselor Self-Assessment Independent *t* test**

A total of 26 school counselors completed the School Counselor Self-Assessment pre- survey intervention. Utilizing the Independent Samples *t* test, it determined that the mean for the pre-assessment of the School Counselor Self-Assessment did not differ significantly for the group of 9 participants who did not complete a post-assessment compared to the 17 respondents who completed both the pre-survey for the school counselor self-assessment and the SCSE scale. The

scores for the independent samples  $t$  test of SCSE are reported as, No Post Assessment participants,  $t(24) = -1.139$ ,  $F = .003$ ,  $p = .266$ , indicating there was a significant violation of the equal variance assumption. The difference between the two means is not significantly different.

### **Paired Samples Test**

A paired samples test is performed to assess if there is a significant difference between two variables (Warner, 2013), in this case it is used to determine whether the mean of the dependent variable (e.g., self-efficacy) is the same in two groups. This analysis was performed to evaluate if attending a professional development training affected self-efficacy in the area of skills, cultural acceptance, or performance, in turn, increasing confidence. This analysis paired the pre-and post-assessments of the SCSE scale to assess the validity by examining the correlations of the five SCSE Subscales. The five subscales scores of the paired samples test of SCSE are reported as, Personal and Social Development  $t = 16$ ,  $p > .094$ , Leadership and Assessment  $t = 16$ ,  $p > .072$ , Career and academic Development  $t = 16$ ,  $p > .643$ , Collaboration  $t = 16$ ,  $p > .009$ , and Cultural  $t = 16$ ,  $p > .080$ . The results of the paired sample  $t$  test indicated there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-assessments, therefore, the decision is to support the null hypothesis. There is enough evidence to verify that the difference between the population means is statistically significant.

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>a1</sub>: School counselor perceived self-efficacy in working with underprivileged students increases after implementation of professional development training workshop.** Based on the school counselors self-efficacy scale, ranging between one to five, 1 representing not confident level, 2 slightly confident, 3 moderately confident, 4 generally confident and 5 highly

confident level, a reliability test was performed to evaluate internal consistency for each of the five subscales of the SCSE assessment. Upon careful analysis, the subscales have been proven to have acceptable internal reliability. Results for the five subscales of SCSE are as follows: the Personal and Social Development scale had a Cronbach's of ( $\alpha = .883$ ), the Leadership and Assessment scale had a Cronbach's of ( $\alpha = .894$ ), the Career and Academic Development scale had a Cronbach's of ( $\alpha = .940$ ), the Collaboration scale has a Cronbach's of ( $\alpha = .926$ ), and Cultural Awareness scale had a Cronbach's of ( $\alpha = .843$ ). It was determined that there was a difference between the paired samples after the implementation of the professional development training. Therefore, it was a significant difference, and we would support the hypothesis in this question.

**H<sub>a2</sub>: The scores on the pre-assessments will demonstrate a significant difference between the pre-assessment and post-assessment.** However, due to the participant's responses, the results of the independent samples *t* test do not support a statistical strong correlation of respondents who completed the pre-assessments. We previously noted that the 2-tail values were greater than .05, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis. The scores on the SCSE scale does not differ, there is no significance indicating there is no statistical difference between the participants who completed the pre-assessments and those who completed both, the pre-and post-assessments. Concluding, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that school counselor's self-efficacy and the self-assessment pre-test demonstrated a significant difference.

**H<sub>a3</sub>: Professional development training will increase school counselor awareness to develop preferred competencies needs. H<sub>a4</sub>: Implementing quality practices and interventions increases school counselors' knowledge of diversity amongst underprivileged students.**

Hypotheses 3 & 4 were similar in direction; therefore, it is answered using the same description. Again, reliability statistics were computed, reporting the Cronbach's Alpha to determine overall consistency to respond to hypotheses three and four. The researcher conducted Levene's test for homogeneity of variance with the data sets using SPSS. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance is a familiar statistical test employed to guarantee that variances in data are comparable. This test is imperative to enhance the probability of fair comparisons and make accurate inferences about data (Warner, 2013). According to the research findings, the self-efficacy level of the counselors was significantly different after application of the development training. These results indicated there is an existing relationship between levels of SCSE and evidenced-based development training. The sample indicated the overall strength of the relationship between the dependent variable, professional development, and the independent variable statistically significant. The results of the paired sample *t* test of the pre- and post-assessments directed the researcher to support hypotheses 4 & 5, determining that there is enough information to make a conclusion. There is a relationship between evidenced-based professional development and school counselor self-efficacy.

