Promoting Equitable College Access and Success: Exploring Critical Frameworks in School Counselor Training

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study employs a phenomenological research approach that examines the school counselor's experiences and training. The purpose of this study is to explore if school counselors received training in critical race theory (CRT), culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), and social justice (SJ), and if they implement these theories in practice. Semi-structured interviews were used with eleven practicing school counselors. Thematic content analysis was used with a critical discourse lens to identify explicit and implicit themes within the data. The results indicate a lack of training in critical race theory (CRT), culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), and social justice. While some participants had knowledge of social justice theory, most were unsure how to move theory to practice. These results allude to a call for action within school counselor education. School counselors should be trained how to translate the theories of CRT, CSP, and social justice to practice. This can provide a deeper understanding of the systemic factors that affect college access and success.

Keywords: critical race theory, culturally sustaining pedagogies, school counselor education, anti-racist counselor, social justice

Introduction

Many scholars propose the United States colonial education system is at the core nucleus of the historical and very contemporary systemic racism that has profoundly impacted the educational inequities woven into the fabric of our society today (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018; Love, 2019; Shedd, 2015). Topics concerning social justice, equality versus equity, oppression, privilege, and racial disparities in college access and success have been ongoing conversations in the world of education throughout time (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Steward, 2019). Considering these are still very relevant hot topics at the center of the college access and success discourse, it seems the field of education has not made much sustainable progress in eliminating racial and discriminatory inequities. Unfortunately, education transformation efforts frequently lose fire and fade to black rather quickly, or continue to perpetuate institutionalized systemic oppression in newly disguised racist policies, language, or practices that uphold racial disparities in college access and success (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018; Love, 2019; Shedd, 2015; Steward, 2019).

However, recently ignited by the global pandemic and current socio-political racial climate, there is a very strong social justice movement underway to address the historical systemic racism and racial disparities in college access and success. This movement, which feels much different than others, is

creating a buzz in the educational community and school counselors are at the forefront pushing a call to action for anti-racist school counseling practices. For example, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) just adopted The School Counselor and Anti-Racist Practices position statement which states, "The role of the school counselor in ensuring anti-racist practices is to enhance awareness, obtain culturally responsive knowledge and skills, and engage in action through advocacy" (ASCA, 2021). The new generation of students currently entering school counseling training programs are coming with a fiery passion to fight for social justice, equity, and to eliminate racial disparities in college access and success through anti-racist school counseling practices. Given this strong movement, what is being implemented within school counseling training programs to ensure sustainable change, social justice, and equitable college access for all?

As professional school counselors and social justice advocates, we need to challenge the colonial ideals of the U.S. education system that help maintain systems of oppression through racist practices (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018; Love, 2019). We have to be critical of culturally biased standardized tests, an implicitly racist curriculum, and biased history lessons that tell half truths. Trying to tackle racial disparities in college access and success without the foundational acknowledgement that these are deeply embedded within the institutionalized systemic racism of colonial education leaves educators, researchers and students spinning in circles.

Critical race theory (CRT) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) are key frameworks that offer educators, especially school counselors, important analytical perspectives on the ramifications of racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power, privilege, and social justice in education (Grothaus, Johnson, & Edirmanasinghe, 2020; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2015). Incorporating these frameworks into school counselor training would provide a strong social justice foundation for school counselors as they advocate for anti-racist school counseling policies and engage in practices to dismantle systems of oppression in education. Therefore, it is important to explore whether school counseling training programs incorporate theoretical frameworks and practices that will prepare future school counselors to disrupt the racist practices in schools as they work toward social justice and equity in college access and success for all students (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore if professional school counselors receive training in critical race theory (CRT), culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), and social justice (SJ), and if they implement these theories in practice.

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Literature Review

This section will open with a review of the literature on the application of CRT and CSP in education. Next, a review of literature on school counselor training will be discussed. This information is then connected to the study to identify why it is critical to incorporate these theories and practices in school counselor training to help school counselors create a counter narrative that moves toward disrupting current educational systems of oppression that impact racial inequities in college access and success.

