

DESCRIBING COUNSELORS' SOCIAL CLASS AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, counseling professionals have become more committed to addressing multicultural competence and issues of diversity in order to respect and acknowledge the spectrum of worldviews clients represent. Race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and spirituality/religion are well-researched areas commonly included in counselor education courses. These courses allow counselors-in-training to examine their biases, beliefs, values, and worldviews about diverse populations, and develop applicable skills. However, far too often, social class and socioeconomic status are excluded from counselors' multicultural training, and similarly, often overlooked as an integral aspect of clients' culture (Liu, 2011; Smith, 2008). The current literature reveals that scholars have taken more interest in social class in the past decade, but none has explored counselors' social class awareness and understanding, two foundational aspects of multicultural competence. The purpose of this study was to describe counselors' social class understanding and awareness through qualitative methodology. Via semi-structured interviews, licensed counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia described how they understood social class and socioeconomic status, their awareness about social class and socioeconomic status, and issues related to classism. Four themes emerged related to social class understanding and awareness: income/money, social class designations, social status, and the places people live. Three themes surfaced linked to socioeconomic status understanding and awareness: Income, education and financial stability. Two categories emerged with regard to classism: participants' classism experiences and participant demonstrations of classism during the interview process. Three themes arose related to participant demonstrations of classism during the interview

process: class microaggressions, class misconceptions, and class privilege. Implications for counseling, counselor education, and supervision are discussed, study limitations are provided, and avenues for future research are considered.

Dedication  
To Chuck and Xandyr

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The United States (U.S.) has always been a place of diversity. Takaki (1993) aptly noted, “America has been racially diverse since our very beginning on the Virginia shore, and this reality is increasingly becoming visible and ubiquitous” (p. 2). Despite the U.S.’s longstanding, visible, and ubiquitous diversity, the people who represent aspects of the non-dominant culture, (e.g. people who are not White, male, heterosexual, middle class, Christian, or able-bodied), consistently have been made invisible and hidden vis-à-vis discrimination, oppression, and violence (Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 2007).

Counseling professionals and scholars acknowledged the disparity between those in the dominant privileged ranks and those at the margins, and focused on discrimination perpetrated by the dominant culture with particular attention to how these dynamics occurred in counseling (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Consequently, they responded by prioritizing multicultural standards, education, and practice (Pedersen, 1988; Sue et al., 1992). Originally, counselor educators and researchers focused on multicultural issues related to race and ethnicity (e.g. Arredondo et al., 1996; Locke, 1990). Over time, researchers explored gender, religion/spirituality, and sexual orientation (e.g. Gilbert, 1999; Pearson, 2003; Stanard, Sanhu, & Painter, 2000). It was not until the early 2000’s that social class received any serious attention from researchers (e.g. Fouad & Brown, 2000; Liu, 2001; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004). To date, the majority of the social class counseling literature has been theoretical in nature, and little is known about counselors’ social class and socioeconomic status (SES) understanding and awareness, and whether they attend regularly to clients’ social class as an integral aspect of their culture. What the limited amount of literature does reveal is social class

and SES significantly impact clients' worldviews, including how they perceive themselves, and that middle class privilege pervades U.S. culture (Liu, Pickett, & Ivey, 2007).

### **The Context of Multiculturalism and Counseling**

Like many professions, the counseling profession only relatively recently began to consider seriously the impact of diversity and multiculturalism. In the 1970's and 1980's, forward-thinking pioneers (e.g. Arredondo-Dowd & Gonsalves, 1980; Carney & Kahn, 1984; Pedersen, 1983; Pettit, Pettit, & Welkowitz, 1974) began to address issues related to counselors' multicultural competence. But, overall, there was scant professional counseling literature prior to 1990 that pertained to multiculturalism (Arredondo, Rosen, Rice, Perez, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005). Ironically, the counseling journal that dealt most directly with multicultural issues during this time was entitled, the *Journal of Non-White Concerns in Personnel and Guidance* (known since late 1985 as the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*). The name of this journal might possibly have had more than one meaning: This journal was not about White people, nor was it *for* White people—implying that multiculturalism was not a White pursuit.

In 1991, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) provided a strong rationale for integrating multiculturalism into counseling, and called for multicultural counseling competencies so clients might be better served. The Professional Standards Committee responded, and proposed 31 multicultural counseling competencies (Sue et al., 1992), focused on attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills (Carney & Kahn, 1984; Pedersen, 1988). These dimensions fell in three domains: Counselors' awareness of their cultural values, assumptions, and biases; counselors' awareness of clients' worldviews; and culturally appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue et al., 1992). These dimensions and domains continue to serve as the mainstay of multicultural education and practice.

Several scholars (e.g. Arredondo et al., 1996; Lee, 2006; Roysircar, Arredondo, Fuertes, Ponterotto, & Toporek, 2003) described the meaning of the aforementioned dimensions and domains, how they function, as well as how counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors operationalize multicultural values. All dimensions are significant, and one domain or dimension cannot possibly be ranked higher than another. However, counselors' exploration of their beliefs and attitudes with regard to their cultural values and biases has received considerable attention both scholastically, and in counselor preparation programs (Arredondo et al., 1996; Balkin, Schlosser, & Levitt, 2009; Brinson, 2004; Lee, 2006; Richardson, & Molinaro, 1996; Roysircar et al., 2003; Sue et al., 1992). The reason for this attention was well articulated by Lee (2003): "A counselor must evaluate how his or her personal attitudes and beliefs about people from different cultural groups may facilitate or hamper counseling effectiveness" (p. 15). Furthermore, the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) explicitly stated, in addition to the charge that counselors are to "do no harm," they "are aware of their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and avoid imposing values that are inconsistent with counseling goals. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants" (p. 4-5).

As multicultural counseling became an established part of counselor training, there was debate about *who* multicultural counseling was meant to serve. Some felt a universal or transcultural approach was best (Fukuyama, 1990), while others vied for a more focused approach (Locke, 1990). The universal/transcultural paradigm is a general skill approach to multicultural counseling, while the focused model concentrates on group specific skill development. Sue et al. (1992) acknowledged, "that the 'universal' and 'focused' multicultural approaches are not necessarily contradictory" (p. 478) yet wrote their initial, groundbreaking article from the "focused" point of view, concentrating on race and ethnicity. Their article

became foundational for subsequent focused approaches (e.g. women; people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender; people who have varying religious and spiritual beliefs).

Although universal approaches to multicultural counseling exist, the profession as a whole has leaned more toward focused approaches to understand clients' worldviews.

Focused approaches to multicultural counseling have centered on the breadth of the diversity spectrum: race, ethnicity, gender, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, and ability. However until recently, social class often has been absent from this list. Pervasive myths about the U.S. being a *classless society* and all people having the ability to *pull themselves up by their bootstraps*, coupled with socially accepted jokes about *trailer trash* or the *people of Wal-Mart*, indicate negative beliefs, stereotypes, and discrimination toward people who comprise the lower class (Staton, Evans, & Lucey, 2012). Few authors have discussed how counselors can examine their biases related to social class, or how social class bias might manifest in the therapeutic relationship (Vontress, 2011). West-Olatunji & Gibson (2012) hypothesized, "perhaps helping professionals have been slow in developing discourse around clinicians and social class because of our implicit beliefs about this construct" (p. 5). The majority of counselors are middle class (Vontress, 2011), many of whom may hold strong beliefs in meritocracy, a marked middle class value, which can yield bias toward people from low social class (e.g. they are *lazy*) and people from high social class (e.g. they did not work for what they have) (West-Olatunji & Gibson, 2012). West-Olatunji & Gibson challenged helping professionals to examine their "socially embedded messages" about social class, to understand the source of these messages, and to seek help in confronting them. Inevitably, counselors reflect the socio-political realities of the cultures in which they live (Arredondo et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 1999), and because stereotypes and discrimination surround social class, the social class construct must be recognized as a

component of multicultural counseling. But in order for counselors to integrate social class into their work with clients, they must be willing to increase their awareness via an examination of their values and biases, and to expand their social class understanding and knowledge.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe licensed professional counselors' social class and SES understanding and awareness via qualitative methods. To date, no study exists that details counselors' social class understanding and awareness. There are several reasons why a study of this kind is warranted. First, a review of the literature revealed (a) social class is a salient cultural variable (e.g. Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004), (b) social class bias exists (e.g. Smith, Li, Dykema, Hamlet, & Shellman, 2013; Smith, Mao, Perkins, & Ampuero, 2011), and (c) both clients and counselors with social class awareness are able to recognize when social class variables empower and/or hinder the counseling relationship (e.g. Balmforth, 2009; Thompson, Cole, & Nizarim, 2012). Scholars have identified significant information about social class, and how social class impacts the counseling relationship, yet none have tackled what comprises counselors' social class and SES understanding or awareness. Understanding involves how counselors conceptualize or make sense of social class and SES. Awareness includes counselors' values, beliefs, and worldviews about social class, and it includes both awareness of self (person-of-the-therapist) and awareness of others (e.g. clients).

Second, without studies to illustrate counselors' base-level social class and SES understanding and awareness, it is difficult to determine what strategies may work to fill gaps in counselors' social class awareness and understanding. Third, without these two components, it is difficult to develop or to teach counselors social class affirmative skills. Fourth, it is important to expand counselors' social class awareness, knowledge, and skills so they can counsel clients



more effectively. It is equally important, if not more important, to investigate social class awareness and to use research results to infuse social class awareness, knowledge, and skills into counselor education programs. As a result, counseling students will gain social class competence as they gain overall multicultural competence. Finally, a study of this kind can aid in the creation of quantitative measures to assess the social class awareness and knowledge of counselors and counselors-in-training. The current literature does not offer significant insight into counselors' social class and SES understanding and awareness, and therefore, at this time, it is impossible to identify salient constructs to create such measures.

### **Research Questions**

Because scholars have not examined counselors' social class understanding and awareness, qualitative methods are most appropriate in order to describe these phenomena (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). A semi-structured interview format allowed participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to their social class and SES awareness and understanding. The research questions for this study are as follows:

*How do counselors understand socioeconomic status (SES) and social class (SC)?*

*What awareness (Personal awareness [person-of-the-therapist] and other-awareness [clients]) do counselors have about SES/SC?*

### **Definitions**

There are a number of terms that contribute to what social class is and how it functions. I explain these terms in depth in chapter two, however an overview is provided here.

Socioeconomic status, social class, social stratification, class mobility, and classism, are defined below.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an objective, ranked system that designates individuals' economic value based on their income, education, and occupation (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Muntaner, Eaton, & Diala, 2000). SES is easily quantified, and it has the capacity to shift rapidly if individuals' income, education, or occupation changes.

Social class is a more subjective, yet often ranked term that integrates individuals' SES factors with the totality of attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact their personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s) (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Liu et al., 2004; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2013). Social class designations and identities are influenced often by social stratification, class mobility prospects, and classism. Further, social class experiences are difficult to quantify, and if SES variables shift, individuals may or may not identify as part of a different social class group.

Social stratification is society's hierarchical, layered structure, and how a society's valued resources are distributed within that structure (Beeghley, 2000). Social stratification is part and parcel to capitalistic societies, and so are the terms that denote class groups. When scholars mark social class levels, they use varied terms, and they designate varied numbers of class groups—and there are benefits and liabilities to each schema (e.g. Gilbert, 2002; Thompson & Hickey, 2005; Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1960). It was difficult to choose a schema congruent with the goals of this study that also included meaningful categories. Therefore, the social class designations used throughout these chapters are a modified schema based on the categorizations established by Warner, Meeker, & Eells (1960). These designations were chosen for the simplicity of its categories to promote ease of use. The six designations are: Upper-upper, lower-upper, upper middle, lower middle, upper-lower, and lower-lower social classes. Absent from

this list are categories that denote diverse *middle* class distinctions (e.g. upper, middle, and low), and I added those categories to my conceptualization (see Table 1.1). Although some nuance may be lost, I will use three social class designations: Low, middle, and high. This choice was made for ease of use, while at the same time acknowledging that great diversity exists in each of these categories.

**Table 1.1**

***Social Class Designations***

<b>Overarching Term Used</b>	<b>Class Designations Included in Each Overarching Term (adapted from Warner et al., 1960)</b>
Low Social Class (LSC)	Lower-Lower, Low, Upper-Lower
Middle Social Class (MSC)	Lower-Middle, Middle, Upper Middle
High Social Class (HSC)	Lower-Upper, Upper, Upper-Upper

Social stratification can be problematic. Aptly, Baker (1996) noted, “constructs like class are, themselves, part of the stratification they are used to explain” (p. 17). Smith (2005) concurred, “Class-related constructs are inherently problematic in that they are integral aspects of the stratification they purport to describe” (p. 687). Although *low*, *middle*, and *high* are used to delineate between social class groups, these terms are not meant to imply one group is better than another. Rather, these demarcations are rooted in individuals’ access to SES resources, they are indicative of the current phrasing used to understand different social class groups, and the hope is that they display the spectrum of social class categories. Baker (1996) made a valid point that “when the concept of class is reduced to income differentials, the factors which create a common culture or perspective are ignored, confounded, or obscured” (p. 18). This statement suggests that other terms need to be developed to explain social class differentiations, particularly terms that

do not imply judgment about the social class group described. Such a task is outside the scope of this project.

*Class mobility* refers to individuals' ability to move from one class status to another (Staton et al., 2012). Class mobility is often thought of solely in terms of upward mobility, but downward mobility exists as well.

*Classism* is discrimination, prejudice, oppression, or bias toward a person or group based on social class or SES (Pope & Arthur, 2009; Smith, 2005).

### **Delimitations**

The population examined as part of this study was licensed professional counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Participants were included in this study if they were (a) current, practicing counselors in a clinical mental health or private practice setting in the Commonwealth of Virginia, (b) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and (c) the number of years since they completed their counselor training program did not exceed 10 years. Participants were determined by using the Virginia LPC database, and contact information was ascertained from public internet websites (e.g. "find a therapist" sites, private practice websites) and the Virginia Counseling Association membership database. Additional recruitment criteria are discussed in chapter three.

### **Limitations**

Study limitations can be grouped into two categories: terminology and methodology. Terminology is a limiting factor in this study because there is no one agreed upon definition for social class (Best, 2005). Further, scholars and laypeople alike often use SES and social class interchangeably or imprecisely (Kurtz, 1966; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004). Therefore, it can be difficult

to know for sure what people mean when they talk about SES or social class. Yet the issues described above may also inform researchers about how to clarify social class definitions.

Methodology also limits this study in some ways. A qualitative approach is most appropriate to describe unexplored phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), and there are issues inherent to this methodological choice. First, the sample size will be small, relative to large scale, quantitative studies. Second, the sample will be comprised of LPCs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Both of these factors impact the ability to generalize this study's results. However, the results of this study may allow researchers to discern (a) whether counselors' social class and SES awareness and understanding display multicultural competence (b) whether more studies are warranted about counselors' social class awareness and understanding, (c) if this study should be replicated in different regions of the U.S., (d) if other methodological approaches may do a better job to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Third, the use of semi-structured interviews can affect data collection. It is important for interviews to be executed consistently, for appropriate rapport to be built with participants, and for participants to be empowered throughout the interview experience (Seidman, 2006). I worked to reduce these methodological liabilities as much as possible by conducting all of the interviews myself, keeping an audit trail and a reflection journal, and by using peer debriefers (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

### **Summary**

In chapter one, I provided a summary of multiculturalism and counseling, and its link to social class and counseling. I described the purpose of this study and, with that, the two research questions that guide this study. I gave an overview of pertinent definitions, and I explained the study's limitations.

In chapter two, I present a comprehensive literature review. Therein I thoroughly define terms and concepts inextricably linked to understanding social class, and I provide a definition of social class grounded in the literature. I outline and explain two theoretical frameworks: The Social Class Worldview Model (Liu, 2001) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (Liu, 2011). Finally, I review relevant research studies, and I clarify literature gaps that need to be addressed.