**H<sub>a</sub>5: There will be a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores on the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale.** This hypothesis is supported which determined that there is enough information to make a conclusion that there is a relationship between evidenced-based professional development and school counselor self-efficacy.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of chapter five is to discuss the results presented in chapter four. This chapter will begin with a brief description of the study, followed by an interpretation of the findings. The implications for the field of counselor educators, and the limitations of this study will be discussed. Lastly, recommendations for future research proposals concerning school counseling self-efficacy are also discussed in this chapter.

### **Discussion**

School counselors serve a critical role in the academic, social/emotional, and development of students in the school setting. It is important for school counselors to understand the factors and developments in students' lives (i.e. school, family, and community) that make it practical for students to flourish academically. The Institute of Medicine has recommended that exposure to mental health and psychological services be implemented into student's regular routine as it has been found necessary to become academically successful (ACA, 2008).

Rowell and Hong (2013) acknowledged that school counselors have a difficult time understanding the fundamentals of motivational behaviors. Increasing motivation is very important in dealing with underserved students due to the wide range of problems they struggle with, and the situations encountered by this group of students. Handling diverse matters among underprivileged students requires a high level of knowledge and skills. Therefore, having a deficiency in skills, knowledge and competence by the school counselors can be a very challenging issue when communicating with underprivileged students. Before attending the online development training session, it was proposed that school counselors will become motivated as they are supplied with the necessary skills and knowledge to relate to underserved

students. For that reason, the MTSS professional development training for school counselors is theorized to have a significant correlation for developing school counselors' self-efficacy which would result in improved professional performance.

Evidence-based counseling implies that all the available facts and information have been taken into account (Smith, 2017). The uses of evidence-based counseling techniques by counselors on underprivileged students can be very important, bearing in mind the situations and challenges faced by the students. Smith (2017) also stated that counselors believe that the use of this technique will be beneficial and hence place a high confidence level in using the technique. The use of evidence-based counseling techniques has a great impact in counselor's competence report, as (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006) reported that competence is associated with motivation.

Utilizing effective counseling techniques will help in creating trust and thus improve the relationship between the counselor and the student. Perception plays a great role in counseling, more importantly when the counseling is to be offered to underprivileged students. According to Albert Bandura's self-concept theory, perceptual process plays a great role in determining how people relate to others and understanding oneself. Improved perception through the training program is important in enabling school counselors to relate to not only the underprivileged students, but also to the teachers, parents and staff, as this has helped in improved performance. Development training is hypothesized to enable school counselors to increase confidence in skills and abilities to provide counseling strategies and best practices to underprivileged students. This research was performed to obtain evidence that school counselors can increased their confidence levels to facilitate delivering best counseling strategies and practices to the students.

The reliability statistics analysis was used in all five research questions to measure of the reliability and internal consistency of the item statements that formed the scale. The conclusion determined that the measure was found to have high reliability. This study employed two processes to analyze the five research questions. The paired samples *t* test was used to answer questions one, three, four and five by looking at the difference between the pre-and post-assessments. Research question number two employed the independent samples *t* test to address the variance of the two groups by looking at the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.

### Research Questions

The research questions used to investigate school counselors' self-efficacy and its effect before and after attending an evidenced-based training contain the following:

**RQ1: What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived self-efficacy and professional development training pertaining to their abilities in working with**

**underprivileged students?** The first research question explored the characteristics of school counselors' self-efficacy based on self-reported responses. Utilizing the paired samples *t* test, it examined the summary statistics of the pre- and post-assessments.