CRT in Education

CRT challenges racism at the structural and institutional level and operates from five tenets: counter-storytelling, permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest conversion, and critique of liberalism (Hiraldo, 2010). CRT centralizes racism in society and the experiential knowledge of people of color and views their perspectives as valid. It uses an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the knowledge learned with historical and contemporary contexts, and works to dismantle oppressive systems with a commitment to SJ (Vaughn & Castagno, 2008). It also questions the ongoing mainstream debates of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness and merit and applies historical and contextual analyses (Dixson & Rousseau 2005).

Ladson-Billings (2020) examines how CRT can effectively be used in the field of education by applying principles to relevant issues such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. For example, Ladson-Billings (2020) discusses the race-neutral perspective of traditional instruction and how deficiency is viewed as an individual phenomenon. If instruction is generic and race-neutral, it can be applied to all students; thus when the desired results are not achieved, the student, not the results, are viewed as deficient. However, when applying the tools of CRT and understanding that institutional racism exists, instruction, curriculum and methods of teaching can be critically examined (Ladson-Billings, 2020) . Additionally, Howard and Navarro (2016) suggest CRT to be used in teacher preparation and it is critical that it moves from theory to practice as many schools are places where racism is undiscussed, but thoroughly understood by the students. The school counselor is not exempt from these issues, even if they are not mentioned in the CRT research. For these reasons, it is imperative to incorporate CRT in school counselor training because it centralizes racism while challenging dominant ideologies and moves beyond explanations of cultural differences or ideologies of deficiency.

CSP in Education

CSP is a theory and practice created by teachers who view schools as sites for sustaining cultures, rather than silencing, eliminating, or assimilating them to the dominant ideal (Paris & Alim, 2017). CSP values cultural diversity and believes in

enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits (Paris & Alim, 2017). The foundation of CSP is in asset pedagogies that challenged deficit approaches of languages and cultures of people and communities of color (Paris & Alim, 2017). Paris and Alim (2017) discuss Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, which is described as a psychological challenge of always looking at oneself through the eyes of a racist society and measuring oneself by a society that looks back in contempt. CSP uses the term 'white gaze' to describe the ways in which students and communities of color are looked at through educational research and practices (Paris & Alim, 2017). In this way, students of color are also held to a white standard, and educational success is framed as how well one can assimilate into whiteness. For example, when school integration was being pushed in education, white students were not being bussed to Black communities and white teachers were not getting fired (Paris & Alim, 2017). Black students were being bussed to white communities with this underlying belief that schools in white communities were providing a higher quality education, and Black teachers were getting fired (Paris & Alim, 2017). This is a clear example of how the white gaze and white standard perpetuates ideas of cultural deficiency. However, de-centering whiteness reframes issues of access and equity by challenging the white gaze-centered question: "How can 'we' get 'these' working class kids of color to speak/write/be more like middle-class white ones, rather than critiquing the white gaze itself that sees, hears, and frames

students of color in every which way as marginal and deficient?" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). Reframation like this is why CSP is essential for school counselor education.

The Inclusion of CRT and CSP in School Counselor Training

School counselor training programs play an important role in how school counselors approach their work with students. A review of the literature shows that frameworks of social justice, multiculturalism, equity and inclusion, have been part of the school counselor training for more than 20 plus years (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; La Guardia, 2019). Moreover, Wilczenski et al., (2011) outline specific areas to apply social justice in school counselor education. These areas include program goals, admission criteria, coursework, cultural diversity, urban experience, community engagement, and service learning. Furthermore, La Guardia (2019) completed a review of 139 articles on counselor education and supervision and noted issues of diversity and inclusion are incorporated more now than ever before. Ratts and Greenleaf (2018) also offer a leadership framework for school counselors using constructs of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC). This framework lays the foundation for an improved kind of school counselor leadership where school counselors will be able to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression that are present in K–12 schools (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Extensive research has demonstrated how SJ has been an integral