In chapter three, I provide the rationale for a qualitative, phenomenological study. I specify the research design, target participants, data collection methods, interview protocols, data analysis procedures, and trustworthiness. Further, I identify researcher assumptions, the role of the researcher, and the Critical Multicultural Research (McDowell & Fang, 2007) conceptual framework.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I explore the breadth and depth of *social class*. First, I define and investigate sociological concepts and relevant terms linked to the definition of social class. Second, I parse the definition of social class, and describe characteristics related to different social class groups. Third, I explain and analyze two theoretical frameworks, the Social Class Worldview Model (Liu, 2001) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (Liu, 2011). Finally, I review quantitative and qualitative research studies related to social class and counseling.

### What is Social Class?

In order to understand what social class is and how it functions, it is necessary to explain germane sociological concepts and related terms linked inextricably to the operational meaning and definition of social class. Specifically, *socioeconomic status (SES)*, *social stratification*, *social mobility*, *classism*, *bias*, and the notion of a “classless society” must be addressed because each contributes to particular social class definitions (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). It is complicated to define social class precisely because it is comprised of a conceptual confluence of ideas. The melding of these terms results in a multidimensional understanding of the complex phenomenon known as social class. Additional complications arise when scholars use the terms, *social class* and *SES* imprecisely, and when they use these terms interchangeably (Kurtz, 1966; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004). Further, scholars have used a plethora of terms to describe social class. Researchers (Liu, Ali, et al., 2004) found 480 different terms synonymous with social class via a content analysis of three counseling journals between 1981 and 2000. To describe the diversity, depth, and interplay of these terms, then, reduces confusion and enriches the theoretical and practical

understanding of social class. Thus, I define social class as the totality of attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact people's personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s). This definition grows out of the multiplicity of sociological and political influences discussed below.

### **Sociological Underpinnings: Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu**

Undeniably, how social class is understood today has been influenced significantly by sociology, particularly the contributions of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Pierre Bourdieu (Craib, 2002). In this section, I give a brief summary of Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu's concepts, applicable critique, and connections between theories, in order to establish a context for present day understandings of class in the U.S.

Marx understood social class in terms of the rank individuals held in society determined by their occupations. More specifically, persons' class status was directly related to their income and their relationship to that income, vis-à-vis the means of production (Marx, 2008a, 2008b). The concept, *means of production*, pointed to Marx's idea that for the most part, people fall into one of two stratified groups, the *bourgeoisie* and the *proletariat* (Marx, 2008b). In Marx's framework, the proletariat produced goods through manual, wage labor, while the bourgeoisie controlled the means of production, and in turn, controlled the proletariat. Marx acknowledged a pseudo-middle class group, the *petit bourgeoisie*, but posited that eventually, if the dichotomous, capitalist system remained intact, the *petit bourgeoisie* would be subsumed mostly into the proletariat, and a select few would join the bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels, 1992).

On the whole, Marx saw the capitalist system as fixed. The bourgeoisie maintained a system in which the proletariat was objectified, alienated beings, separated not only from the



things they produced, but also from their humanity and from other human beings, rendering them powerless in terms of upward mobility and increased class status (Marx, 2008a). If the system remained fixed, Marx saw no potential for any person to change his or her social status; the bourgeoisie remained rich and in power, and the proletariat remained poor and powerless.

Marx's answer to the stratified, capitalistic system of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was communism. The goal of communism was to institute a communally sound infrastructure in which all people did their part to produce what society needed, and in turn, all inhabitants' needs were met (Marx & Engels, 1992; Moore & Bruder, 1999). Communism is not about social mobility, nor is communism really about social equality. Marx's conceptualization of communism is more about human beings being connected to their humanity and connected to each other so that societal needs are met, creativity can flourish, and no *ruling class* (Marx, 2008c) is necessary. However, in order for communism to succeed, the proletariat must overthrow the bourgeoisie, a move that Marx (2008b) saw as entirely possible:

The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air. (p. 85)

This quote illustrates how the proletariat holds the power for social change. If the proletariat coalesced and overthrew the bourgeoisie, it would do so for the benefit of all society, not just for itself. Marx did not assert possibilities of social mobility, but rather focused on a social ratification in which all of society's needs would be met, and members would have the ability to be connected to others and themselves in a functional, life-giving way. In sum, for Marx, as long

as capitalism existed, the bourgeoisie would rule the proletariat, and a significant portion of society's needs would not be met.

Marx's theory is an important, foundational framework through which to understand social class. At first glance, for Marx, social class was certainly about SES factors of occupation, income, and education, which is similar to how many people in the U.S. understand social class today. However, Marx also brought concepts such as *power* and *privilege* to the forefront through the assertion that when power and privilege are wielded for the benefit of a few, everyone suffers. The result is total social separation. Indeed, Marx seemed to understand social class only in terms of SES variables, yet provocatively, he revealed the stark differences between dichotomous economic groups, and how all of society can be victimized by such a structure.

Weber's conceptualization of class structure was less rigid than Marx in terms of more possible class groups, and how social class is thought to function in society (Weber 2008a; Weber, 2008c). Weber defined social class as a collection of people who are similar in terms of their *class situation* (Weber, 2008c), with people's class situation determined by their *market value* and the *market situation* (Weber, 2008a). Therefore, a person's social class is determined by her or his market value—the person's skills, abilities, education, talents—and how that market value lines up with the demands of the market. Thus, class situation is not static. Hence, if an individual's market value increases in the same ways the market demands, a person can be upwardly mobile. Further, Weber differentiated between *statuses*, *parties*, and *classes*, and claimed one does not necessarily define the others. Statuses are divisions based on the social order, parties are separations based on the political order, and classes are divisions based on economics (Best, 2005). This perspective is a significant departure from Marx's theory of social class because Marx did not view upward mobility as a possibility, nor did he think upward

mobility should be a societal goal. Marx was concerned more with meeting human needs, and he longed for humans to be connected to *themselves* rather than to the products they constructed or to the status associated with upward mobility.

Weber's theory gives important insight into how class is understood in the U.S. today. For example, there is a significant class spectrum, and people's SES often fluctuates with their market value and the market situation. However, like Marx, Weber discussed class mainly in terms of three factors aligned with SES: education, income, and occupation. Although Weber considered status, parties, and classes, he asserted that these distinctions were not necessarily linked, and he failed to consider how these groups might overlap or have discrete ways of being in terms of worldviews or values based on SES determinants. An important question to ask about Weber's theory is, "How can persons with limited financial means, geographic restrictions, responsibility for children and/or aging parents, and underdeveloped self-efficacy due to their social situation increase their market value?" The belief that it is possible to increase one's market value exists, thus instilling a modicum of hope in those who comprise the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, yet in reality, the prospect of upward mobility is bleak (Sawhill & Morton, 2007). Weber spoke candidly about such limited mobility when he acknowledged the reality of open and closed relationships (Weber, 2008b). He seemed to understand that not all groups are open to all people. Nevertheless, he made the case for possible upward mobility, while knowing the likelihood of gaining entry and acceptance into a closed group was tenuous at best. Weber created an understanding of social class that was substantially more flexible and nuanced than Marx's theory. However, Weber's position on social mobility did not do justice in any realistic way to the significant barriers the vast majority of people have to overcome in order to increase their market value (Bradbury & Katz, 2002; Sawhill & Morton, 2007). This criticism

of upward mobility is particularly apropos to understanding social class in the U.S. today. There continues to be a persistent myth that if people just “work hard enough” or “dream big enough,” they can change their social class situation (Dollarhide, 2012). In fact, only a small percentage of Americans experience income mobility. In the 1990s, only 4.3% Americans in the two lowest economic quintiles experienced income mobility over a ten year period (Bradbury & Katz, 2002).

Bourdieu asserted the concept of the *habitus*, an organizational structure through which social class dispositions are understood and enacted in terms of culture, history, tastes, and lifestyles (Bourdieu, 2008). Class encompasses economic and cultural capital, and it is reflected by particular, socially conditioned *tastes*. These socially conditioned tastes (e.g. food, music, art) are homologous, meaning that people’s tastes are analogous to people’s genetic or historical connections (Bourdieu, 2008). Therefore, people are born into and socially conditioned as participants in one social class group or another.

In Bourdieu’s paradigm, people’s social class groups are fixed, and social class designations are based inherently on SES factors. However, Bourdieu’s notion of tastes indicates that he believed people in different social class groups had different preferences and ways of being. This idea was not addressed in either Marx or Weber’s class conceptualizations, and this concept can be interpreted to make a case for social class including other factors in addition to SES. Further, it is difficult to ascertain if social mobility is a possibility in Bourdieu’s theory because one might assume that someone who attempts upward mobility would be unlikely to succeed because of not being born into a higher class and thus, not being socially conditioned to the tastes of that higher class. The logical conclusion of Bourdieu’s theory is that people of lower social classes would not be interested in upward mobility because they did not have the trained

tastes to want it. Social stratification, then, is a necessary systemic component of Bourdieu's theory. Further, the exclusionary and inclusionary principles of social closure, a dynamic in which groups make concerted efforts to preserve their power by including some and excluding all others (Staton et al., 2012) is implicit in Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu did not apologize for his assumption of social stratification, nor did he make any recommendations as to how to address the limitations related to social stratification. Rather, he seemed to accept social stratification as a norm, and his theory appears to be a report of what society is, rather than what society should or could be.

Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu contributed significantly to how social class is understood currently in the U.S. Threads of the class understandings these sociologists posited are woven throughout common conceptualizations of social class, and the sharp distinctions between these theories give some insight into why there may be such varied beliefs about social class, and why there may be such reticence to address social class (Keller, 2005). Further, these theories illuminate a spectrum of beliefs about social class, possible ways social class can be interpreted as a force in people's lives, and how fluid *and* rigid social class can be. In sum, these theories introduced important concepts such as social mobility, social stratification, and class power and privilege, all of which converge in present day social class understandings.

### **Socioeconomic Status, Class Mobility, and Social Stratification**

In many cases, social class is reduced solely to discussions of SES because SES is discrete and measureable (Brown et al., 1996; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004.) Traditional, objective SES measures most commonly include income, education, and occupation (Brown et al., 1996; Muntaner et al., 2000). These factors are a "snapshot" of one's economic standing at a particular moment, and although these factors say something about what one has obtained, they do little to

describe how that individual actually lives or how she or he experiences the world based on her or his economic status. This is the main reason why *SES* cannot be used interchangeably with the term, *social class*.

Socioeconomic status is nonetheless a necessary component of social class. For example, economic resources often determine people's access to resources (e.g. educational opportunities, nutritional needs, housing), and in turn, these resources also contribute significantly to people's power and their privilege (Beeghley, 2000; Brown et al., 1996). Therefore, the more economic resources people have, the more opportunities, or life chances they have, and following, the fewer economic resources people have, the more limited their opportunities and life chances are. This statement is true particularly in capitalistic countries like the U.S. Succinctly, *capitalism* is an economic structure, and it is also a social structure, both dependent upon and undergirded by social stratification. *Social stratification* refers to a society's hierarchical, layered structure, and how a society's valued resources are distributed within that structure (Beeghley, 2000). Valued resources include SES factors of income, education, and occupation, as well as the aforementioned concepts of power and privilege. Imbedded in social stratification is the concept of class mobility. *Class mobility* refers most often to upward class mobility: one's ability to move from a lower social class group to a higher social class group (Staton et al., 2012). Class mobility works both upwardly and downwardly, and many more U.S. citizens experience downward mobility than upward mobility (Bradbury & Katz, 2002; Sawhill & Morton, 2007).

The types of capital individuals accrue are one way social stratification is reflected. Liu, Soleck, et al. (2004) explained that "in a capitalist environment, socialization is aimed at the accumulation of social class symbols and proxies" (p. 100). Liu, Soleck, et al. (2004) claimed in the Capital Accumulation Paradigm (CAP), that people choose and accrue capital they believe is

valued by their subjective social class group, and that capital reinforces their social class standing in particular environments. In the CAP model, capital falls in three categories: social, human, and cultural. Therefore, people's differential accumulation in terms of the types of capital they have and the amount of capital they possess sends specific messages to those both *inside* and *outside* of a social class group. Choices about capital, then, reflect values, beliefs, and worldviews about what and who is important. Inevitably, classism becomes a salient factor, and judgments are made about which social class groups' values are "right," and which ones are not (Liu, 2011; Liu et al., 2007; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004). The CAP begins to illuminate how people understand capital, and how they make choices concerning capital. However, it does not explain how they come to understand their social class, or the breadth of factors that influence that understanding.

One difficulty associated with determining people's social class based solely on SES is the temporal nature related to an SES framework (Liu, Soleck, et al. 2004). For example, from a position of temporality, one can assume people who are considered to be low social class (LSC) can increase their financial resources, and thus change their class status. Theoretically, it is possible for people from LSC to obtain greater financial resources. However, based on social stratification and the limitations associated with social mobility, it may not be realistic for them to sustain such resources or to move to a higher class group. Moreover, additional financial resources do not necessarily lead to a shift in social class status, because the simple accumulation of financial resources does not determine or necessarily change the attitudes, values, beliefs, and worldviews people from LSC may hold based on their class experience.

## **Classism and Bias**

Most simply, *classism* is a form of oppression, similar to other “-isms” (e.g. racism), based on social class and/or SES (Pope & Arthur, 2009; Smith, 2005). Liu (2011) identified four forms of classism: *downward, upward, lateral, and internalized*. The concept most germane to this investigation is that of downward classism. Downward classism occurs when people in higher classes discriminate against (explicitly or implicitly), or are oppressive toward people whom they perceive are in lower classes (Liu, 2011). Such behavior is the most common and obvious form of classism, and this form is usually implied when someone uses the term, classism.

Brown, Riepe, & Coffey (2005) stated that “classism results from the unequal and unearned privilege of those who have the power to discriminate” (p. 79). Such classism occurs frequently when people in a higher class group preference a *higher* class group’s resources, values, or worldviews over the resources, values, or worldviews over those of a lower class group. Particular emphasis is placed here on *higher* class group’s preferences rather than *lower* class groups because in U.S. society, individuals who are middle class and higher have the power and the privilege to discriminate against individuals who are lower class.

It is appropriate to pause and to consider what power and privilege are, and *who* is considered to have privilege and power in the U.S. Privilege is considered to be an unearned benefit based on qualities determined to be valued by the dominant culture (McIntosh, 1998). The dominant culture privileged in the U.S. includes people who are male, White, heterosexual (Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1998; Johnson, 2006), able-bodied (Johnson, 2006), Christian (Larson & Shady, 2012; Liu et al., 2007), and middle class (Liu et al., 2007). In many cases, privilege, especially unrecognized privilege, translates to power, and often, power over others (Johnson,



2006; McIntosh, 1998). For example, in U.S. culture, the dominant and “preferred” race is White. McIntosh (1998) stated she saw her White privilege “as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 148). Johnson (2006), too, noted how people in the dominant culture are “oblivious” to privilege, and do not see privilege as a “problem:” because (a) they do not recognize privilege exists; (b) they are not required to acknowledge privilege because they do not have to; (c) they think people “get what they deserve,” so they relinquish issues of privilege to being a “personal problem;” (d) they want to retain their privilege; (e) they may be prejudiced toward people who are different from them; and (e) they have deep fear of people who are different from them. In the U.S., social class privilege is afforded to people who are considered to be middle class (Liu et al., 2007). This can present significant issues if counselors, the majority of whom are middle class (Sue & Sue, 1977; Vontress 2011), are unaware of their privilege and counsel clients from different class groups.

Liu (2011) defined upward classism as “the prejudice and discrimination that occurs against those who are perceived to be in a higher class” (p. 200). Liu (2011) cited name-calling, jealousy, envy, and other prejudicial feelings on the part of people from LSC toward people from HSC as examples of upward classism. The plausibility of *upward classism* (Liu, 2011; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004) is called into question by Brown, Riepe, & Coffey’s (2005) definition of classism: “Classism results from the unequal and unearned privilege of those who have the power to discriminate” (p. 79). The problem with Liu’s use of the term, “upward classism,” is that people from LSC do not have the power and privilege to oppress people in higher social classes. Smith (2006) made an appropriate distinction between *prejudice* and *oppression*, in that everyone is capable of prejudiced thoughts and biases about one group or another, however, oppression goes

“beyond mere cognitions in that they are linked to real sociocultural power hierarchies that systematically privilege some groups while others are disadvantaged” (p. 339). Further, Smith (2005) stated, “Only dominant groups have the institutional and cultural power to enforce their prejudices via oppression” (p. 688). Classism is about one having the power to oppress another based on social class, and Liu’s (2011) conceptualization of upward classism does not meet this criteria.