Table 9

*Paired Samples Correlations of Self-Efficacy Subscales*

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Subscale 1	Pre 1 & Post 1	17	.678	.003
Subscale 2	Pre 2 & Post 2	17	.704	.002
Subscale 3	Pre 3 & Post 3	17	.705	.002
Subscale 4	Pre 4 & Post 4	17	.818	.000
Subscale 5	Pre 5 & Post 5	17	.705	.002



Analyzing the results of the SCSE subscales from the Table 9 above: It has concluded that Personal and Social Development  $t(16) = -1.779$ ,  $p = .003$ ; Leadership and Assessment  $t(16) = -1.924$ ,  $p = .002$ ; Career and Academic Development  $t(16) = -.472$ ,  $p = .002$ ; Collaboration  $t(16) = -2.980$ ,  $p = .001$ ; and Cultural Acceptance  $t(16) = -1.867$ ,  $p = .002$ . All significant values are calculated to be less than 0.05. This indicates that, statistically, the difference between the paired samples are significantly different. Participants indicated their self-efficacy levels did significantly change after the MTSS professional development. Therefore, suggesting that attending professional development training does have an effect on school counselor self-efficacy.

**RQ2: Do the scores differ significantly for those who completed only the pre-assessment?**

Self-efficacy was measured in terms from the responses received in the pre- assessment compared to those who responded to both the pre- and post-assessment (See Table 10).

Independent samples  $t$  test is an analysis to assess the assumption of independence and assumption of normality. The test for variance provides an  $F$ -statistics value and  $p$ -value.

However, in research question two, the  $p$ -value is greater than the significance level. It verified that there is no relationship between self-efficacy in participants who only completed the post-assessment. Based on the table below, it also verified the difference is not significant, and the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is likely to be a result of chance.

Independent samples  $t$  test was performed in a study pertaining to immunological, testing cells in mice with and without infection. It was determined that an absence of inferential statistical analysis was identified due to the inconsistency of the measurement (Lamb, Graham, & Petrie, 2008). They also stated that a study may be found not statistically significant if it lacks an adequate sample size or low statistical power.

Table 10

*Independent Samples t Test Group Statistics*

	PRE-ONLY	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Subscale 1	Pre and Post	17	4.1078	.61291	.14865
	No Post	9	3.9259	.58101	.19367
Subscale 2	Pre and Post	17	4.0654	.66442	.16114
	No Post	9	3.8395	.43784	.14595
Subscale 3	Pre and Post	17	4.3277	.57977	.14062
	No Post	9	4.1270	.66411	.22137
Subscale 4	Pre and Post	17	3.8556	.63884	.15494
	No Post	9	3.5556	.46454	.15485
Subscale 5	Pre and Post	17	3.9265	.73827	.17906
	No Post	9	3.6667	.57282	.19094

**RQ3: Does multicultural training impact school counselors' self-efficacy in the area of professional development? RQ4: Does a significant correlation exist between school counselor's self-efficacy levels and them obtaining valuable knowledge during a professional development to address the diverse range of issues underprivileged students present? RQ5: How will gaining awareness and learning various evidence-based counseling techniques impact school counselor's competence reports?** From the SPSS output using the paired samples *t* test in Table 11, research questions three, four, and five were answered by looking at the *p*-value for the 2-tailed *t* test, since the value was less than the alpha value of 0.05,

concluding to there is enough information to make a conclusion that there is a relationship between evidenced-based professional development and school counselor self-efficacy.

Table 11

*Paired Samples Test*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Subscale 1	Pre1-Post 1	-.19608	.45447	.11023	-.42975	.03759	-1.779	16	.094
Subscale 2	Pre2-Post 2	-.22222	.47629	.11552	-.46711	.02266	-1.924	16	.072
Subscale 3	Pre3-Post 3	-.05042	.44014	.10675	-.27672	.17588	-.472	16	.643
Subscale 4	Pre4-Post 4	-.26738	.36993	.08972	-.45758	-.07718	-.07718	16	.009
Subscale 5	Pre5-Post 5	-.25000	.55199	.13388	-.53380	.03380	.03380	16	.080

The analyses were conducted to consider the variance that each level of data contributes to the dependent variable. As a result, there were a statistical difference between associations found between school counselor self-efficacy and increasing knowledge through professional development. While there is limited research pertaining to school counselor self-efficacy and the effects of attending evidenced- based professional development, research does indicate that self-efficacy beliefs has an impact on how effective professional training can be based on their willingness to transfer skills learned (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003).