part of the field for decades. Yet, a deeper analysis of this work indicates that SJ approaches in practice are more focused on the individual rather than systemic racism (Ladson-Billings, 2020; Duncan-Andrade, 2008). The research is lacking literature that unpacks the deeper parts of racism: institutionalized racism, implicit discriminatory policies, and the factors of CRT and CSP need to be at the forefront of the conversation. Research that examines the role of CRT and CSP in school counselor training and practice is even more scarce. However, the current anti-racist school counselor movement has begun to support shifts within the field. ASCA has recently addressed the issue of moving from culturally competent to culturally sustaining in practice. As stated in Culturally Sustaining School Counseling, "...the term "culturally sustaining" invites us to change our views and actions regarding culture by engaging the whole community and embracing and enriching existing strength..." (Grothaus et al., 2020). This is an indication that the field is progressing, but the continued racial disparities in college access and success suggest there is still work to be done. Given the scarcity of research in this area the implementation of these frameworks, strategies, and concepts is imperative to the continued growth of the profession to ensure school counselors are best serving their communities and schools.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study employs a phenomenological research approach that examines the school counselor's experiences and training. The purpose of this study is to explore if school counselors received training in critical race theory (CRT), culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), and social justice (SJ), and if they implement these theories in practice. Students of color are historically swayed away from college and do not have the same opportunity for success in higher education. Thus, it is vital to examine one of the key bridges from high school to college: the school counselor. The research questions are as follows:

How do school counseling training programs provide sustainable knowledge in CRT, CSP, and SJ content (level of exposure, for example, one course vs. embedded throughout the curriculum)?

How do school counselors report utilizing CRT, CSP, and SJ in practice?

Methods

School Counselor Participants
To explore the research questions, interviews were conducted with 11 professional school counselors who currently work at various school districts in Southern California.

Participants work in traditional, charter, court and community schools, serving students in

kindergarten through 12th grade, with ages ranging from five to twenty four. Before the interview, all participants completed a demographic questionnaire.

Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used because they provided guidance and structure pertaining to the research interests, and allowed flexibility in the participants' answers. This allows for a thick and rich description of the participants' experiences and allows the researcher to analyze on a deeper level (Brinkmann, 2014). Information about the semi-structured interview was read to all participants prior to starting.

Participants were encouraged to answer questions honestly and assured they would remain anonymous. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews took approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. The semi-structured interview consisted of multiple sections. The first section consisted of a survey module that gathers demographic background data (e.g., age, sex, race/ethnicity, etc) and inquires about professional development and training that occurred in the last five years.

Additional sections explored the participant's current school counseling work (i.e. How do you feel about the school counseling program's effectiveness and place within your school?), students (ie. What is your relationship with the students like? How do you relate to them?), school (i.e.

How is your school supporting all students?), and their school counseling graduate program (i.e. Was social justice incorporated within your school counseling program [e.g., one course, topics threaded throughout multiple courses, embedded in the entire curriculum]? If so, how?). The purpose of this was to get a holistic understanding of the participant's experience and training. All questions were optional, therefore participants were not obligated to answer questions if they did not feel comfortable doing so.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research study and all supporting documents including the research proposal, informed consent, and interview questions prior to starting the study. Participants were recruited via email and listservs. Willing participants were screened once they responded with interest in being interviewed to ensure they met the required criteria. Participants were required to have a Masters degree, a Pupil Personnel (PPS) Credential, and had to be current practicing school counselors in Southern California. All human subject requirements were approved by the researchers institution and all participants signed the IRB approved informed consent prior to the interview.

Data Analysis

Once eleven interviews were complete, they were then sent to Rev.com, an online audio transcription service, to be transcribed. Once transcribed, interviews were coded until saturated by the primary investigator and by

the faculty chair to ensure coding validity (Spooren & Degand, 2010). This coding process was done by reviewing the transcriptions multiple times in different sittings to ensure all data was included and reviewed. Thematic content analysis was used to identify themes in the data using a critical discourse lens. Thematic content analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Critical discourse analysis "[analyzes] written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts" (Hart, 2010). Thematic content analysis allowed for explicit and implicit messages to be exposed within the data. Using a critical discourse lens gave better context to the implicit messages and better focus to the reproduction and/or challenge of the dominant hegemony (Hart, 2010).