Similarly, Liu’s (2011) assertion of lateral classism does not include a group who holds power and privilege over another group, nor the ability to use it to oppress them with that power. Liu (2011) defined lateral classism as the perception that one must “keep up” with others whom they perceive to be in the same class as they are, vis-à-vis material resources. Liu stated that when people experience lateral classism they are “constantly reminded of personal deficiencies that are not congruent with being in a certain social class group” (p. 200). By this definition, lateral classism is more a form of internalized classism, which Liu described as persons feeling anxious, frustrated, inadequate, and having a sense of dissonance associated with their social class group. These feelings may cause people to work harder to achieve what they believe to be “normal” in their class group, or such feelings may cause them to experience low self-worth or low-self esteem, and to believe they do not have any power to “fit in” with their class group. Liu may be correct that people experience both lateral classism and internalized classism, and the feelings associated with them. However, what Liu termed *lateral classism* and *internalized classism* are not necessarily forms of classism per se, because they lack the oppressive dimension present in downward classism. Other terms such as *class envy* or *class competition* or *class adequacy* may better capture what Liu called upward classism, lateral classism, or internalized classism respectively. It is important to parse and to understand Liu’s perspectives on social class

and classism because his scholarship dominates the social class and counseling literature. Liu has made significant contributions to the counseling field, and there are ways in which his scholarship can be nuanced to provide more accurate and applicable counseling and social class resources.

*Bias* is the preference, inclination, or prejudice for one thing or person over another. Essentially, classism could not exist without the presence of bias. Boysen (2010) made a distinction between *explicit* and *implicit* bias. Explicit biases are conscious, overt preferences within a person's awareness that can result in prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. Implicit biases are not consciously accessible. They are covert preferences, outside of a person's awareness, that can result in microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007), prejudice, discrimination, and oppression (Boysen, 2010). The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) Code of Ethics (Arredondo, et al., 1996) charged counselors to be aware of their biases so that they do not impose their values on clients. The AMCD Code of Ethics specifies that counselors be aware of their own cultural values and biases in terms of attitudes and beliefs, so they can develop awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with clients who are culturally different from them. Scholars (Foss & Generali, 2012; West-Olatunji & Gibson, 2012) acknowledged the vast majority of counselors have not been trained to examine their biases about social class, which may mean that counselors unintentionally or intentionally exhibit classism toward their clients.

Scholars noted that social class bias negatively affects the counselor/client relationship. Lott (2002) indicated that middle class people typically respond to people who are poor through cognitive and behavioral distancing. Lott (2002) stated that cognitive distancing takes two forms: ignoring social class and stereotyping. When people ignore issues of social class, they do so

mostly via social class isolation, meaning that their lives revolve around neighborhoods, businesses, and overall environments that do not include people who are poor. In terms of stereotypes, when people who are isolated from people who are poor, they tend to trust pervasive negative beliefs. Negative beliefs may include that people who are poor do not care for themselves, have low behavioral standards, and have negative personality characteristics, all of which are attributable to their own failings (Lott, 2002). Cognitive distancing, then, can lead to behavioral distancing. People who are poor may be excluded, either directly or indirectly, in individual interactions such as the counseling relationship, or they may experience group or institutional exclusion. Institutional exclusion can include restricted access to education (Liu & Ali, 2005), housing, health care, legal assistance, and public policy efforts (Lott, 2002). And when people who are poor or from LSC gain entrée into middle class arenas such as universities, often it is assumed that they “will aspire to becoming more like their middle-class counterparts in regards to behaviour (*sic*), attitudes, dress, language, and lifestyle” (Pearce, Down, & Moore, 2008, p. 267). This statement reflects the bias that everyone should strive to be middle class if they are not already. Certainly, counselors are a part of institutions, if only by virtue of their advanced educational degrees, and they are at significant risk for distancing themselves cognitively and emotionally from people who are LSC if they have not taken steps to examine and reduce their social class biases. Liu & Ali (2005) recommended that counselors recognize and work through their class biases, and with that, move past tendencies to idealize people who are poor (e.g. sentiments such as, “they are poor, but happy”).

### **The Myth of the Classless Society**

A discussion about social class in the U.S. is not complete without acknowledging the pervasive myth that the U.S. is a classless society. Proponents of this myth perpetuate the belief

that all people in the U. S. have equal access to resources and equal opportunity for financial and occupational advancement, and there are scholars who support this myth (e.g. Kingston, 2000). Other countries culturally similar to the U.S. such as Australia, England, and Finland have struggled with a similar classless mythos, and scholars (e.g. Dutton, 2010; Pearce et al., 2008; Ranchor, Bouma, & Sanderman, 1996) have worked to modify such beliefs because they mask the large inequities and the gap between rich and poor that exist in the U. S. and other western countries. Promoting the concept of a classless society enables those from the privileged high and middle classes to maintain prejudice and bias toward those from lower social classes.

Often times, the origins of the myth of the classless society are predicated on the seemingly ubiquitous U.S., middle class belief in the *American Dream*, rooted in the Protestant work ethic (Mirels & Garrett, 1971). The American Dream is the concept that all people in the U.S. can achieve economic wealth if they work hard enough (Dollarhide, 2012; Hanson & Zogby, 2010; Staton et al., 2012). This concept is similar to Weber's (2008a) notion of people being able to increase their market value and thus "move up" in social class standing.

Survey data collected by Pew Charitable Trusts revealed that in 2007, 67% of Americans ( $N = 35,556$ ) believe that people can get ahead if they work hard enough (Hanson & Zogby, 2010). The concept of the American Dream appears to carry hope for many, yet the grave facts about how few Americans who actually achieve social mobility (Bradbury & Katz, 2002; Sawhill & Morton, 2007) call the American Dream into question. An educational lesson plan for school aged children developed by the Library of Congress quoted The Declaration of Independence, and American Dream proponents such as James Truslow Adams and Thomas Wolfe, yet even they asked learners to consider whether all Americans could obtain the American Dream (Library of Congress, n.d.). On the whole, the American Dream is an

unrealistic, romantic notion attainable by only a few, and fuels significantly the erroneous notion that the U.S. is a classless society.

The crux of the argument to reject notions of the U.S. being a classless society is that “by generally accepting the assumption that the U.S. is classless, psychologists in science and practice have made invisible those who are not middle class” (Lott, 2002, p. 100). Research showed that when differences are perceived during early relationship stages, difficulties can arise quickly (Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008), and in the counseling context, clients who do not feel connected to their counselor do not return to counseling (Vontress, 2011). Therefore, when counselors, the majority of whom are middle class (Sue & Sue, 1977; Vontress 2011), have unexamined biases regarding social class and people who are not middle class, they are much more likely to ignore social class, rendering a part of clients’ culture “invisible.” Furthermore, they are much more likely to view clients who are LSC as “disorganized, inarticulate, apathetic, and insufficiently skilled to engage in or benefit from the therapeutic process” (Pope & Arthur, 2009, p. 57). Many of these issues arise from the belief that the U.S. is *classless*, and that social class is irrelevant. Counselor codes of ethics (e.g. ACA, 2005; AMCD, 2005) recommend counselors build their personal awareness, knowledge, and skills in order to provide culturally competent services. Further, the contact hypothesis states that meaningful, prolonged contact between people who are different from one another can reduce cultural misunderstandings and foster respect (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Hipolito-Delgado, Cook, Avrus, & Bonham, 2011). Indeed, there is hope that counselors can work more effectively with clients from multiple social class groups (Liu & Arruello, 2006).

### **Social Class: A Multidimensional Concept**

Major sociological contributions have been explained, and associated concepts such as SES, social stratification, social mobility, classism, bias, and the notion of a classless society, have been unpacked in order to establish and define concepts inextricably linked to the definition of social class. This helped describe the complexity of social class, which helps readers (a) to understand why social class is often excluded from the literature, (b) to comprehend why counselors may choose to “ignore” social class differences, (c) to realize the depth of social class, and why social class is important to clients’ worldviews, values, and ways of being. It is important to note that the focus on social class is not meant to trump or to negate other multicultural identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Constantine, 2002; Pearce et al., 2008). In fact, the intersections that often occur for people with multiple subordinate-group identities increases the likelihood of these persons experiencing heightened oppression. For example, Almqvist (1975) coined the term *double jeopardy* to capture the exponential increase in marginalization experienced by people when they have two non-dominant cultural identifications, such as African American women. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to distinguish “class issues” from issues related to other subordinate-group identities (Weeks & Lupfer, 2004), many of which result in *intersectional invisibility* (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Although researchers have begun to untangle the interaction between race and social class, the main focus of this study is on counselors’ awareness and understanding of social class in the therapeutic arena.

Thus far, the worldviews, values, and ways of being particular to different social class groups have not been explored. To discuss the differences of social class groups’ values, worldviews, and ways of being is a tenuous undertaking because doing so can lead to

stereotyping, “pigeon-holing,” and exacerbating previously held biases (Lee & Ramsey, 2006). There is no way that social class groups can be reduced to a list of discrete variables, nor would a list of discrete variables reveal the lived experiences of individuals, families, or peer groups. However, differences do exist, and it is worthwhile still to underscore some of the differences between social class groups in order to build counselors’ awareness and knowledge about how social class groups’ values, worldviews, and ways of being differ so that they might work more effectively with clients.

Bourdieu (2008) introduced the concept of tastes, and how tastes are distinctive within different classes groups. Similarly, Payne (2005) revealed the *hidden rules of social class*, which are the “unspoken cues and habits of a group” (p. 37) that dictate class groups’ particular ways of being, or tastes. Payne has received considerable criticism, particularly from academics, that her assertions were generalizations, ungrounded in empirical data (Dworin & Bomer, 2008; Tough, 2007); that she did not acknowledge institutionalized discrimination against people who are poor; and that her categorical hidden rules lead to stereotyping (Staton et al., 2012). These criticisms are important to consider, and certainly, they should not be taken lightly. However, it seems that Payne’s hidden rules among social class are nonetheless important to consider, and they should not be taken lightly because they uncover differences between social class groups that allow for counselors to understand class groups different from their own in a new way. Further, they allow counselors to ponder whether the rules listed for their own social class group coincides with their social class experiences. Undoubtedly, these rules should not be used to stereotype others, and Payne is clear on this point. Further, Payne’s use of the categories of *poverty*, *middle class*, and *wealth* hardly reflect the spectrum of social class diversity within each of these categories. For example, people who are working class, and people who are poor are



subsumed under the category of poverty. Arguably, evidence for Payne's hidden rules does exist, and through the exploration of literature that explicates social class differences, examples of such are given below.

**Table 2.1**

*Hidden Rules Among Classes (Payne, 1995, p. 42-43)*

	<b>Poverty</b>	<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>Wealth</b>
<b>Possessions</b>	People.	Things.	One-of -a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees.
<b>Money</b>	To be used, spent.	To be managed.	To be conserved, invested.
<b>Personality</b>	Is for entertainment. Sense of humor is highly valued.	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued.	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued.
<b>Social Emphasis</b>	Social inclusion of people he/she likes.	Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency.	Emphasis is on social exclusion.
<b>Clothing</b>	Clothing valued for individual style and expression of personality.	Clothing valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class. Label important.	Clothing valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.
<b>Time</b>	Present most important. Decisions made for moment based on feelings or survival.	Future most important. Decisions made against future ramifications.	Traditions and history, most important. Decisions made partially on basis of tradition and decorum.
<b>Education</b>	Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality.	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.
<b>Destiny</b>	Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance.	Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now.	Noblesse oblige.
<b>Language</b>	Casual register. Language is about survival.	Formal register. Language is about negotiation.	Formal register. Language is about networking.
<b>Family Structure</b>	Tends to be matriarchal.	Tends to be patriarchal.	Depends on who has money.

	<b>Poverty</b>	<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>Wealth</b>
<b>Worldview</b>	Sees world in terms of local setting	Sees world in terms of national setting.	Sees world in terms of international view.
<b>Love</b>	Love and acceptance conditional based upon whether individual is liked.	Love and acceptance conditional and based largely upon achievement.	Love and acceptance conditional and related to social standing and connections.
<b>Driving Forces</b>	Survival, relationships, entertainment.	Work, achievement.	Financial, political, social connections.
<b>Humor</b>	About people and sex.	About situations.	About social faux pas.

In addition to the hidden rules of class, Payne (2005), offered the idea of capital to include finances, emotions, mental abilities, spirituality, physical needs, support systems, relationships/role models, and *knowledge* of hidden rules (Biles, Mphande-Finn, & Stroud, 2012), and she challenged K-12 school personnel to examine these categories with regard to children's learning, behavior, and participation, and to create appropriate interventions for students who live in poverty. Biles et al. (2012) pointed out that children from LSC often receive a less rigorous education, have diminished access to academic resources (e.g. computers, school supplies), and are more likely to experience discrimination and reduced contact with teachers and administration than their middle social class (MSC) counterparts. Scholars (Farkas, 2003; Hochschild, 2003) noted student achievement is predicated on SES, educational opportunities, and inherent discrimination or *nested inequalities* (Hochschild, 2003), and their overall education is different from students who are MSC or HSC. Further, there is evidence that some school personnel and policy makers label students from LSC as "culturally and linguistically deficient" (Dudley-Marling & Lucs, 2009, p. 362), a designation that adds to educational inequality. Payne (2005) highlighted the aspect of differential language under the hidden rule entitled, Language.

Therefore, often times, because their language is different, students from low social class groups do not receive the same opportunities as students from MSC and HSC groups. Thus, when students from LSC groups graduate from high school, they have not received the same education as students from MSC and HSC groups, thus rendering them less prepared to pursue additional educational opportunities (e.g. college/university, technical college) or more advanced job opportunities (e.g. managerial or supervisory positions). How children are educated is just one difference between social class groups.

How children are raised is another difference between social class groups. Lareau (2011) conducted an observational study of 12 working class and middle class families, and found middle class parents introduced their children to the adult, MSC world through “concerted cultivation” (p. 2) indicated by highly structuring their children’s play and educational activities, as well as through teaching their children to engage with adults as equals. Working class parents did not engage in these behaviors, and they taught their children to “know their place” in their family and community environments, instilling a hierarchy of adults over children, and children were expected to create their own play activities. Lareau’s (2011) findings coincide with Payne’s (2005) hidden rules about how people in MSC and LSC often understand the categories of Social Emphasis and Time. According to Payne, the category, Social Emphasis, for people who are MSC “is on self-governance and self-sufficiency,” (p. 43) while for people who are LSC, it is on “social inclusion of people he/she likes” (p. 42). This emphasis is seen clearly in the values parents teach their children with regard to play activities. For people who are LSC, the present is most important in the hidden rule of Time. Decisions are “made for [the] moment based on feelings or survival” (p. 42). For people who are MSC, the future is most important, and decisions are made with the future in mind. This hidden rule is revealed by how children are

taught to interact with adults: Children who are LSC are seen in the moment as lower in terms of an adult-child hierarchy, while children who are MSC are taught with the future in mind, to act how adults act, and to interact with adults as if they are adults. Pronovost (1989) corroborated these notions of time, and added the ideas of freedom and autonomy associated with time. He noted that on the whole, people from LSC who are employed as hourly employees enjoy far less freedom and autonomy than people who are MSC and are salaried employees or who are self-employed.