### **Implications**

Quality practices and interventions are particularly important in handling diversity amongst underprivileged students as observed from the literature of this study. The research findings indicated this study not providing enough evidence by demographic variables in exploring the relationship between self-efficacy of school counselors after development training. By way of advocating for the integration of student academic, implementing career and personal

development into the mission of the school, there are various ways of creating awareness about the competencies school counselors need to develop in order to improve their performance. Most of the school counselors are members of The American School Counselors Association (ASCA), which plays a role in the creation of awareness. Development training is an important way of creating awareness to school counselors as well as through other various means such as brainstorming, group discussion during the training sessions, and various other ways of sharing.

Regarding the integration, school counselor's self-efficacy levels recognize situations that impact student's learning and achievement, both negatively and positively. Upon training, the need to analyze patterns of achievement and behaviors that contribute to school success can improve indicating if there was a rise in counselors' self-efficacy. As school counselors gain belief in their abilities, confidence would enable counselors to advocate themselves as professionals and aid in the emotional and social development of students, which in turn will positively impact the achievement of school goals. As a result of effective evidenced-based training, measurable outcomes for a counseling program can be developed. To produce a valid report, it is evident that this research requires more development through coaching/mentoring of expert professionals, and further professional development opportunities.

### **Limitations**

#### **Self-reporting data**

While descriptive data regarding the consistency of the school counselors' self-efficacy scale remained reliable, there are limitations that exist within the generalizability of the findings. Because the collection method of the surveys was self-reporting, the participants' responding to the statements on the pre-assessment of the self-efficacy scale may have been inflated. School counselors reporting data based on their experience may have resulted in expressing faulty

perceptions, therefore, resulting in the data being skewed. Researchers have associated cognitive (insight, perception) and situational (environment, gender) issues as being two key factors to assessing the validity of self-reported data (Center for Health and Safety Culture, 2011).

### **Demographic Data**

This study did not measure data based on age, ethnicity, or education, which limited the findings to the entire population of school counselors. Practically, all the participants were women, in the exception of one male.

### **Small Sample Population**

In addition, this study resulted in a small number of participants ( $N = 26$ ), which also limited the generalization of the scores. Faber and Fonseca (2014) identified the use of small samples in a study to manipulate the internal and external validity as it can result in producing false statements. Email messages and continuous Facebook posts were made in attempts to increase the number of participants, still only resulting in a small number of participant response rate.

### **Culture Preference**

Because this study targeted school counselors from underprivileged schools, the cultural preference may have affected the reliance of the study. Specific cultural settings may stimulate responses predicted by cognitive development. Hence, working in an underrepresented environment could have influenced their way of thinking, making it relatively difficult to differentiate their beliefs concerning the population. Cultural differences could be removed by implementing a procedure to modify response styles (He, & Van de Vijver, 2012).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Literature has blamed self-efficacy beliefs as possibly being a predictor of ineffective professional development. Due to this study's limitations, additional studies could broaden the understanding of this topic as appropriate based on the descriptive data; to understand the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and its influences, such as experience, age, and certifications. Further research utilizing descriptive data would be beneficial to investigate the relationship amongst training and self-efficacy providing groups of different evidenced- based approaches to enhance school counselors' self-efficacy compared to novice school counselors versus experienced school counselors, and evaluate the direction of the relationship. Counselor's confidence is important in providing support to those who need it by helping in creating the necessary connections and interactions.

Future research should also address cognitive beliefs that influences a person's thoughts and actions pertaining to a population of individuals. Interactions should be displayed with two types of environments to confirm the influence variables of effort, success, empathy, and depression.

Another recommendation for future research would be to duplicate this study, sourcing a larger sample size to expand the insight and significance for gaining validity using the pre-test of the School Counselor Self-Assessment. Furthermore, reproducing this study taking in account that data be taken in an effective method, using an equal variance relevant to descriptive data (i.e. gender, age, experience) would build a stronger correlation of data providing in-depth knowledge of understanding the outcome related to the independent and dependent variable.