Positionality

The researchers are from a school counseling graduate program that is deeply committed to social justice, equity, and removing barriers for all students to succeed. As we worked together throughout the program, we realized a lack of clarity in practice, and that is what led us to pursue this research. We realized the conversations that took place in our late night classes did not always translate to the work being done in the field. We also witnessed the complexities of bringing new and sometimes "radical" or "revolutionary" ideas and perspectives to the public school system that was very comfortable and set in its ways. The work is not easy, but it is vital to create lasting change.

Results

An analysis of the demographic data indicates that the sample of participants (N=11) was 63.6% female (n=7) and 36.3% male (n=4). Roughly 45.4% identified as White (n=5), 18.1% as Latino/a (n=2), 0.09% as Pacific Islander (n=1), 0.09% as Chicano (n=1), 0.09% as Filipino Mexican (n=1), and 0.09% as Filipino American (n=1). Approximately 81.8% identified their age as 25-34 (n=9), while 18.1% identified their age as 35-44 (n=2). Additionally, 72.7% of the participants have been working in the field for 5 or less years (n=8), and 81.8% received their degree and PPS in Southern California (n=9). Lastly, 36.3% of the participants work at elementary schools (n=4), 18.1% work at middle schools (n=2), 27.2% work at high schools (n=3), 18.1% work at alternative schools (n=2), and three of the schools were charter schools. Given the data, the most represented participants were white young adult females, most which are fairly new to the field. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews provided extreme depth and rich descriptions of school counselors' perspectives, experiences, training, and practice. The thematic content analysis of the data revealed three primary emergent themes.

The first theme, graduate school experience, answered research question one (i.e., How do school counseling training programs provide sustainable knowledge in CRT, CSP, and SJ content [level of exposure, for example, one course vs. embedded throughout the curriculum]?). This theme affirmed that CRT and CSP were unfamiliar to the majority of participants. The second theme, views about education and social justice, answered research question two (i.e., How do school counselors report utilizing CRT, CSP, and SJ in practice?). The data revealed that participants are unclear how to move theory to practice in regards to SJ. The third theme, personal experience with gatekeeping and access, revealed some unexpected additional findings about how school counselors serve as key stakeholders in college access. Each theme is described in more detail below and selected quotes from participants are used to reveal how school counseling programs could improve by integrating more theory to practice and incorporating CRT, CSP, and SJ into the curriculum.

Graduate School Experience

To answer the first research question, participants were asked to reflect back on their graduate school training. Graduate school experiences varied, but the common theme when asked about CRT, CSP, and SJ was that the training was minimal or nonexistent. One participant stated:

I feel when I was going through the program it was very centered around being data-focused and learning the national model, which is great and it's helped me tremendously, but I just feel like as a person and as an educator and as a social justice advocate, it would have helped a lot more to learn more about it [CRT, CSP, SJ] or to have some more discussions regarding social justice. And so that was my experience. There were for a few instances, but not as many as I thought I was going to see, especially through a graduate program.

This quote draws attention to the lack of social justice within the graduate program, and a disappointment in a sense, as the participant had different expectations of graduate level work. Additionally, another participant shared similar feelings about social justice in his/her school counseling graduate program. The participant stated: "...I thought I was going to get more [social justice content] in my program…" Again, this highlights feelings of disappointment pertaining to social justice content in school counseling graduate programs. Both participants had certain expectations for their graduate programs to provide training and information pertaining to social justice that were not fulfilled. This finding indicates that the level of CRT, CSP, and SJ content in school counselor training was limited and participants wished there was more of it. Lastly, only one participant was able to speak to CRT and could explain what it was. This participant stated:

[CRT]...it's just kind of like this idea around putting race at the center of how we look at oppression, privilege, and just kind of like how that manifests itself in education. Being aware of like all the different ways in which like race and racism manifest itself, like systemically, in schools, for me, I think that's critical...and just being aware of that. But I [also] think...it's about being fully aware of how racism is still here today, knowing our own biases and how that impacts our interactions with people, but then also having really difficult conversations around race, and how it looks for every single person, because race is so complex, you know, and how we define race is so complex too.