Gillies (2006) also found differences in how children in LSC groups and children in MSC groups are raised, and there are important connections here to Payne's (2005) hidden rules. For example, parents in LSC groups reported giving treats to their children in the form of name brand clothing or fast food, while parents in MSC groups reported giving their children musical instruments or a trip to the museum. And although both social class groups reported feeling invested in their children's education, parents who were MSC advocated actively for and involved themselves in their children's schools and educational processes, while parents who were LSC felt overwhelmingly that their children's schools did not value their input, so they stayed at a distance (Gillies, 2006). These examples illuminate the hidden rules of Education and Destiny (Payne, 2005). According to Payne, for people who are LSC, Education is "valued and revered as abstract but not as reality," and for people who are MSC, it is "crucial for climbing [the] success ladder and making money" (p. 43). Because parents who are MSC believe education will lead to success and income, and because most likely they have gone through a similar educational process to be successful, they are motivated and empowered to involve themselves in their children's education. However, parents who are LSC may believe their children's education is important, and many parents may have had the same types of educational

experiences as their children, yet they do not realize schools are run by middle class rules (Lareau, 2011; Payne, 2005). What parents who are LSC do know is they feel unwelcome if they visit their children's schools because they are seen as being uninvested in their children's education (Gillies, 2006). Similarly, the hidden rule of Destiny plays an integral role in how much control parents who are MSC and LSC feel they have. Parents who are MSC believe in choice, and believe they can change the future with good choices now, while parents who are LSC believe in fate and are convinced they cannot do much to mitigate chance. There are clear differences in the sense of agency people who are LSC and MSC feel they have. When parents who are LSC have been taught to believe there is little they can do to change things, one can understand why they would choose not to spend the little time they have trying. A counselor who is MSC might quickly suggest to a client from LSC that she has the ability to make choices, and she should work with her child's school to get him the resources he needs. Yet this suggestion is a prime example of how a counselor might impose her social class values on her client. It may be appropriate to introduce her client to how a middle class system such as a school operates, but not before she explores her client's social class worldview that may go back for many generations.

Other examples of how social class differences may be revealed include the concept of work, and how the term, *work* for people from LSC groups is congruent with the term, *job*, versus how people from MSC correspond the term, *work* with the term, *career* (Kraus et al., 2012). Additional qualities of affective and behavioral class differences exist between MSC and LSC (Reay, 2005), and further examples are discussed in the review of relevant literature later in this chapter. However, again, differences between social class groups cannot be stereotyped, nor can they be ignored, particularly by counseling professionals. Reay (2005) stated social "class is

produced in a complex dynamic between classes with each class being the other's 'Other.' Class practices contain the very emotional dynamics that produce class relations as well as within-class practices themselves" (p. 923). This quote illustrates some of the complexity of understanding social class. When the concept of social class is combined with sociological understandings, the intricate concepts of SES, social stratification, social mobility, classism, bias, and the myth of the classless society, one can begin to grasp how social class values, worldviews, and ways of being are deeply ingrained in people's very beings. So what is social class? It is the totality of attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact people's personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) (Liu, 2001) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (SCWM-R) (Liu, 2011) are theoretical frameworks that provide a context for how counselors can understand social class. The SCWM is the major focus of this section, however, important aspects of the SCWM-R are discussed. When taken in their entirety, Liu (2001; 2011) offered the most comprehensive theoretical frameworks to date for understanding social class and counseling, and how the phenomenon of social class influences identity.

#### **Social Class Worldview Model**

The SCWM was created so that counselors could understand better how people interpret and make meaning of their thoughts, feelings, acutities, economic settings, and culture related to their social class understanding, worldviews, and experiences. The SCWM makes three assumptions: (a) social class functions at an individual, subjective level; (b) because social class

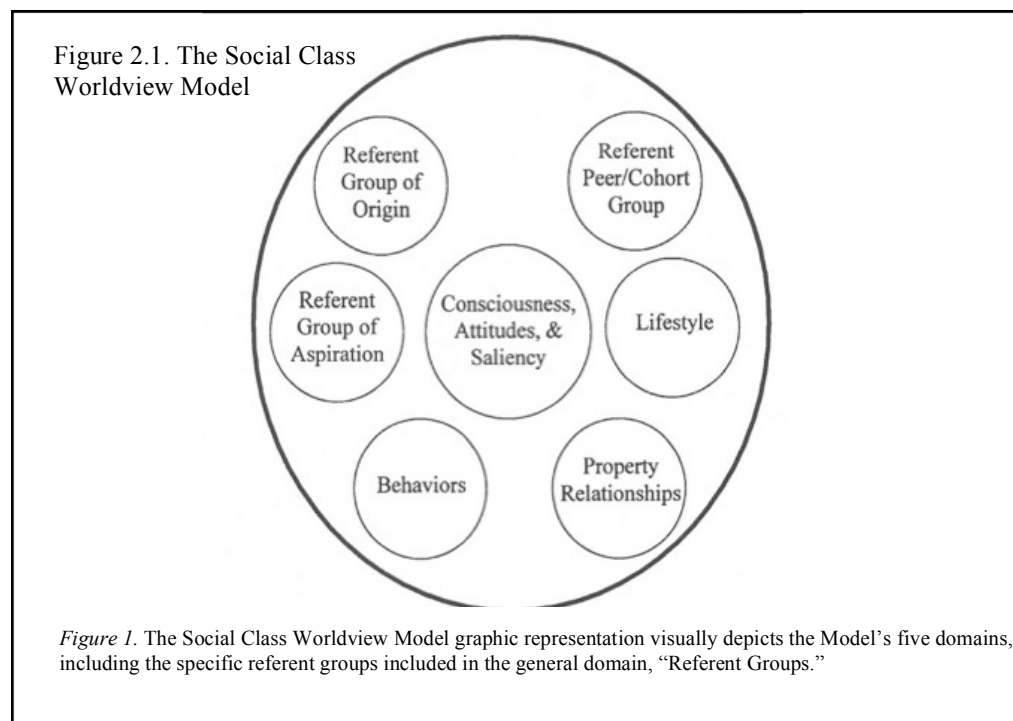
is individual and subjective, people's subjective social class experiences are the result of individuals' phenomenological perceptions of social class; (c) people do whatever possible to cope with their social class status, to maintain homeostasis and avoid dissonance, and to increase acquisition of valued social class capital. These assumptions inform the five domains that make up the SCWM: (a) *Consciousness, Attitudes, and Salience*; (b) *Referent Groups*; (c) *Property Relationships*; (d) *Lifestyle*; and (e) *Behaviors*.

The first domain, *Consciousness, Attitudes, and Salience*, points to the level of self-awareness and awareness of others within social class environments, and the degree to which people can communicate that awareness. *Consciousness* refers to one's awareness of belonging to a social class group, and how social class might influence one's life. In turn, *salience* concerns the degree to which social class is meaningful to a person, and *attitudes* are how individuals understand and appropriate social class thoughts, feelings, and values.

The second domain, *Referent Groups*, concerns three different social class groups: the group of origin, the peer/cohort group, and the group to which people aspire. Each of these groups teaches people what it means to be part of particular social class groups. The group of origin is most often an individual's family system, and those associated with that system. The peer/cohort group is indicative of one's most salient class characteristics, and serves as a social class success and failure "barometer." The group of aspiration is the group to which one desires to belong, and into which one works to gain entrée.

The third domain, *Property Relationships*, pertains to the "materials people value, use to define themselves, expect as a part of their worldview, and use to exclude others" (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004, p. 105). The emphasis in property relationships is on the *perceptions* people have about materialism, and how these perceptions meet interpersonal and emotional needs, and

concretizes their social class worldview. The fourth domain, Lifestyle, refers to how social class impacts the ways in which people spend their time, money, and resources. The fifth and final domain, Behaviors, points to socialized behaviors that are considered “normal” in a person’s social class group. Behaviors are learned directly through correction, and indirectly by modeling.



Liu (2001) provided a figure (see Figure 2.1) to “illustrate the relationship among the various domains” (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004, p. 106-107). The figure shows the SCWM domains, however, it does not address adequately the relationships between or among the domains Liu purports it does, nor does it reveal how an individual’s social class worldview vis-à-vis the five domains interact with other individuals’ social class worldview. Also, this figure leads one to assume that each factor has equal influence on the individual.

The figure needs to be refined so it captures the dynamic nature of the domains. These domains do not operate in isolation or independently from one another, and Liu does not address this dynamism adequately. Furthermore, Liu’s description of the SCWM focuses narrowly on the



individual, and neglects the communal aspects of social class experiences. To some degree, Liu's individual focus gives one the sense that social class experiences "happen to" individuals, rather than being experiences in which they participate, sometimes in isolation, sometimes in community. Additionally, an individual focus, or *rugged individualism*, is often viewed as a middle class value that many people from LSC do not have the luxury to embrace fully (Furr, Briggs, & Magus, 2012; Sturm & Slaughter, 2012). People who are LSC often have to rely on one another for a myriad of supports from childcare to emotional supports because they are unable to purchase outside services (Furr et al., 2012).

The SCWM provides a categorical understanding of social class, and encompasses the range of people's experiences with regard to social class, *within* social class groups. The domains provide a framework for conceptualizing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors based on social class factors. These domains are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they meant to create stereotypes about people in certain classes, or to imply that one's social class position is fixed or stable. Rather, these domains demonstrate the depth and dynamism of social class, and express how social class encompasses so much more than SES.

### **Social Class Worldview Model Revised**

Liu (2011) made helpful additions to the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (SCWM-R) that overcame some of the deficiencies of the SCWM. In the most significant modification, Liu expanded the discussion about external class forces, namely class socialization messages and classism. Additionally, Liu included a developmental element of Social Class and Classism Consciousness. The additions to the SCWM-R, how they add to understanding social class, and relevant implications and critique are discussed below.

Liu (2011) stated, “The SCWM-R is founded on the idea that the individual is an interactive participant with his/her social class and economic environment and that these social influences help shape the individual’s worldview” (p. 78). This statement is an important addition because in the SCWM, Liu was not explicit about the cooperative nature of social class worldview development. Further, a major criticism of the SCWM was it did not address adequately the communal aspects of social class worldview development, and it focused too narrowly on the individual. Although Liu still did not include communal social class experiences within the SCWM-R, it is notable that he acknowledged more concretely the fact that individuals are interactive participants with their social class environments, and social class values and worldviews do not develop in isolation. The communal aspects of social class are important because they concretize values, customs, and ways of being that do not occur outside of community. In fact, individuals who move from LSC to MSC or HSC express concern about being alienated from their social class group or losing their sense of cultural identity (Ivers & Downes, 2012; Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau, 2006).

Social Class and Classism Consciousness (SCCC) is Liu’s (2011) class developmental model, similar to Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 1993) or the White Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1992). The model reveals the stages of social class awareness and consciousness via *levels* and *statuses*. The SCCC has three levels: (1) no social class consciousness, (2) social class self-consciousness, and (3) social class consciousness. Within each level, there are several *statuses*. At each status, individuals examine their social class perceptions of self, peers, others, and society, and typically, ideological and practical shifts occur (see Table 2.1). When people experience the first level, no social class consciousness, they progress through the statuses of unawareness, status position saliency, and questioning. In the second level, social class self-

consciousness, people experience exploration and justification, despair, believe the world is just, and intellectualized anger and frustration. In the third level, social class consciousness, people experience reinvestment, engagement, and equilibration.

**Table 2.2**

*Social Class and Classism Consciousness Model (Liu, 2011, p. 89-93)*

<b>Status</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Self-Perception</b>	<b>Perception of Peers</b>	<b>Perception of Others</b>	<b>Perception of Society</b>
<b>No Social Class Consciousness Level</b>					
Unawareness	Social class is not a salient part of one's worldview. There is recognition of inequality, of rich and poor, but no real conceptualization of how social systems may work to create inequality. Overall there may be a belief in the myth of meritocracy and an acceptance of personal and other people's unqualified privileges and entitlements.	The self is an independent actor in the class system.	Peers are perceived to reflect and endorse the individual's worldview and are believed to share a similar unaware worldview.	Some recognition that there are higher and lower "others" but no acknowledgment that the individual is also part of a larger economic system.	The larger sociostructural system works neutrally. People get what they deserve. The individual believes that there are some unfair advantages but not so much as to unbalance the system.
Status Position Saliency	The individual recognizes people in higher and lower groups and is aware that he/she may belong to a social class group.	The individual generally sees him/herself as belonging to a social class group and begins to recognize the boundaries of his/her social class group.	Peers are part of the individual's social class group and the individual recognizes peers who may belong to other social class groups.	The individual perceives of multiple social class groups within which others belong, and these groups are stratified, but the individual is unclear what creates the hierarchy, stratification, or inequality.	The larger society is recognized to be composed of higher and lower social class groups, some of which deserve esteem and others derision.

<b>Status</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Self-Perception</b>	<b>Perception of Peers</b>	<b>Perception of Others</b>	<b>Perception of Society</b>
Questioning	The individual questions the role of social class in his/her life. The question may create anxieties and tensions related to how social class operates in the individual's life and the larger society.	Some dissonance about the individual's role in social class and inequality; generally unsure what social class and classism means, but some burgeoning recognition that social class exists and operates. The individual may also question how he/she came to his/her particular social class position.	Beginning sense that the individual and his/her cohort have certain social class boundaries that still seem diffuse and unclear and some recognition that the peer group has boundaries.	Steady recognition that there are social class in-groups and out-groups.	Still greatly unsure how the larger sociostructural system of social class operates but some sense that status considerations are important parts of one's experience.

#### **Social Class Self-Consciousness Level**

Exploration and Justification	The individual seeks out knowledge and experiences to answer these questions. The individual is primarily interested in finding support for previously held beliefs about how social class functions and the role it plays in his/her life.	The self is unsure and is vulnerable, but the individual is willing to explore answers that may support the already existing, albeit tenuous, worldview.	Peers and the cohort group are sought out for answers, but recognition that the peer group may be an unreliable source of information grows.	Other people are unreliable because they do not "understand" the individual's experiences and perspectives and are likely to challenge the individual too much.	A growing sense that society "must" be just and inequality "must" be a "natural" product of people's efforts.
Despair	The individual resigns him/herself to believing there is no escape from the current circumstances. For instance, an individual in poverty may believe he/she cannot move beyond his/her situation	The self is perceived as impotent against the current situation; the individual does not believe he/she possesses the skills to overcome his/her situation.	Peers are regarded in a similar situation and peers may be the target of anger if they try to deviate from (improve) their current situations.	People are not interested in helping you cope with the situation.	There are rich and poor and society is made to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

<b>Social Class Consciousness Level</b>					
<b>Status</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Self-Perception</b>	<b>Perception of Peers</b>	<b>Perception of Others</b>	<b>Perception of Society</b>
Reinvestment	The individual investigates social class, classism, and inequality again in his/her own personal life and explores how his/her actions impact others. The individual is interested in finding ways to understand social class in his/her own world.	The individual recognizes that he/she is engaged in unequal, unjust, and sometimes classist actions. The individual recognizes these actions as having negative impacts on others. He/she begins to connect individual behavior to possibly larger social problems.	The individual observes how peers also enact social class and classism. Peers are being evaluated on their social class consciousness.	Rather than focusing on society at large, the individual focuses on his/her surrounding environment. The individual's interest is the immediate context within which social class and classism are now enacted and how his/her individual behaviors may make an impact.	Society is recognized to be composed of smaller contexts. These smaller contexts are the ways in which society may be changed to be more equitable.
Engagement	The individual is actively involved in social class, inequality and poverty issues in his/her community. The individual is testing his/her developing awareness of being a socially classed person.	The individual recognizes the importance of being vigilant against inequality and that social class operates all around. The individual is intentional and deliberate about how he/she acts in certain contexts and is sensitive to social class differences.	New peer groups may be sought that reinforce this growing new consciousness. Dissonance and conflict may still exist as the individual shifts away from old friends to new networks. Anxiety may increase from these new experiences.	It is important to find ways to help people in one's community/ neighborhood. It is also important to support other causes against classism.	Society is largely unjust and classist and marginalizing of the poor and people from poverty. The whole of society cannot be changed immediately, but it is important to be part of or start a process of change.

<b>Status</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Self-Perception</b>	<b>Perception of Peers</b>	<b>Perception of Others</b>	<b>Perception of society</b>
Equilibration	The individual is able to complexly explore and understand the role of social class in his/her world. The individual struggles for equilibrium when trying to figure out issues of poverty/injustice.	The individual recognizes that he/she is constantly negotiating privilege and power, and there are some times and context in which he/she has and uses the privilege and others in which he/she does not or cannot exercise privilege.	The individual has multiple groups of friends and peers that reflect a complex understanding of social class. The individual has some ability to move between and within each of these groups.	The individual recognizes people in different strata and sees the privileges, power, and limits of each group. He/she recognizes the fluidity of these groups and how context changes the quality of each group.	Society is not an independent entity or organism outside the individual, and the individual can only make changes through constant vigilance in combating classism.