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**APPENDIX A: Demographics questionnaire**

**Please complete the following demographic questions (all questions are anonymous). Mark “X” in the appropriate box.**

1. Are you currently a School Counselor?

- Yes
- No

2. Do you currently work in the state of North Carolina?

- Yes
- No

3. What county do you currently teach in? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age range?

- 18 years – 29 years
- 30 years – 40 years
- 41 years - 50 years
- 51 years – 60 years
- 61 years – 69 years
- 70 + years

5. Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch

- 100% - 75%
- 74% - 50%
- 49% - 40%
- 39% - 26%
- 25% - 10%
- 9% - 0%

6. What is your school’s current performance grade?

- A
- B
- C
- D
- F
- Unknown

7. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

8. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply.
- African American
  - Caucasian
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - American Indian
  - Alaska Native
  - Asian or Pacific Islander
  - Native Hawaiian
  - Other
9. What is your educational level?
- Master's
  - Specialist
  - Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
  - Doctor of Education (Ed. D)
  - Currently enrolled in Doctoral program
10. In what area is your counseling degree (Check one)?
- School Counseling
  - Counselor Education
  - Community/ Mental Health Counseling
  - Social Work
  - Psychology
  - Counseling Psychology
  - Other
11. Was your counseling program CACREP accredited?
- Yes
  - No
12. Please check each certification you hold:
- Certified School Counselor
  - Certified Teacher
  - National Board-Certified Counselor
  - National Certified Counselor (NCC)
  - Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
  - Licensed Mental Health Counselor
  - Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
  - Other state licensure

13. Are you a member of either professional association?

- American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
- Neither

14. How many years have you worked as a school counselor?

- 1 - 4 years
- 5 – 9 years
- 10 - 14 years
- 15 – 19 years
- 20 – 24 years
- 25 – 29 years
- 30 years and over

15. Which is your current school level?

- Elementary
- Middle
- High

16. How many counselors are assigned to your school?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 or more

17. Approximately how many students are enrolled at your school?

- 200 – 500 students
- 501 - 900 students
- 551- 650 students
- 901 – 1300 students
- 1301 – 1700 students
- 1701 – 2000 students
- 2001 – 2400 students
- 2401 – 2800 students
- 2801 – 3000 students
- 3001 or more students

18. Approximately how many students are assigned to each counselor?

- 1 – 200 students
- 201 – 300 students
- 301 – 400 students
- 401 – 500 students
- 501 – 600 students
- 600 and over students

19. Please provide your email address. \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX B: ASCA School Counselor Self-Assessment**

The school counselor should complete the rubric by checking descriptors that characterize professional practices in evidence as a part of his/her daily work.

<b>Summary Rating Form for School Counselors</b>	<b>Not Demonstrated</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Accomplished</b>	<b>Distinguished</b>
<b>Standard I: School counselors demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaboration.</b>					
a. Demonstrates leadership in the school.					
b. Enhances the counseling profession.					
c. Advocates for schools and students.					
d. Demonstrates high ethical standards.					
<b>Overall Rating for Standard I</b>					
<b>Standard II: School counselors promote a respectful environment for diverse population of students.</b>					
a. Fosters a school environment in which each student has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults.					
b. Embraces diversity in the school community and in the world.					
c. Treats students as individuals.					
d. Recognizes students are diverse and adapt their services accordingly.					
e. Works collaboratively with families and significant adults in the lives of students.					
<b>Overall Rating for Standard II</b>					
<b>Standard III: School counselors understand and facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.</b>					
a. Aligns their programs to support student success in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.					
b. Understands how their professional knowledge and skills support and enhance student success.					
c. Recognizes the interconnectedness of a comprehensive school counseling program with academic content areas/disciplines.					
d. Develops comprehensive school counseling programs that are relevant to students.					
<b>Overall Rating for Standard III</b>					
<b>Standard IV: School counselors promote learning for all students.</b>					
a. Knows how students learn.					
b. Plans their programs for the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students.					
c. Uses a variety of delivery methods.					
d. Helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.					
e. Uses and promotes effective listening and communication skills.					
<b>Overall Rating for Standard IV</b>					
<b>Standard V: School counselors actively reflect on their practice.</b>					
a. Analyzes the impact of the school counseling program.					
b. Links professional growth to the needs of their school and their program goals.					
<b>Overall Rating for Standard V</b>					