This quote touches on many different aspects and how CRT applies to systems outside of education, in a similar fashion as SJ. This participant was the only person that could explain CRT and was also the only person that continued their education to earn a Ph.D. They stated that this knowledge came from their doctoral work, thus, it was not received in their school counseling program. Overall, while many participants shared overall positive graduate school experience, some also shared areas of growth for their graduate program. Most areas of improvement were about SJ content, and a desire for more of it. This implicates changes for school counselor training.

Views About Education and Social Justice

To answer the second research question, participants were asked whether social justice was incorporated within their school counseling program (e.g., one course, topics threaded throughout multiple courses, embedded in the entire curriculum? If so, how?). Participants expressed strong views about the education system and SJ in particular. Many identified flaws within education, discussed how they approach student needs, and again, the importance of relationships in the field of education. However, one of the most prominent themes in regard to SJ, was an uncertainty of how to move SJ theories to practice in school counseling. As one participant stated:

I don't know if it's something that is obvious or I don't know if it's something that's very explicit. I just feel like it, I don't know. I mean, I think I try to do it but I don't know if I'm doing a good job at it. I don't know if it's something that's just apparent to everybody else.

This participant had strong feelings about SJ, but then was hesitant in their answers as to how SJ is applied in their practice. Another participant shared:

I do know that social justice, even as an educator, is going to be very, very limited. Because again, you're bound by whatever your school or your district believes and that's kind of where you have to function around. You can't be like this crazy social justice advocate at a school, especially when you're just starting because you might not last there very long, you know? You might get isolated or even worse, you might get laid off or fired for something that you might do. I think you just gotta be strategic too while you're within the confines of a school setting. You have to be very

strategic in terms of the work that you're able to accomplish. But as a social justice educator, I feel that we have to understand that true change is probably not going to happen within the school hours. The true change is probably going to happen outside of what we're able to do here. Like when we try to implement new policies, new rules or funding and whatnot, it's not going to happen from us screaming at the top of our lungs while students are here in the school.
It's going to have to happen outside of the work hours. It's going to have to happen at board meetings, out in the community...

This quote highlights multiple reasons why utilizing SJ as a school counselor, and in schools in general, is difficult. The participant also explained how SJ work requires strategy because of the barriers that schools, districts, and the system as a whole can have in place. Even further, the participant shared how they felt education was unfortunately not the ideal place for SJ work and it tends to happen outside of school.

SJ was understood by participants in a variety of ways. While some participants had a deep understanding and passion for SJ, this did not necessarily mean they were implementing intentional and clear strategies within the schools. The application and practice of SJ was a very unclear concept to participants, which may speak to the training that is happening in the school counseling graduate programs.

Personal Experience with Gatekeeping and Access

This theme surprisingly emerged in the analysis and is a vital piece of the data that speaks to systemic issues like equity and access in the personal experiences of the school counselor participants. For instance, one participant speaks of their own personal experience as what motivated them to pursue school counseling:

I became a school counselor, based on my personal experience in education. I went to a low income high school, two different high schools. One high school did not offer extracurricular activities or AP courses. It was concentrated on raising the literacy of students. Then I went to a traditional high school with AP classes. I felt that I was identified as a high achieving student, and because of that, I received guidance to go to higher education. However, I was also in non-AP classes, and I […] saw that students in non-AP classes were offered only army and community college options. That was very disturbing to me.