For the most part, the SCCC is a linear process, and one must, for example, move through the Unawareness status before proceeding to the Questioning status. However, people can and do fluctuate between levels and statuses, and “revisit” levels/phases at different developmental junctures. Liu (2011) posited that people who are most mature in their SCCC recognize the ability to use and benefit from different statuses when contexts and situations change. Liu did not elaborate on what situations or contexts may call for one to function in earlier social class development levels/phases.

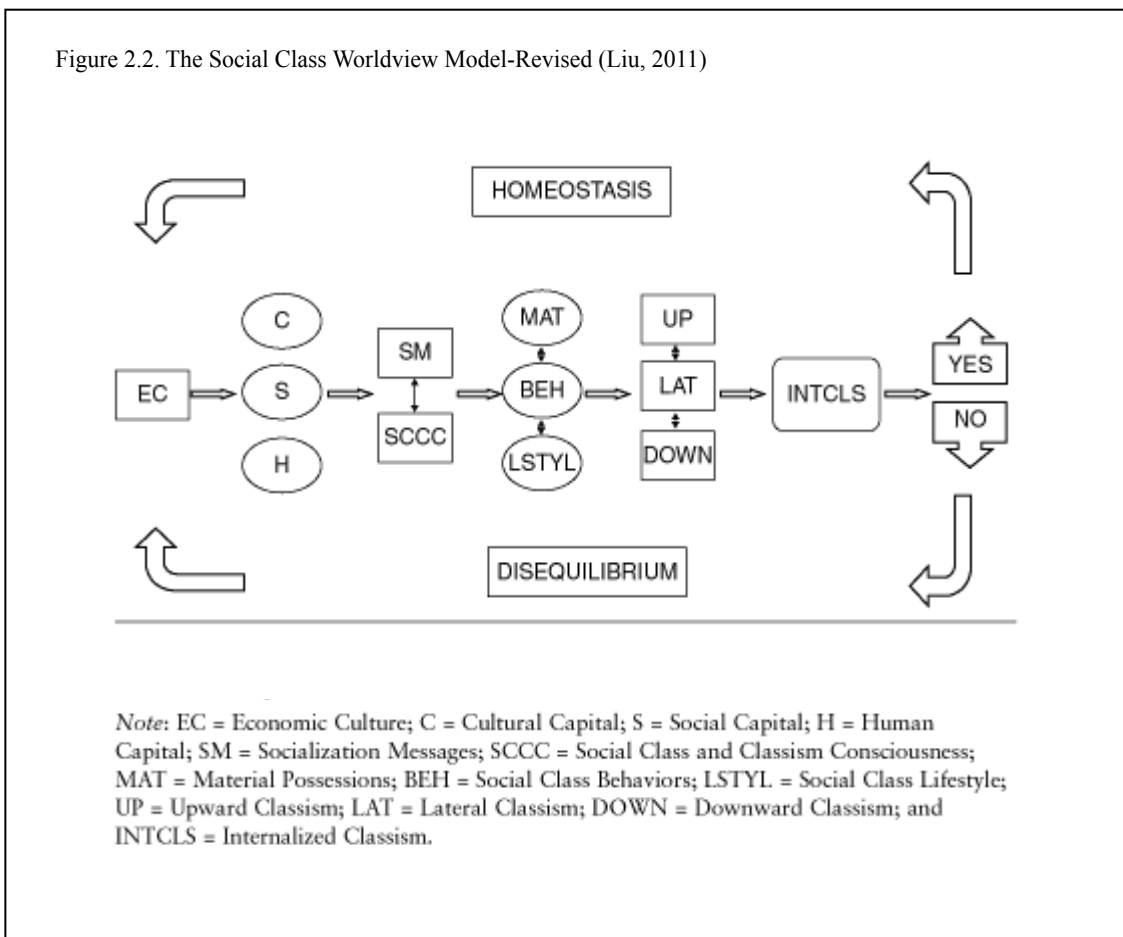
The SCCC is a significant contribution to the social class literature because it provides a framework to understand individual social class awareness development, and how that development intersects with one’s peers, others in society, and society as a whole. However, there are parts of the SCCC, as well as concepts missing from the SCCC that may be problematic. First, there is no mention of family, and how people view their families as they progress through the statuses. Families play a significant role in people’s social class development, and families are the first exposure people have to the norms and culture of their

social class group of origin (Heppner & Scott, 2004; Sherman & Harris, 2012). Second, Liu does not discuss how there may be differences in how individuals work through different levels/statuses based on the individual's lifespan development stage. There may be some very different reactions between persons who are 16 years old and those who are 44 years old when they enter the Questioning status. Third, some of the statuses seem more geared toward people who are MSC and HSC, and some of the statuses seem more oriented toward people who are LSC. For example, the Unawareness status seems to be aimed at people who are MSC and HSC because the privilege they have enables them to remain unaware of class. On the whole, people from LSC tend to have an incredibly strong sense of their social class status because of the classism they have experienced. The Despair status, then, seems to be directed toward people from LSC because of language such as, "Believing there is no escape from the current circumstances," and "Peers are regarded in a similar situation and peers may be the target of anger if they try to deviate from (improve) their current situations" (Liu, 2011, p. 91). Fourth, Liu did not explain adequately his descriptions for the statuses. For example, when Liu discussed the Equilibration status, examples might have proven helpful in order to understand the "times and context in which he/she has and uses the privilege and others in which he/she does not or cannot exercise privilege," or what Liu meant when he stated, "He/she recognizes the fluidity of these groups and how context changes the quality of each group" (p. 93). Fifth, Liu's use of hierarchy via statuses can be seen as problematic. Liu stated that the SCCC is "posited in a hierarchical order" because the model is about movement from "less sophistication . . . to more complexity" (p. 94). Movement is not the issue, but rather hierarchy in a developmental model. Hierarchy implies one developmental point is "better" than another. Development just "is," and to quantify and judge a developmental process is troublesome. Finally, to date, no qualitative or

quantitative studies exist regarding the application of the SCCC, so it is impossible to determine how or if it depicts accurately people's experiences.

The figure Liu (2011) created to depict the SCWM-R is inadequate, much like the figure for the SCWM (see Figure 2.2). The SCWM-R figure appears to be a linear process, and Liu does not represent visually the dynamism people experience. These experiences include people's everyday interactions as members of a particular social class group, what happens as people develop (or do not develop) in their SCCC, and the reactions people have to classism experiences. Liu contended when upward, lateral, or downward classism occurred, some people internalized that classism, and some people did not. The limitations of Liu's classism categorizations have been discussed above. Here the emphasis is on Liu's determinations of what happens when people do/do not internalize classism. Liu's figure illustrates the notions that if one internalizes classism, she or he experiences *homeostasis*; if one does not internalize classism, she or he experiences disequilibrium. Liu did not fully explain these concepts, giving only a few sentences to describe them. Further, he never used his own term, *homeostasis*, when he described the process, so it is unclear what he actually meant by *homeostasis*. It appears he meant *homeostasis* when he used the term *equilibrium*, because *equilibrium* is juxtaposed with *disequilibrium*. There is a serious deficit in his definition of this internalization process: "Overall, people are motivated by internalized classism to act in classist ways against others. That is, the person may perceive others as barriers to achieving a goal or preventing him or her from achieving equilibrium" (Liu, 2011, p. 95). This definition is problematic in a number of ways. First, Liu assumed when people experience classism, they in turn would become classist.





This claim is erroneous; Liu does not support this statement with literature or research, and it therefore, it cannot be taken as a generalizable claim. Second, people may or may not see others as barriers to their social class equilibrium. Many people who internalize classism believe *they* are at fault for their economic situations because consistently, they norm themselves against people from MSC groups (Pearce et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2011). Third, the idea of achieving or not achieving particular goals is based squarely in SES, which is an aspect of social class, and is only a small part of what people may experience when they internalize classism. Internalized classism, as with the other “isms” involves believing the social class group to which one belongs is somehow inherently wrong or inferior to other social class groups. These beliefs may lead

individuals either to try to change their class situation, or to “resigning” themselves to the class to which they belong because they do not see any way to change (Liu, 2011). The problem here is that the discussion is focused predominantly on economics, and does not address adequately the notions of values, customs, and ways of being associated with different class groups. As stated earlier, people can increase their economic holdings quite quickly, but it is a much slower process for them to alter their social class group lifestyle and values. In fact, some may never make these types of changes. Furthermore, Liu does not address the fact that people may try to *pass* (Brown et al., 2005) as a member of a social class group higher than the group to which they currently belong as a result of internalized classism.

It seems as if Liu (2001, 2011) wanted to create a universal theory of social class with both the SCWM and the SCWM-R applicable to the experiences of all people in all social class groups. Although this universal approach is a noble goal, it may be unrealistic. It is clear that Liu understood social class is more encompassing than SES. However, ultimately, when operationalizing his theory, he appeared to ignore the values, customs, interactions, and the overall *lived experience* of social class in favor of SES factors. To create a model that does not reduce social class to SES factors is a challenging undertaking, yet it is necessary. Although Liu’s models inform counselors’ awareness and knowledge about social class, these models come up short in terms of truly acknowledging the breadth and depth of social class. This deficit is the result of Liu’s claim that people are either meeting or not meeting their “social class goals” which amounts to whether people are meeting their SES goals. In the end, Liu returned to economic culture where the model began. Quite possibly, this model could add to counselors’ class bias and internalized classism because it makes the assumption all people want to be in a

social class group above the one in which they find themselves. Essentially, the covert message to persons from LSC is their current social class group is not “good enough.”

### **Social Class and the Counseling Literature**

As early as 1974, researchers began to address social class and counseling (e.g. Lorion, 1974; Pettit et al., 1974; Sladen, 1982; Sue & Sue, 1977), however, these ideas were not incorporated significantly for over three decades. Primarily through the analysis of medical and sociological literature, Liu (2001) brought social class into view in the counseling profession with his work, “Expanding our Understanding of Multiculturalism: Developing a Social Class Worldview Model.” Liu (2001; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004) developed the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) and the Social Class Worldview Model-Revised (SCWM-R), described in detail above. These models provided language to understand the complexity of social class that included socioeconomic status, but was not limited to socioeconomic status. After Liu’s publications, social class began to enter the counseling literature more often.

Recently, scholars have begun to develop social class and counseling literature that speaks to how social class impacts the counseling relationship. For instance, in a conceptual article about social influences on counseling, Vontress (2011) pointed out that although clients run the gamut of social differences, counselors tend to be middle class, and, subsequently, hold middle class values and worldviews. He stated further how elements such as the therapeutic setting, counselors’ traditional displays of empathy, the structure of counseling, mandatory client self-disclosure, counselors’ lack of personalism, and counselors’ communication style, often reflect middle class values and worldviews, and can hinder the therapeutic process for clients who are from lower class groups. Additionally, Kim and Cardemil (2012) shared their clinical experience with clients from LSC, and indicated counselors must “attend to social class issues in

an explicit and ongoing manner” (p. 29) with regard to social class assessment, the integration of social class into the therapeutic process, and attention to class differences between counselors and clients.

As discussed earlier, scholars have conceded that social class is difficult to define (e.g. Aronowitz, 2003; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2007), and therefore challenging to research and to develop prescriptions for social class conscious counseling practice. Indeed, definitions of social class range from the unidimensional concept of socioeconomic status to a more complex construct that includes a multidimensional expression of culture, including values, family meanings, attitudes, beliefs, practices and language (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2007). The latter description is emerging as a more comprehensive approach to understanding social class and the implications of it for effective counseling practice. Despite the complexity of the construct, researchers must continue their quest to understand, clarify, and prioritize social class as part of multicultural counseling competence.

### **Review of Related Studies**

If there were a plethora of literature on social class and counseling, I would have established a narrow set of criteria for studies to include in this review. However, compared with other areas of multicultural counseling research (e.g. race, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality), there are few research studies related to social class and counseling. Therefore, I established a very inclusive criteria such that the studies I reviewed in this section represent social class research from multiple disciplines, including counseling, psychology, medicine, sociology, and education. Based on this multi-disciplinary literature, I made appropriate extrapolations, interpretations, and links to counseling.

Relatively little is known about clients' and counselors' lived social class experiences, what teaching methods target counselors' social class awareness, knowledge, and skills, and the specific ways social class is salient in the counseling relationship. Thus, qualitative and quantitative studies were reviewed because each methodological type reveals different facets of social class, and their applicability to counseling research. Also, there is no uniformity with regard to how authors discussed social class. Some used the term *social class*, some used the term *SES*, while others used both terms interchangeably. As discussed earlier, the paucity of clear social class definitions is a common issue when exploring social class literature, therefore, in this review I retained the particular term the authors used in their study.

A number of authors focused solely on poverty, while others dichotomized their studies in terms of participants living either in poverty or in HSC. Certainly these studies contributed to the body of social class literature, and it is important to recognize that there are a significant number of voices missing in between the ends of the spectrum. This group includes people who are working classing, the vast range of people who consider themselves to be middle class, as well as people who identify with more than one social class group (e.g. a social class group of their family of origin and an adulthood social class group).

Significant research results revealed why social class is an important factor to include among cultural considerations within the counseling relationship. Three organizational categories provide structure and enhance understanding of the literature on social class: (a) social class as culture, (b) potential biases counselors may hold toward people from LSC, and (c) how social class impacts the therapeutic relationship, from the perspective of clients and counselors.

## **Social Class as Culture**

As the SCWM (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004) suggested, people from different social class groups have different values, worldviews, points of reference, and strengths. For example, Hoadley and Ensor (2009), through their qualitative case study of 8 teachers and 80 students, discovered that teachers who taught in a working class context prioritized students' personal development, as opposed to teachers who worked in a middle class context, who prized knowledge acquisition, subject knowledge, and overall student cognitive development. These findings are consistent with Lareau's (2011) observational and interview-based, long-term study with twelve working class and middle class families, who lived in or around Richmond, Virginia. She found that Black children raised in working class homes were more similar to White children raised in working class homes, than they were to Black children raised in middle class homes. The same comparisons were true for White children. The similarities were not due to race, but rather to social class norms, and the differences between class groups were most salient with regard to parental child rearing conceptualizations, and the function of the parent-child relationship. Lareau found middle class parents engaged in "concerted cultivation" (p.2) of their children marked by organized play activities, children being equal to adults, and the instillation of structural and social entitlement. Conversely, working class parents raised their children from the perspective of "accomplishment of natural growth" (p. 3), indicated by a dearth of organized play activities, a clear distinction between adults and children, and lessons about respect and how to "earn" a place in society. Both aforementioned studies revealed social class value differences, initiated by the family system, which indelibly impacted how children and adults viewed themselves, the world, and their interactions. Undoubtedly, these value differences affect adults and children who are working class or poor, because the United States operates from a middle

class paradigm with middle class rules (Lareau, 2011; Aronowitz, 2003). Because the vast majority of counselors are middle class (Sue & Sue, 1977; Vontress, 2011), counseling relationships, too, are governed often by middle class values (Kim & Cardemil, 2012; Vontress, 2011).

Social class experiences also can affect personality variables. Ranchor et al. (1996) conducted a quantitative study with 2663 men, aged 30-70 years, in the northern Netherlands, in order to understand the relationship between social class, personality, and social support from a health care perspective. Participants were contacted via mail, and they responded to a questionnaire that included participant demographics (education and occupation were used to determine social class), the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985; Sanderman, Eysenck & Arrindell, 1991), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Buss Durkee Hostility Inventory (Buss & Durkee, 1957), the Social Support List Perception (Van Sonderen, 1991), and the Maudsley Marital Questionnaire (Arrindell, Boelens & Lambert, 1983). The researchers discovered a negative correlation ( $r = -.036$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) between LSC and hostility subscales, particularly suspicion. This correlation was not present for men from high social class (HSC). Additionally, the researchers found a positive correlation between social class and social support system availability during stressful times. A limitation of this study was researchers used income and education to measure social class, which does not present a full picture of participants' social class. Despite this limitation, the results are particularly useful for counselors in terms of adding to their social class knowledge base. For example, clients from LSC may have higher levels of hostility, especially suspicion, than clients from MSC, and relationship building may look different. Or, clients from LSC may have support systems access issues that are different from clients who are HSC, particularly when they are

under stress and need those resources the most.