**APPENDIX C: School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale**

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**APPENDIX D: IRB Approval Letter****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 16, 2019

Latonya Bunch

IRB Approval 3730.041619: Challenges of Underserved Students in Disadvantaged Schools:  
Influence of Training on School Counselors' Self-Efficacy

Dear Latonya Bunch,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

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**APPENDIX E: MTSS Approval Letter**

3/1/19

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter serves as permission for Latonya Bunch to use the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction M TSS professional learning module 2.1 in her dissertation research. This involves school staff accessing the modules through NC Edcloud and the NCEES application.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. We look forward to hearing about Ms. Bunch's research findings.

Sincerely,

Matt C. Hoskins, Ed.D.

Interim Director

Integrated Academic and Behavior Systems

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

**APPENDIX F: Informed Consent Form**

The Liberty University  
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Protocol # 3730.041619

**CONSENT FORM**

Challenges of Underserved Students in Disadvantaged Schools: Influence of Training on School Counselors' Self-Efficacy

Latonya Bunch  
Liberty University  
School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine how your self-efficacy is impacted by an increase in knowledge, confidence, and skills. The objective of this study is to recognize the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy and their performance working in a disadvantage school, servicing underserved students.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older and are currently a school counselor in the state of North Carolina in an underserved school. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Latonya Bunch, a student in the Department of Community Care & Counseling /School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** What are school counselor's perceived self-efficacy pertaining to their abilities in working with underprivileged school children? How does a workshop on working with underprivileged students impact school counselors perceived self-efficacy in working with this population? The purpose of this study is to investigate how school counselors' self-efficacy is influenced after receiving quality professional development training. It is to determine if an increase in self-efficacy will increase the desire to deliver exceptional counseling services to underserved students who are faced with challenges that impede their academic success.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete the demographic survey, 5-minutes.
2. Complete the Self- Efficacy assessment, 15-minutes.
3. Complete the ASCA School Counselor Self-Assessment, 10-minutes.
4. Complete the MTSS: Establish Readiness and Sustainability for Building an Intervention System for School Teams training, self-paced, 10 hours or less, (includes a collection of reading material, PowerPoints, videos, and discussions).
5. Re-submit the Self- Efficacy assessment, 15-minutes.
6. Re-submit the ASCA School Counselor Self-Assessment, 10-minutes.

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**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Upon completion of the MTSS professional development course, participants can expect to receive increased knowledge, skills, and confidence to enhance their performance and self-efficacy.

**Benefits to society may include:** The lives of children will be enhanced by eliminating low expectations that often characterize disadvantaged schools. Delivering quality interventions and strengthening students' psychosocial abilities will allow students to grow and progress through significant life challenges.

**Compensation:** Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Upon completion of the MTSS training, participants will receive 1.0 CEU credit, awarded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Participants who complete all study requirements within one week will be placed in a drawing for a chance to win a \$50.00 Amazon gift card. The drawing of one gift card will be held at the conclusion of the study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- The privacy of participants will be protected by removing all identifying information such as email addresses from all survey data.
- Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer, stored away in a file. All files stored on the computer's hard drive will be erased, utilizing a hardware technique that prevents any information from being retrieved in the future.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Latonya Bunch. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at (919)441-6485 and/or [lbunch2@liberty.edu](mailto:lbunch2@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Hollingsworth, at [mahollingsworth@liberty.edu](mailto:mahollingsworth@liberty.edu).

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If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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Signature of Participant

Date

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Signature of Investigator

Date

**APPENDIX G: Social Media Recruitment Letter**

Hello, my name is Latonya Bunch,

I'm conducting a study focusing on the impact of increasing the self-efficacy of North Carolina school counselors who work with underserved students.