This quote speaks to the different paths taken depending on where students go to school and the guidance they receive. Because of this experience, the participant has the opportunity to take a stand as a leader in education to identify and call out injustices. Another participant shared a similar experience:

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We have a large percentage of first-generation college students and also a pretty significant population that's low-income for reduced lunch. So working with all students, but particularly with them has been rewarding because I know that my experiences and my upbringing kind of serve a purpose. Or at least it allows me to be able to help some of those students who otherwise probably wouldn't see themselves going to college...

This quote highlights the school counselor as a gatekeeper for college access. If it weren't for the participants' experience, they feel that the students they work with would never think of pursuing college.

This theme highlights an important factor that directly affects the trajectory of students' lives: school counselors act as gatekeepers for college access. With that being said, what can be done to ensure school counselors are properly equipped with tools to create the bridge between students of color and higher education? It is imperative that the research on this topic continues.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that school counselor training programs should include CRT, CSP, and SJ and provide clear approaches to move theory to practice. The first theme demonstrated how most school counselors have very limited familiarity with CRT and CSP, while also reporting a desire for more SJ content to be included in their graduate training experience. Therefore, in

order to ensure school counselors are fostering a positive transformational education experience for all students, it is important for school counselor training to incorporate strategies that are not merely tolerant of all cultures, but create a space for students from all cultures to flourish. Training in CRT would provide school counselors the fundamental knowledge that racial disparities in college access and success are deeply embedded within the institutionalized racism of colonial education (Atkins & Oglesby, 2018; Love, 2019; Shedd, 2015; Steward, 2019). School counselors can utilize this critical analytical perspective to challenge and disrupt racism, inequity, and the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression in education (Grothaus, Johnson, & Edirmanasinghe, 2020; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2015). The findings within the second theme indicate that participants are unclear how to move theory to practice in regards to SJ. Again, through the application of CRT and CSP into practice school counselors can critically identify the deeper root issues to disrupt racism, rather than continuing to compartmentalize issues as if they are not in and of the same problem. CRT provides a framework for school counselors to create counternarratives and a different way of viewing schools as a catalyst for change and empowerment, and challenges deficit rhetoric in all forms (Childers-Mckee & Hytten, 2015). CSP incorporates a curriculum that empowers and sustains cultural identities rather than silencing or suppressing them (Paris & Alim, 2017). Incorporation of these theories and

practices will have a significant impact on the field of school counseling by defining ideas and practices that current school counselors are hungry to implement. Application to practice could look like collaborating with teachers or administrators to critically analyze classroom curriculum and opening honest discussions with students about the racism they experience, valuing the voices of students and their lived realities and applying this knowledge to school practices and curriculum.

Our findings demonstrate that school counselors are not receiving the in-depth training on CRT, CSP, and SJ needed to sustain success and break down systemic barriers for our richly diverse populations. While many participants identified as SJ advocates, they were unsure how to move SJ theory to practice. Thus, it is important to be more clear on how to implement intentional strategies in practice during the graduate school experience and beyond. The implementation of CRT and CSP is a step in the right direction, as this can lay the groundwork for potentially difficult and uncomfortable discussions, which can then lead to changes in practice, policy, and hopefully the standards at which students are measured.

> **"Our findings demonstrate that school counselors are not receiving the in-depth training on CRT, CSP, and SJ needed to sustain success and break down systemic barriers for our richly diverse populations."**

Additionally, the unexpected finding that emerged from the third theme suggests that systemic issues like equity and access in the personal experiences of the school counselor participants may affect the trajectory of their students' lives. Given the fact that school counselors can function as gatekeepers to college access and success, it is imperative that they are given the critical analytical tools and practical skills to challenge deficit rhetoric and empower and sustain different cultural backgrounds in the educational and professional context. School counselors need to challenge theories and practices that suggest educational failure is the result of cultural deficiency on the part of the student, the family, and the community (Duncan-Andrade, 2008). Seeing that school counselors are student advocates and social change agents, they are in a great position to critically examine this deficit perspective, its implications, and how educators could create counternarratives more aligned with the truth that college access and success is attributed to cultural superiority or assimilation into culturally superior ways, which is much deeper systemic issue at play (Duncan-Andrade, 2008).