Kraus, Côté, and Keltner (2010) conducted a three-study quantitative research project ( $N = 387$ ) to ascertain whether people from LSC judge emotions more accurately than people from HSC. The results of all three studies revealed empathetic accuracy was higher for people from LSC than people from HSC (Study 1: LSC,  $M = 106.02$ , M/HSC,  $M = 99.40$ ; Study 2:  $r(104) = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Study 3: LSC,  $M = 27.08$ , HSC,  $M = 25.23$ ). These researchers, too, measured social class solely on the basis of income and education levels.

In Study 1, participants were adult-aged ( $M = 42$  years;  $SD = 11$ ) and part of the work force ( $n = 200$ ). They were administered the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002) to measure empathetic accuracy, and the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999) to measure agreeableness. Raw scores on the MSCEIT were converted to standardized scores with a mean of 100, and the IPIP was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very inaccurate*, 5 = *very accurate*). People from LSC displayed higher rates of empathetic accuracy than people from M/HSC (LSC,  $M = 106.02$ , M/HSC,  $M = 99.40$ ).

In study 2, participants were university students ( $n = 106$ ) who were divided into dyads, and interviewed by a researcher who simulated a mock job interview. After the interview, participants individually allocated a hypothetical \$5,000 reward between the members of the dyad, based on who they thought performed better during the interview, and they wrote down explanations for their choices. Also, participants assessed their familial social class using a subjective, 10-rung ladder self-assessment tool (1 = *lowest social class*, 10 = *highest social class*) (Alder, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009); they completed an agreeableness scale (Ten-Personality Inventory; 7-point Likert scaled, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7



= *strongly agree*) (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003); and they assessed their partner's and their own emotions during the mock interview by rating 20 positive and negative emotions on a 10-point Likert scale (0 = *no emotion*, 9 = *a great deal of emotion*). The combined results revealed an association between individuals from LSC and more accurate empathy,  $r(104) = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Study 3 involved university student participants ( $n = 81$ ) who, like in study 2, assessed their familial social class using a subjective, 10-rung ladder self-assessment tool (1 = *lowest social class*, 10 = *highest social class*) (Alder et al., 2000; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009), but this time, participants were instructed to write a hypothetical scenario about an interaction with a person at either the top or the bottom of the ladder. To measure empathetic accuracy, participants engaged in the Mind in the Eyes task (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001), which exposed participants to 36 facial photos, and they identified what emotion they believed was represented in the photo. For each correct answer, participants received one point ( $M = 26.18$ ,  $SD = 3.87$ ). Further, participants' agreeableness was measured via the 7-point Likert scaled (1 = *disagree strongly*, 7 = *agree strongly*) Big-Five Personality Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ). In this study, like the other two studies, participants from LSC showed greater empathy than participants from HSC (LSC,  $M = 27.08$ , HSC,  $M = 25.23$ ;  $F(1, 77) = 4.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These results were confirmed by further ANCOVA analysis,  $F(1, 74) = 4.48$ ,  $p < .05$ .

The authors posited that because people from LSC lack "resources and control," they rely on "external, social context to understand events in their lives" (p. 1721). Further, they claimed people from LSC "orient to other people to navigate their social environments" (p. 1721). The authors' research results are helpful for counselors because counselors' use of empathy and

rapport building must be particularly keen and genuine in order for clients from LSC to judge the therapeutic relationship as authentic and effective. However, there are issues with this study. First, the authors drew conclusions between studies with different sample types, two of which used university students. Second, the authors did not use uniform measures of social class or empathetic accuracy, which may indicate that results are not as similar as the authors posit they are. Third, the researchers' explanations about their findings may appear biased, and potentially damaging to clients, because they stated that people from LSC need others to help them to understand life events and their social environments, which seems to imply that people from LSC have limited autonomy and mental capabilities that make them incapable of fully functioning without taking cues from others. A worldview with those assumptions seems fraught with middle-class bias (Liu et al., 2007), and highly problematic.

Social class status can affect how individuals perceive themselves and their capabilities, especially when they compare themselves to people in other social class groups. Kudrna, Furnham, and Swami (2010) hypothesized that people from HSC would estimate higher self-assessed intelligence than people from LSC. They conducted a quantitative study ( $N = 343$ ) in which participants self-assessed their social class via the MacArthur Ladder of Subjective Social Class Status (Adler et al., 2000); they self-identified their intelligence by placing themselves on a normally distributed bell curve that displayed intelligence quotient scores (Furnham, 2001;  $M = 100$ ;  $SD = 15$ ); and they provided demographic information. The authors found that when social class identity is salient, people from HSC ( $n = 91$ ) assessed their intelligence as much higher than people from LSC ( $n = 71$ ) assessed their intelligence ( $M = 120.50$ ;  $SD = 15.22$  and  $M = 109.24$ ;  $SD = 15.87$ , respectively). These statistics are significant as compared to the control groups (no social class identity salience), which for HSC ( $n = 92$ ) was  $M = 114.48$ ;  $SD = 14.94$ ,

and for LSC ( $n = 89$ ) was  $M = 111.00$ ;  $SD = 12.35$ . The authors claimed the results were likely due to stereotype lift effects, and that people from HSC may have “inflated perceptions of their intelligence” (p. 863) not found in LSC groups.

Similarly, Ostrove and Long (2007) conducted survey research with 324 mid-western college students. The authors measured social class based on SES demographic collection; a 5-item measure that assessed participants’ access to resources (5-point scale, 1 = *did not have access to*, 5 = *had excellent access*) (Ostrove & Long, 2001); a 6-item measure created for this study that investigated participants’ concerns about money, friends, and time; a measure that “assessed each of the categories of ‘ease of life,’ ‘financial security,’ and ‘hours of work’ with a one-item measure” (p. 371) (5-point scale, 1 = *life was quite difficult*, 5 = *had a life of ease*); and a 5-item measure that assessed classism and exclusion (5-point scale, 1 = *never*, 5 = *many times*) (Langhout, Rosselli, and Feinstein, 2007). Sense of belonging at college and adjustment to college were measured using the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1999) and the College Self-Efficacy Instrument (CSEI) (Solberg, O’Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993).

The authors utilized linear regression analyses and mediation analyses, and found that a sense of belonging “mediates the positive relationship between objective class background and academic adjustment (Sobel  $z$ -value = 3.07,  $p < .01$ ), between objective class background and social adjustment (Sobel  $z$ -value = 3.16,  $p < .01$ ), between subjective class background and academic adjustment (Sobel  $z$ -value = 3.86,  $p < .001$ ), and between subjective class background and social adjustment (Sobel  $z$ -value = 4.02,  $p < .001$ )” (Ostrove & Long 2007, p. 378).

According to Ostrove and Long (2007), “social-class background was strongly related to a sense of belonging at college, which in turn predicted social and academic adjustment to college,

quality of experience at college, and academic performance” (p. 381). Therefore, social class has an indirect, rather than a direct effect on college outcomes. Whether students feel they have a sense of belonging is the indirect effect that leads to positive adjustment to college and college performance. The authors reported college students from LSC experienced consistent feelings of marginalization and alienation from their MSC and HSC peers, which could lead to poor college outcomes. In this case, much like the previous study, people’s perceptions of their relative societal rank strongly influenced their worldview, and, in the case of college students from LSC underrepresented in their college setting, their sense of being on the “outs” could negatively impact their desired trajectory and life goals. Although both studies had a smaller sample size that affects generalizability, the results allow counselors to understand how introjected, culture-bound messages about social class can affect deeply how clients understand their “place” in the world. And further, if counselors from MSC or higher are not aware of their social class position, they could unknowingly continue to impose middle class values and worldviews on their clients.

### **Social Class Bias**

ACA’s (2005) Code of Ethics states counselors must be “aware of their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and avoid imposing values inconsistent with counseling goals” (p. 4). As mentioned earlier, AMCD’s Code of Ethics takes ACA’s charge further, outlining *how* counselors avoid value imposition through personal identification of their values, beliefs, and behaviors (Arredondo et al., 1996). Each section of AMCD’s Code of Ethics utilizes three domains to operationalize multicultural competencies: (a) attitudes and beliefs, (b) knowledge, and (c) skills. The first competency is “counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases.” Scholars (e.g. Arredondo et al., 1996; Brinson, 2004) noted the difficulty counselors face with this competency, due to the varied nature of bias etiologies. However difficult, it is imperative

for counselors to cultivate awareness of their attitudes and beliefs so they can develop knowledge and skills, and serve their clients competently. The subsequent research studies illuminate biases counselors may hold about people from LSC, and indicate the possible origin of some biases.

Smith et al. (2011) investigated whether clients' social class presentation influenced counselors' therapeutic impressions, and whether counselors' just-world beliefs impacted their opinions about their clients. Participants ( $N = 193$ ) were clinical and counseling psychology graduate students at a large, urban northeastern U.S. university, the vast majority of whom reported being from MSC or higher (82%), and 17% of whom reported being from working class, LSC, or poverty backgrounds. Using four written case vignettes, each vignette represented an HSC, MSC, working class, or poverty class client, participants assessed the four hypothetical clients with the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale, Clinical Features Questionnaire (created for this study), and a session evaluation questionnaire (SEQ) (Stiles, 1980; Stiles & Snow, 1984; Stiles et al., 1994). Then, participants completed the Belief in a Just World Scale (BJW) (Dalbert, 1999). Although the sample was small, the results are highly relevant to the current investigation. Researchers found when participants had high BJW scores, which indicated strong belief that the world is just, or that people "get what they deserve," they believed clients who were working class or living in poverty were lower functioning, had more mental health symptoms, unfavorable clinical outcomes, and a higher probability of "less meaningful" clinical work with these populations. The authors stated:

Vignette condition did have a significant impact on CFQ scores for the high BJW group, however:  $F(3, 99) = 5.80, p < 0.01$ . Both Gabriel's procedure and Hochberg's GT2 indicated that significant group differences at the  $p < 0.01$  level existed between mean CFQ scores for participants in the poor ( $M = 43.58, SD = 10.01$ ) vignette condition

relative to both the middle-class ( $M = 34.86$ ,  $SD = 11.16$ ) and wealthy ( $M = 34.10$ ,  $SD = 10.18$ ) vignette conditions. (p. 21)

These findings are significant because they point to a potential source of bias for counselors—an entrenched, prejudicial belief that people’s social class status is inextricably linked to something they have done or failed to do. Research shows that this belief, though pervasive and ubiquitous throughout U.S. culture, is flawed and unfounded because upward economic mobility has more to do with the resources with which one is born, rather than how hard a person works (Sawhill & Morton, 2007; Staton et al., 2012). It is clear that U.S. beliefs/biases about economic mobility are not substantiated by economic facts, and if counselors are not aware of the beliefs/biases they hold about social class and economic mobility chances, there can be serious, negative implications for clients from LSC who receive mental health services from these counselors.

Smith et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the lived experiences of counselors who work with people in poverty. The researchers completed one-hour interviews with 10 participants, 9 of whom reported being from MSC or higher. The researchers analyzed the data via consensual qualitative research methods. Twelve domains were identified during analysis, five of which are germane to the current discussion of social class bias: Domain 1: Early Impressions of People in Poverty; Domain 3: Shifting Views; Domain 5: Clinicians’ Attributions for Clients’ Poverty; Domain 8: Personal Challenges in Working with Clients in Poverty; Domain 11: Observations of Public Attitudes Towards the Poor.

Domain 1, “Early Impressions of People in Poverty,” revealed some participants, prior to working with people in poverty, avoided people who were poor and/or held stereotypes about people from LSC. Common stereotypes participants reported were that people who are poor are “dirty, lazy, or violent” (Smith et al., 2013, p.141), and poverty causes mental illness. The

researchers discovered participants' views about people from LSC changed (domain 3, "Shifting Views") when they (1) were immersed in work with people who were poor and learned about the true realities of their lives, and (2) committed themselves to advocacy and public awareness efforts about people who are poor. Correspondingly, even after participants were invested in their work with people who were poor, domain 8 uncovered participants' difficulty distinguishing clients' psychological symptoms from symptoms that might be related to how poverty might be affecting the client.

Accordingly, participants did not agree about why people were poor. Domain 5, "Clinicians' Attributions for Clients' Poverty," revealed some participants' biases with responses such as the belief that people who are poor cannot hold a job, they cannot meet their basic needs, they have mental health issues, and that they do not have the ability to make good decisions. Ironically in domain 11, "Observations of Public Attitudes Towards the Poor," the majority of participants stated that, "society believes that poverty is the fault of the poor," (Smith et al., 2013, p. 145), yet the authors did not report whether participants were able to link their own beliefs and biases to overall U.S. cultural beliefs and norms. As scholars have noted (Arredondo et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 1999), counselors and researchers, like other professionals, tend to reflect the sociocultural environments in which they live.

Comparably, medical students also hold unconscious bias toward people from LSC. Because medical researchers are aware of the negative impact biases can have on health care assessments, treatment, and outcomes, Haider et al. (2007) sought to understand how frequently implicit biases occurred, and what influence these biases may have had on clinical assessments. Therefore, they administered two implicit association tests, one to measure racial preferences and one to measure social class preferences, along with eight clinical assessment vignettes to two

cohorts of new medical students ( $N = 211$ ) as they entered Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. The sample participants were between 21 and 26 years old, and about half of the sample was female (52%) and half was male (48%). The results for both implicit association tests showed that 69% of students preferred to work with White patients, and an overwhelming 86% of students preferred to work with patients from HSC. The interesting data from this study is the researchers did not find a significant relationship between students' implicit biases and their clinical assessments with patients from any social class group ( $r = -.04, p < .05$ ). These findings were not consistent with research findings from similar studies with physicians who were more experienced. The researchers offered an explanation: Younger students may have implicit preferences toward White, HSC people, *and* they may also have more multicultural education than older physicians. They also wondered if students' lack of medical practice experience allowed new students to have a kind of naïveté about medical practice, and they cautioned that simply because there was not a correlation between implicit association scores and clinical assessments, did not mean students would not make biased decisions. Because the sample size was small, retests with future incoming students may provide answers as to whether the results were typical. Additionally, a longitudinal study with the participants in this study could prove or disprove the authors' hypothesis about new students' naïveté, and whether their views change over time. This study pointed to how clinicians can have preferences and biases, yet not allow them to impact their work negatively. The potential challenge of applying the results of this study to the counseling profession is that counselors have more frequent and prolonged contact with clients in terms of session length and session frequency than most physicians do with patients. It seems, too, that the type of contact counselors have with clients may necessitate a different level of bias reduction.



Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) sought to understand how counselors reduced their biases, and became more multiculturally competent. The researchers surveyed 158 graduate students from ten U.S. counseling master's programs. One hundred twenty four (124) participants were female (78.5%), 34 were male (21.5%), and their ages ranged from 21 to 67 years ( $M = 34.26$ ,  $SD = 10.37$ ). The researchers administered four assessments: (a) Beliefs about Poverty Scale (Smith & Stone, 1989), (b) Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) (Ponterotto et al., 1995; Ponterotto, Potere, & Johansen, 2002), (c) Multicultural Social Desirability Scale (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey 1998), and (d) Multicultural Training Questionnaire (created for this study). Via forced-entry hierarchical regression analyses, the authors examined "the degree to which multicultural counseling training and racial attitudes served as predictors of attributions of poverty" (p. 265). They controlled for variables that previously demonstrated positive correlations such as general trainings, immersion experiences, and significant demographics. They found that "cognitive racial attitudes ( $B = .224$ ,  $SE B = .036$ ,  $\beta = .458$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the number of multicultural courses contributed a significant portion of the variance above and beyond other variables ( $B = .407$ ,  $SE B = .157$ ,  $\beta = .194$ ,  $p < .05$ ),  $F(4, 158) = 13.908$ ,  $p < .01$  (p. 266). Therefore, the more multicultural training students had, and the more sensitive their racial attitudes, the more likely they were to explain poverty in terms of structural inequality. Conversely, students who received limited multicultural training had less sensitive racial attitudes, and were more likely to explain poverty in terms of how individuals caused or contributed to their poverty. Interestingly, and unsurprisingly, based on the paucity of social class counseling literature, the researchers found students' racial and ethnic multicultural training was much more substantial than their social class training. The results from this study demonstrated the more multicultural training counselors have in terms of awareness, knowledge,

and skills, the more multiculturally competent they can be. These outcomes suggest more multicultural training focused on social class is warranted.