Would you be interested in helping me out? If you are a school counselor in North Carolina who works with underserved students, and you would like to volunteer for this research study, please click the link to be forwarded to the consent form to receive more information. Upon reviewing the consent form, you will type your name in the text box provided to indicate that you have read and agree to the consent information and would like to take part in the study. You will then be advanced to a demographic survey that will determine if you are eligible to participate in the study. If so, you will then begin a set of assessments and a self-paced professional development training that will need to be completed within one week. Once you have completed the professional development training, you are asked to email your certificate of completion to [lbunch2@liberty.edu](mailto:lbunch2@liberty.edu). You will then receive the post assessments to finalize your participation.

If you choose to participate, you will receive 1.0 CEU, awarded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), that can be submitted to your Local Educational Agency (LEA) for compensation.

Excitedly, all participants who complete the requirements of the study within the recommended one-week timeframe will also be placed in a drawing for an opportunity to receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Let me know if you're interested or have any questions!

Best regards,

Latonya Bunch



**APPENDIX H: Recruitment Letter**

Dear School Counselor:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Community Care & Counseling /School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University. As part of my dissertation requirements for a doctoral degree, I am conducting research to investigate how school counselors' self-efficacy is influenced after completing a professional development training.

I am inviting all North Carolina school counselors to take part in my research study. The initiative is to investigate how professional development training effects school counselors' self-efficacy for being able to effectively treat the unique needs of underprivileged students.

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older, employed as a school counselor in the state of North Carolina, and working in an underserved school. You will be asked to complete a demographics survey that asks specific questions related to the population characteristics of your school and personal characteristics of your education and professional career. School Counselors will also complete pre-assessments, the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale and ASCA School Counselor Self-Assessment and post-assessments, the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale. Additionally, you will participate in a self-paced online training known as the *MTSS: 2.1 Establish Readiness and Sustainability for Building an Intervention System for School Teams*.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary. Rewardingly, your replies will contribute in improving the profession of counseling to meet the needs of disadvantaged students. The survey and assessments will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The online training is accessible through your PowerSchool login and is located under the Professional Development tab. You will be asked specific information; however, participation will be completely confidential, and no personal, identifying information will be revealed.

To participate, click on the link provided to review the consent form and learn additional information about my research. Upon reviewing, please type your name in the text box provided at the end of the consent form to indicate that you have read and agree to the consent information and would like to take part in the study. You will then be advanced to a demographic survey that will determine if you are a good candidate to proceed to the assessments and the self-paced professional development training. If you are allowed to continue, you will then begin a set of assessments and a self-paced professional development training that will need to be completed within one week. Once you have completed the professional development training, you are asked to email your certificate of completion to [lbunch2@liberty.edu](mailto:lbunch2@liberty.edu). You will then receive the post assessment to finalize your participation. If you choose to participate, you will receive 1.0 CEU, awarded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), that can be submitted to your local educational agency (LEA) for compensation. All participants who complete the requirements of the study within the recommended one-week timeframe will also be placed in a drawing for an opportunity to receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Sincerely,

Latonya Bunch, Doctoral Candidate  
Liberty University  
1971 University Blvd  
Lynchburg, VA 24515

**APPENDIX I: Recruitment Flyer****SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY**

*Study Title:* Challenges of Underserved Students in Disadvantaged Schools: Influence of Training on School Counselors' Self-Efficacy

The purpose of this study will be to examine the impact of professional development training on self-efficacy and to conclude if the awareness gained from the training will increase the counselors' self-efficacy, competency, and confidence to effectively meet the needs of underprivileged students.

To participate in the research, you must:

- Be a school counselor in North Carolina
- Work with underserved students

Participation in this study involves:

- Demographic survey
- Self-Efficacy assessment
- ASCA School Counselor Self-Assessment
- Self-paced professional development
  - MTSS: Establish Readiness and Sustainability for Building an Intervention System for School Teams training
- Post-Assessment of the Self-Efficacy assessment

**Participants who complete all study requirements within one week will be placed in a drawing for a chance to win a \$50.00 Amazon gift card.**

**Completion of the MTSS professional development course will result in 1.0 CEU, received through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).**

To get started, click [Here](#) to be forwarded to the consent form.

To find out more information about this study, please contact Latonya Bunch at: Email: [\*\*lbunch2@liberty.edu\*\*](mailto:lbunch2@liberty.edu)