Limitations

Even though this study provided a platform for much needed work in the field of school counseling, there are some limitations. This study only focused on the perspective of school counselors in one geographic location of southern California. Additionally, most of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 34, and fresh to the field with five or less years of experience. The interviews were also completed with no follow up to ask for clarification. Although this study has several limitations, it did help with the conceptualization of a model that we believe can guide future directions for research.

Future Direction

The following conceptual model was created to demonstrate the layers of the problem, with western ideologies being the root issue of systemic institutionalized racism that exists in disparities of college access and success. This model is connected to and drawing from the work of scholars dedicated to revolutionary education, especially that of Paris and Alim (2017), Smith (2012), Love (2019), and Atkins and Oglesby (2018).

Model 1.
Western Ideologies as Root Issue of Systemic Racism in Disparities of College Access and Success.
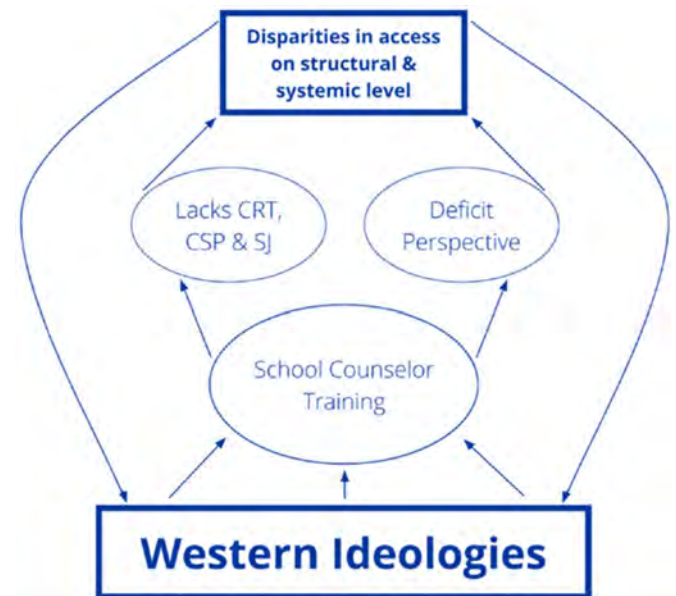
Western ideologies heavily influence school counselor training, which has resulted in a lack of CRT, CSP, and SJ and perpetuates a deficit-based perspective of anything that falls outside of white middle class norms (Paris & Alim, 2017). This cycle has caused the disparities in college access and success on a systemic level, which was historically done intentionally via redlining, segregation, and other discriminatory policies within U.S. colonial education. The problem we are seeing in current research is that too much focus is put on the symptom (disparities in access), with too little regard to the root of why (Smith, 2012). The root of why, western ideologies, is the missing piece that is being glossed over and unaddressed. Furthermore, given the fact that the research done on

disparities in college access has mainly focused on financial and academic barriers, it is imperative that this scope is broadened and focuses more on what is actually causing those disparities: western ideologies. The field would make more progress getting to the root of the problem, rather than using energy putting band aids on the symptoms (disparities in access). This is an uncomfortable conversation because it requires calling out systems, structures, and the individuals that uphold them, but it is a necessary step.

Conclusion

The results allude to a call for action within school counselor education. School counselors should be trained on how to translate the theories of CRT, CSP, and SJ to practice. This can provide a deeper understanding of the systemic factors that affect students, and thus, support school counselors in providing the best and most appropriate anti-racist school counseling services for the students via removing barriers to higher education and beyond, challenging the status quo within schools, and creating change on a systemic level. This is especially important as the research also identified the school counselor as a gatekeeper for college access. The results allude to the possibility that students of color are continuing to be swayed away from higher education because school counselor training lacks the tools to empower and sustain diverse cultural

backgrounds and dig deeper into systemic racist issues. The research must continue, and we hope this study shines a brighter light on the problematic insidious issue of western ideologies and their application to the education field, the role it plays in college access, and its metrics through the colonial educational process and experience. **JCA**

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