### **How Social Class Impacts the Counseling Relationship**

The following studies suggest that when clients and counselors have social class awareness, both groups are able to recognize when social class variables empower and/or hinder the counseling relationship.

Balmforth (2009) conducted a phenomenological qualitative study in order to understand the lived experience of clients who differ in social class from their counselors. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher interviewed seven participants for approximately 60 minutes. Six participants identified as working class, and had a counselor whom they perceived was middle class, and one participant identified as middle class, and had a counselor whom she perceived was working class. The researcher noted the seemingly imbalanced sample reflected the current demographics of counselors in the United Kingdom (U.K).

Through repetitive coding procedures similar to grounded theory analysis, the researcher found three themes. The first theme, "Clients' Feelings About Themselves," arose from multiple instances when participants from LSC stated they felt a sense of inferiority, discomfort, or inability to be themselves during counseling sessions. These feelings caused participants to feel shame about their social class backgrounds, to feel self-conscious about the way they dressed when they went to counseling sessions, and to be aware of how they spoke. However, the participant who identified as MSC did not report any of these findings. Seemingly, this participant reported feeling "'more in control' of sessions than the therapist" (Balmforth, 2009, p. 381).

The second theme, “Clients’ Feelings About the Therapist,” came from numerous codes in which participants from LSC indicated they felt misunderstood and controlled by the counselor. Participants stated they felt their counselors lacked awareness about their social class background, and at times, they felt disempowered or judged. Like the previous theme, the participant from MSC did not have the same experience as the other participants. She reported feeling she had a different background than her counselor, and did not feel disempowered by the experience.

The third theme, “Clients’ Feelings About the Therapeutic Relationship,” resulted from participants from LSC’s statements about not feeling a connection with their counselor because they felt an imbalance of power in the relationship. Participants stated social class was a “barrier” that made the relationship feel inequitable. In this instance, the participant from MSC agreed. Albeit in a different way, she, too, did not feel equality in the relationship, and as a result, she did not feel her counselor really understood her experience. This study highlights important counseling relationship features that, when absent, sabotage the therapeutic relationship. First, it seems rapport was never thoroughly established because participants felt inferior to and disempowered by their counselor. Second, participants did not feel understood by their counselor, and the counselor’s lack of empathy may have broken down what little relationship they did have. Third, social class was never discussed. There was no evidence in this study that counselors discussed differences with their clients as suggested by Day-Vines et al. (2007), who opined that broaching differences between counselors and clients is essential to effective cross-cultural counseling. It is important to acknowledge that this was a small qualitative study, and the findings reported here could have resulted from many factors other

than social class. Nevertheless, Balmforth (2009) opened the door for more in-depth research into the relationship between social class and counseling effectiveness.

Similarly, Thompson et al. (2012) found that when clients experienced their counselors as positive toward their social class group, they felt positive about their counseling experience, and conversely, when clients experienced their counselors as negative toward their social class group, they felt negatively about their counseling experience. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 participants from LSC who attended at least six counseling sessions. The researchers coded and analyzed data via grounded theory methods, and they identified positive therapist behaviors related to social class that led to positive client experiences, and less positive therapist behaviors related to social class that led to less positive client experiences. Positive therapist behaviors included counselors' explicit acknowledgement and broaching of counselor/client differences, counselors working to understand people in LSC's multilayered experiences, and utilizing holistic, culturally appropriate treatment measures. With that, participants stated that they felt connection, trust, and safety in the therapeutic relationship, which resulted in positive counseling outcomes (e.g. lower stress levels, increased self-esteem).

"Less positive" therapist behaviors were consistent with Balmforth's (2009) findings. Less positive therapist behaviors included counselors' failure to acknowledge or broach counselor/client differences, a lack of willingness to understand the multiple layers of people in LSCs' experiences, and a failure to utilize holistic, culturally appropriate treatment measures. As expected, participants reported feeling judged, disempowered, and shameful, which intensified relationship power differentials, and participants felt counseling was not helpful and/or not worth their effort. The authors of this study made it abundantly clear what is at stake when counselors

fail to address and integrate social class into counseling: clients feel disempowered, judged, and they will likely to end treatment, never to return again.

Ballinger and Wright (2007) sought to answer the question, “Does class count?” from counselors’ perspectives, via qualitative, co-operative inquiry research. Co-operative inquiry methodology is a “new paradigm” research strategy that intentionally brings together people who share a similar concern or worldview, so that they can understand and normalize their shared concern/worldview, and learn action strategies in order to enact change (Ballinger & Wright, 2007). Therefore the goal of this study was to bring counselors together who shared concerns about social class and counseling in the U.K. Twenty five people were contacted to participate in the study, and nine people chose to participate. The co-researchers (participants are called “co-researchers” in co-operative inquiry) met eight times over a nine-month period.

The data from these meetings were systematically collected, and eight themes emerged during data analysis: (1) visibility of class in counseling and counseling training, (2) the subjective experience of class, (3) class and identity, (4) class and mobility, (5) class, language and accent, (6) access to counseling and training, (7) counseling, class and politics, (8) the function of class. All eight themes are strikingly similar to clients’ concerns outlined in the two prior studies, and echo the finding of studies discussed throughout this literature review. Counselors’ social class awareness, knowledge, and skills need to be developed during their training programs, and integrated into their work with clients.

### **Summary**

Social class is a multilayered cultural concept with significant nuances, complexities, and meanings that impact people’s worldviews, values, and ways of being. In this chapter, I defined sociological concepts and relevant terms linked to how social class is understood, and I created a

working definition of social class grounded in the literature. In addition, I explained and critiqued the Social Class Worldview Model (Liu, 2001) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (Liu, 2011), and I reviewed research studies pertinent to social class and counseling.

There is a serious gap in the literature regarding how counselors understand social class. What awareness do counselors have about social class, as applied to themselves (person-of-the-therapist) and to their clients (“other” awareness)? What knowledge do they possess about social class and how it functions? In chapter three, I explain why qualitative methodology is appropriate for answering these questions.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

Over the last decade, counseling researchers have begun to explore social class and how it impacts the counseling relationship. Demonstrably absent from the literature is research about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge, two core components of multicultural competence (Arredondo et al., 1996). The purpose of this study was to describe counselors' social class understanding and awareness, and to answer the following research questions:

*How do counselors understand socioeconomic status (SES) and social class (SC)?*

*What awareness (Personal awareness [person-of-the-therapist] and other-awareness [clients]) do counselors have about SES/SC?*

These questions guided semi-structured interviews designed to understand how counselors' experience and understand social class and SES both in their professional and personal lives.

In this chapter, I outline the purpose of the study, underlying research assumptions, and the role of the researcher. Additionally, I describe the conceptual framework and methodology, including the research design, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

### Research Purpose

In order to discern appropriate research methods, Newman, Ridenour, Newman, and DeMarco (2003) suggested researchers consider thoughtfully and carefully, and subsequently outline clearly, their research purposes in addition to their research questions. They purported that “the research question is necessary but not sufficient to determine methodology” (p. 168), because research questions alone do not reflect the complexity of a research pursuit. The purpose of this study, revealed by the research questions, is to identify counselors' social class and SES understanding and awareness. The deeper, more complex purpose of this study is to determine

whether counselors' social class awareness and understanding are sufficiently developed. That would suggest that they are able to provide culturally competent and appropriate counseling services that acknowledge, integrate, and respect clients' social class worldviews, values, and experiences. Based on an extensive literature review, frequently social class is not the focus of multicultural counseling literature (Smith, 2008), which may mean counselors do not develop social class awareness, knowledge, and skills (Arredondo et al., 1996) as part of their multicultural education. An extended purpose of this study is to discern needed adjustments to counselor multicultural training programs so counselors will be competent to serve people from all social class groups. However, priority is placed on counselors' social class competence with clients from the varied groups that comprise low social class (LSC) because this population often has limited access to services, and fewer financial and time resources to try several counselors in order to find the right fit. This is consistent with other multicultural research, which focuses on groups that are historically underserved. To date, no research studies exist about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. In order to develop social class sensitive skills, it is imperative to understand first what social class awareness and knowledge counselors have so that second, any gaps in those areas can be filled before addressing skills. Without a foundation of social class awareness and knowledge, skill development is moot.

The purposes of this study are influenced significantly by researcher assumptions. Rossman and Rallis (2012) adapted the sociological typology paradigms of Burrell and Morgan (1979) as a reflection tool for researchers to identify their underlying research assumptions, and ascertain more clearly the purpose of their studies. These paradigms are situated on a continuum with polar viewpoints on either end, and assumptions can lie anywhere on the spectrum between the two poles. Two paradigms applicable to understanding this research study's purposes are



subjectivity/objectivity and status quo/radical change. The subjectivity/objectivity spectrum is related to “truth,” and the types of truth researchers are seeking. Researchers oriented on the subjective end of the spectrum seek truth in terms of contextual understandings. They use comparative logic, and they use themselves as a tool in their research. Researchers on the objective end of the spectrum pursue generalizable rules or laws, employ probability logic, and rely on instrumentation and statistics as the tools of their research. The status quo/radical change spectrum characterizes views of society and the social processes within society. Researchers positioned on the “status quo” end of the continuum believe society is predictable, fair, organized, and small changes to the system would result in it running more smoothly. Researchers located on the “radical change” end of the spectrum posit that society is unreliable, unjust, chaotic, and in need of significant transformation in order for the system to be more fair and balanced.

It is important to acknowledge both where the researcher and research purposes lie on these spectra because these assumptions shape the research design, and the ways data is collected and interpreted. I created a figure (see Figure 3.1) adapted from Rossman and Rallis (2012) to depict the similarities and differences between the two paradigms, and between the researcher and research purposes. In terms of objectivity/subjectivity, assumptions about both the research study and those of the researcher lie together at the subjective end of the spectrum. The purpose of this research study is to identify the subjective or *lived* social class experiences of participants, not to identify objective “truth” about social class. Similarly, I do not believe objective truth can be discovered, and I want to discover participants’ social class awareness and knowledge from their personal and professional perspectives.



assumptions are also based on my belief that a significant shift needs to take place in counselor training programs with regard to social class awareness, knowledge and skills.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In all research, and especially in qualitative research, it is necessary for researchers to identify their “positionality” or social location, so potential biases can be identified, and so researchers can apply reflexive rigor to their research pursuits (Newman et al., 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Further, researcher positionality descriptions allow research consumers to analyze qualitative research findings more thoroughly, and moreover, to understand researchers’ motivations and theoretical lenses. I recognize there are no “value free” research pursuits, and I acknowledge my social location, power, privilege, and my values, and the iterative process inherent to reducing bias in my research.

I am a counselor who serves couples, families, and individuals; a counseling supervisor; and a counselor educator who infuses multiculturalism into all aspects of my professional and personal life. Because of my professional identities, I acknowledge my emic perspective as I conducted interviews with people with whom I share a professional identity. I live solidly in a post-modern context, I operate from a social constructionist perspective, and I do not seek to find one ultimate truth about social class (Anderson, 1990; Gergen, 2000). Rather, as a social constructionist, I seek to identify the multiple, personal truths people have *constructed* about social class. Further, I want to understand the different lenses people use to view their worlds and create what truth is to them and which of those lenses were chosen intentionally, and which ones were introjected based on social location. I value deconstructing these lenses, and I acknowledge the benefits and liabilities of such.

I identify as a White woman raised in an upper-lower (Warner et al., 1960) social class environment, who has gained entrée into middle social class via education. I was raised in a geographic location that encompassed a vast spectrum of values and worldviews, many of which were in constant tension. I witnessed openness to diversity, yet often I observed oppression and dominance from higher social class persons toward people of color, undocumented workers, and people in lower social classes. This tension shaped my worldview indelibly because I occupied a social class position in the geographic area I lived in, equivalent to many people of color and undocumented workers, and they comprised my peer group. We were linked based on our social class. I acknowledge the power and privilege my race affords me, as well as my post-high school education, which includes two master's degrees and soon, a Ph.D.

Pearce et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study with college students who were working class, and one of their findings resonated with my desire to understand counselors' social class awareness and knowledge: "Students from working-class backgrounds seek the status and power afforded by middle-class occupations not for their own improved status but rather so they can work to improve the life chances of others from a similar class background" (p. 267). I, too, seek to use my power as an academic to bolster the life chances of others who come from a social class background similar to mine. My goal is to raise counselors' social class awareness and knowledge so they can develop culturally competent skills to work with clients from all social class backgrounds, but especially with clients from the varied groups that comprise LSC, and often have few choices about the mental health services they receive.

## Research Design

### Conceptual Framework

This study's research design was created through purposeful and thoughtful consideration of the study's purpose, the research questions under investigation, assumptions underlying the study, and the researcher's positionality. The conceptual framework for the research design is Critical Multicultural Research (CMR) (McDowell and Fang, 2007). CMR is defined by McDowell and Fang (2007) as "(a) informed by critical, feminist, and multicultural theories; (b) supportive of equity and inclusion; and (c) centered on the concerns of those inhabiting traditionally marginalized and oppressed social locations" (p. 551). CMR is a powerful conceptual framework because the confluence of its theoretical underpinnings undergirds research that seeks to critique social processes, while it supports "an interrogation of systems of thought and action that promote oppression, and a commitment to develop concrete strategies to reform social structures that maintain inequality" (p. 552). Currently, the counseling profession is predominantly a middle class enterprise, structured and postured to serve middle class clients (Vontress, 2011). Therefore, it is essential that equity, inclusion, and social justice define squarely the conceptual framework used to design this research study.

The goals of CMR include (a) amplification of marginalized voices, (b) interrogation of politics related to knowledge creation, (c) beneficence to research participants, (d) attendance to culture and context, application of diverse research strategies, and (e) vigilant researcher self-awareness. These goals fit nicely with the research questions and this study's purpose in several ways. First, this study's purpose is to highlight counselors' social class awareness and knowledge, and it is hypothesized that the majority of counselors have limited social class awareness and knowledge. Therefore, when research participants learn about social class as a

cultural construct during the interview process, it can impact their social class awareness and knowledge, and their work with clients in a positive way. Second, because often social class is not recognized as a salient cultural construct, clients from low social class may not be asked about their social class experiences, or worse, counselors may impose middle class values on their clients unknowingly because of their limited social class knowledge and awareness. Thus, narratives by clients from low social class may be silenced. Third, the basis of this study was to understand counselors' culture and context vis-à-vis their social class awareness and knowledge. Again, in order to enhance counselors' clinical skill set, it is paramount to understand first how much social class awareness and knowledge they have.

### **Study Design**

To date, there is a dearth of information about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. Therefore, a qualitative design was the most appropriate choice because the nature of this study was exploratory, and was meant simply to describe counselors' lived experience of social class awareness and knowledge. Specifically, I chose the phenomenological tradition because of its proven effectiveness to ascertain the lived experience of individuals who participate in a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Further, phenomenology "requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience a specific phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). This quote captures the breadth and texture I obtained through this study.

Quantitative methods were considered for this study however, they were deemed inappropriate for several reasons. First, quantitative methods do not allow researchers to capture the depth of participants' experiences in the same ways qualitative methods do. Second, the

purpose of this study was to explore the complex phenomenon of social class, and to uncover how participants' social class and SES awareness and understanding developed through their lived social class experiences. These experiences are best explained through participant narratives, and the gravity of participants' word choices are not accessible through quantitative assessments. Third, no meaningful quantitative measures exist that accurately depict participants' social class awareness and knowledge, particularly with regard to the counseling relationship. And finally, because multicultural training is ubiquitous in the majority of counselor education programs, social desirability is a salient concern. The process of reading questions and writing responses enables participants to "filter" their responses more carefully than if they are being interviewed, and simply asked to respond to questions. Also, face-to-face interviews allow the interviewer to see participants' body language, hear changes in their tone of voice, and to ask follow up questions based on these cues. Therefore for this study, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Licensed Professional Counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## **Procedures**

### **Participants**

Prior to any participant contact, I gained Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. All research procedures adhered to IRB procedures and the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2005). Sampling techniques were purposeful in order to identify participants who met the inclusion criteria. Participants were included in this study if they were (a) current, practicing counselors in a clinical mental health or private practice setting in the Commonwealth of Virginia, (b) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia, (c) the number of years since they completed their counselor training program did not exceed 10 years. Participants were not

included in this study if they do not meet the aforementioned criteria. The inclusion criteria were created so data will reflect social class and SES understanding and awareness of practicing counselors who have undergone the rigorous process of licensure. Further, the time limit of 10 years since degree completion was established for two reasons. First, although multicultural training was introduced more than 25 years ago (Arredondo et al., 1996), the integration of it into accredited counselor education programs took hold only about 10 years ago. This means many counselors trained more than 10 years ago may not have received thorough multicultural education. Second, to obtain counseling licensure in Virginia takes approximately 3 years, so if the time scope were shortened, it would have been difficult to recruit licensed participants. Also, participants were not included if they earned their counseling master's degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University or Radford University. This exclusion criterion was set in order to reduce potential social desirability based on participants' relationship or acquaintance with these universities, its faculties, or the researcher's relationship with these universities.

Participants were recruited using the Virginia LPC database in conjunction with the Virginia Counseling Association member database and various public internet information sources (e.g. private practice websites and "find a therapist" websites). Participants were contacted initially via email or phone (See Appendix B and C for recruitment scripts). During the initial contact, participants were asked screening questions to insure they met recruitment criteria. Further, participants were informed of the duration of the interview process, how their identifying information would be kept confidential, the ability to choose their own pseudonym to be used in published/presented research, required written consent procedures in order to participate, and their right to withdraw their consent at any time without penalty.



I began by culling through the Virginia LPC database to determine participants. All LPCs in Virginia totaled 3,627 through December 2012. I set up a spreadsheet of potential participants whose license date range fell between 2006 and 2012 ( $n=1342$ ). Then, I eliminated Virginia LPCs who did not live in Virginia ( $n=138$ ). I removed those who live in AK, AP, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WV. The total number of LPCs who were living in Virginia who were licensed between 2006 and 2012 was 1204.

The remaining 1204 potential participants were organized into six regions (Central, Northern Virginia, Southside, Southwest, Tidewater, Valley) based on the town listed in the licensure database. I decided to eliminate Northern Virginia because it is culturally very different from the rest of Virginia, and people in that region often hold licenses in more than one state because of its proximity to Maryland and Virginia. As a result of eliminating LPCs living in Northern Virginia ( $n=411$ ), the total number remaining was 793. Then, I began a search for possible participants' contact information. I searched for all potential participants who met the screening criteria using Google, the Virginia Counseling Association membership directory, Goodtherapy.com, PsychologyToday.com, NetworkTherapy.com, and LinkedIn. I also looked at health insurance websites such as Aetna, and did not find anyone listed. Other insurance companies' websites were password protected and available to members only.

In the Central region, there were a total of 276 eligible participants. I contacted 56 whose contact information was available. Of those, 14 responded to my inquiry of interest, 8 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 6 scheduled interview appointments. In the Southside region, there were a total of 59 eligible participants. I contacted 6 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my

inquiry of interest, 2 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none were left to schedule interview appointments. In the Southwest region, there were a total of 95 eligible participants. I contacted 7 whose contact information was available. Of those, 3 responded to my inquiry of interest, all were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher). In the Tidewater region, there were a total of 255 eligible participants. I contacted 41 whose contact information was available. Of those, 12 responded to my inquiry of interest, 9 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 3 scheduled interview appointments. In the Valley region, there were a total of 108 eligible participants. I contacted 21 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my inquiry of interest, 14 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none scheduled interview appointments. In sum, a total of 131 potential participants were contacted, 33 responded, 43 were eliminated, and 9 completed interviews.

In phenomenological studies, the number of participants is not predetermined. Participants were recruited and interviewed until the data was saturated, or until no new data emerged (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Interviews were coded initially after two interviews were completed. This procedure aided the researcher to know quickly when the data reached saturation.

### **Interviews and Data Collection**

Interviews were conducted in a confidential location, convenient for the participant, and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Participants were given a \$10 gift card to either Starbucks or Target as a, "Thank you," for their participation. Participants engaged in one interview session. Although some scholars suggested multiple interviews are most effective (e.g. Schuman, 1982),

Seidman (2006) noted there is no convincing evidence that multiple interviews are superior to single interview sessions, and the most rigorous interviews follow a rational process, are replicable, and well-documented. The interview protocol for this study met those criteria. Further, this study was an exploration of participants' current social class awareness and knowledge. Presumably, neither of these aspects would have changed significantly in a short period of time if an additional interview was added. If participants had additional information they wanted to add to what they stated during their interview, they had the opportunity to do so when they "member checked" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) their transcript.

Participants provided written consent (Appendix A) prior to interview commencement, and were given a copy of the consent forms for their records. During the consent process, participants chose a pseudonym, if they so desired; if not, a pseudonym was assigned to them. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription purposes, and video recorded for researcher review. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by a professional, secure transcription service. After the transcriptions were completed, the researcher reviewed the transcripts against the recorded material. Participants were invited to "member check" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) their transcript, and they were permitted to make additions and corrections to their transcript. Member checking, or participant validation, adds to the credibility and rigor of qualitative studies. Transcripts were emailed to participants within one week of their interview, and they were given a maximum of two weeks to comment on their interview transcript. Six out of nine participants chose to member check their transcripts. The researcher recorded field notes after each interview was completed in order to record contextual variables, insights, and reflections on the interview process. Field notes provide a "thick description" of events, and are necessary for "thick interpretations" of data, and aided the researcher in data analysis (Rossman and Rallis,

2012). All digital data was secure via encryption and password protection on a computer that is password protected, and inaccessible to users other than the researcher. All hard copy data is stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, inaccessible to others. In compliance with IRB regulations, signed consent forms and study codes are stored separately from other hard copy data, and data will be retained for a minimum of three years.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted following the interview protocol (Appendix D). The interview protocol was not a script per se, but rather an outline to guide the interview process. Interview questions were constructed as open-ended, and intentionally simple, yet meaningful (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Seidman, 2006). Participant demographics were collected during the interview process, and participants were not required to give written responses of any kind during the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is an interpretive enterprise that involves several steps to uncover categories, themes, and meanings (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Further, qualitative data analysis is an iterative process that necessitates researchers to review constantly and consistently a study's research questions, methods, and practices while concurrently being immersed in the data. This is so that any necessary modifications can be made to ensure sound research procedures. For example, adjustments may need to be made to interview questions if participants are consistently confused during the interview process, and it is important for the researcher to be able to flex with the participant to ensure clarity and a positive interview experience. Thus, research methods and data analysis methods are linked to each other, and were attended to consistently throughout the research study.

Data analysis for this research study included both inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive analyses were conducted so concepts, categories, and themes developed organically from the data. However, as much as the researcher can attempt to bracket prior social class knowledge, opinions, frameworks, and conceptualizations, it was impossible to ignore the influence prior knowledge had on this study. In fact, Rossman and Rallis (2012) noted that at times in qualitative approaches it is appropriate to draw connections between inductive concepts, categories, and themes derived from the data, and deductive concepts, categories, and themes nested in the literature. To do so shows links between counselors' social class awareness and knowledge already established in the literature in terms of how the general population understands social class. These connections are discussed more fully in chapters four, five and six where participant comments support concepts, categories and themes about the social class construct.

### **Coding**

Coding is a process through which researchers make sense of data and identify significant concepts, categories, and themes (Buckley, 2010). Concepts are data contingent ideas that can contain multiple themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), while categories are "general groupings of related concepts that help identify themes that emerge from the data" (Buckley, 2010, p. 121). As a single coder with peer reviewers, I coded the research data in several stages, and the coding process followed Strauss and Corbin's (1990; 1998) model of open, axial, and selective coding. These scholars are known for their contributions to grounded theory, and although this study did not presuppose grounded theory development, this coding procedure is rigorous, process oriented, and well-documented, making it an appropriate procedural choice for this study.

**Open coding.** Open coding was the first stage in the coding process. Open coding is a line-by-line, fluid process by which the researcher breaks down a unit of data analytically (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Holton, 2007). In this study, each interview was considered a unit of data. Open coding commenced after the first two interviews were completed. Open coding took place in pairs so the researcher was aware when the data became saturated. Saturation is achieved through constant comparison of data (Holton, 2007). Therefore, after two interviews were completed, open coding was initiated. During open coding, initial concepts emerged and were noted by underlining words and phrases, color notations, and then labeled with an *in vivo* code. *In vivo* codes are codes that use participants' words (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although electronic platforms exist (e.g. NVivo), I prefer the tactile, immersive nature associated with coding by hand, thus electronic coding software was not used for this study. Further, throughout the coding processes, I kept detailed notes of hypotheses, assumptions, biases, and reflections that developed while I was immersed in the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

**Axial coding.** The second coding stage is axial coding. Axial coding is “the process of relating categories to their subcategories,” and it is “termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 123). Therefore during axial coding, categories were formed based on the *in vivo* codes identified during open coding. *In vivo* codes were retained, and they were placed within overarching categories. Axial coding commenced when four interviews were completed because the researcher began to see categories and themes begin to emerge early in the interview process. Through constant comparison, categories and subcategories emerged, expanded, and contracted throughout the coding process. Because this is a phenomenological, descriptive study,

it was important to allow the data to “speak for itself” rather than impose meanings that may not be reflected in the data.

**Selective coding.** The third and final coding stage is selective coding. “Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories” (Corbin & Strauss, 1998, p. 143). In grounded theory, it is necessary to define a single, central category from which the grounded theory emerges. However, in a phenomenological study, more than one salient, central category surfaced that explained “central processes of the phenomenon of study” (Buckley, 2010, p. 124). Because social class is a complex concept, and because both understanding and awareness were being explored, multiple categories emerged. However, categories were not determined until after the data were collected and analyzed. After selective codes were determined, I reflected on social class and SES literature, particularly conceptual frameworks such as the Social Class Worldview Model (Liu, 2000) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (Liu, 2011) because these are the only two current conceptual frameworks the counseling profession has to understand social class.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is concerned with the use of ethical research practices that ensure research credibility. According to Rossman & Rallis (2012), trustworthy practice follows the standards of accepted research practice. Participants are respected and researchers are sensitive to the minutiae of their setting and topic. This study fit these ethical criteria because it strictly adhered to IRB protocols and ACA (2005) Code of Ethics. Further, I am a researcher committed to ethical practice as evidenced by following established, researched qualitative guidelines; obtaining participant informed consent; maintaining confidentiality; and upholding IRB ethical guidelines, as well as the ACA ethical guidelines that guide my professional practice.

Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated trustworthy qualitative studies are truthful, applicable, consistent, and neutral. All four of these areas were maintained during this study by using member checking, peer debriefing, and thorough documentation (field notes, reflection journal, and audit trail). Member checking ensured truthfulness, inasmuch as participants said what they wanted to say during the interview process, and that the transcriptionist accurately transcribed their verbalizations. Before transcripts were sent out to participants, the researcher listened to the recorded interview, and compared what she heard to the transcript to ensure the transcript was as accurate as possible.

Based on directives from Rossman and Rallis (2012), peer debriefers were an essential part of this study. Two outside professionals with qualitative research experience were recruited to help ensure truthfulness, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Each of the two peer debriefers employed open coding, using *in vivo* codes to review two different transcripts. This approach involved having each peer debriefer go line by line through the transcripts, developing her or his own codes as these codes emerged for them from the data. The purpose of this approach was for the debriefers to act independently in the coding procedure so their coding results could be compared to the researcher's coded transcript for consistency and accuracy. After the researcher completed axial and selective coding described above, the peer debriefers reviewed the categories, themes, and the codes within categories and themes to ensure accuracy. Also, peer debriefers helped process potential bias with the researcher in order to ensure trustworthiness, consistency, and applicability. For example, one peer debriefer offered an additional contextual lens related to the data regarding participant responses to questions related to the American Dream. She indicated it was possible that participants' immigration status and the length of time they had been living in the U.S. might influence their understanding and



appropriation of the American Dream construct. In sum, the peer debriefing process was a system of checks and balances created to increase researcher objectivity in a subjective methodology.

Documentation was used throughout the entire research process. All research activities were recorded via an audit trail. After each interview was completed, the researcher wrote field notes to provide context and description of the interview experience. Finally, the researcher kept a reflection journal that included thoughts and feelings connected to the research process, budding and developing hypotheses, as well as issues related to bias.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I have charted the methodological course to investigate counselors' social class awareness and knowledge via a qualitative, phenomenological study. I identified study and researcher assumptions, acknowledged my position as the researcher, and I explained the Critical Multicultural Research conceptual framework. Subsequently, I provided the research design, and explicated critical elements such as target participants, data collection methods, interview protocols, data analysis procedures, and assurances of trustworthiness. Through rigorous qualitative methods, this study will illuminate counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. The study's results can have far reaching implications, and can inform significantly future research directions. Further, it is predicted that the study's results will add to the knowledge base, provide recommendations to impact counselor education practices, and inform professional practice (Greene & Caracelli, 2003).

**Chapter Four**

**Article 1**

Describing Counselors' Social Class and Socioeconomic Status Understanding and Awareness

Jennifer M. Cook

### Abstract

Nine Licensed Professional Counselors participated in semi-structured interviews designed to illuminate their awareness and understanding of social class and socioeconomic status (SES). Four themes emerged related to social class, and three themes emerged related to SES. Participant social class and SES awareness and understanding was found to be limited, a potential clinical liability. Participants used “social class” and “SES” imprecisely or interchangeably, focused almost uniformly on finances, and none indicated social class was a significant cultural variable.

*Keywords:* social class, socioeconomic status, counseling

## Describing Counselors' Social Class and Socioeconomic Status Understanding and Awareness

Social class symbols are all around us: where we live, what we eat, how we speak, the clothes we wear (Payne, 2005), and how we raise our children (Lareau, 2011; Gillies, 2006). Through the years, popular culture, especially television, has created definitions for what different social class groups are like. Early television shows like *The Beverly Hillbillies* (Simon & Ransohoff, 1962-1971) depicted what happens when people who are poor gain entrée into upper social class. *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* (Jones, 1990-1996) showed what it is like to “class jump” (Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau, 2006), and how people of color in upper social class live. In 1988, Carsey and Werner, producers of *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992), brought a very different family into American homes with *Roseanne* (1988-1997), and normalized working class life. Later, with the advent of reality television, people in the United States became particularly privy to acute aspects of people’s social class experiences, most often representing dichotomies of class experiences (e.g. *Here Comes Honey Boo-Boo* [Lexton, Reddy, & Rogan, 2012-], *The Real House Wives of Orange County* [Dunlop, 2006-2013]).

Whether we know it or not, much of our lives are influenced by media images of social class combined with our social class groups, both our social class group(s) of origin, and the current social class group(s) to which we belong. Yet, in the United States, there is an overall reluctance to acknowledge how social class impacts people’s ways of being, to talk about how social class impacts people’s lives, and to recognize any class group outside of “middle class” exists (Staton, Evans, & Lucey, 2012; West-Olatunji & Gibson, 2012). Because of this reluctance, counselors and clients alike may possess limited social class and socioeconomic status (SES) understanding and awareness, which may affect their ability to acknowledge and validate social class and SES realities. The purpose of this article is to describe how counselors

understand social class and SES. In this article I review relevant literature, describe study methodology, present research findings, and offer implications for counseling and future research.

### **Literature Review**

As early as 1974, researchers began to address social class and counseling (e.g. Lorion, 1974; Pettit, Pettit, & Welkowitz, 1974; Sladen, 1982; Sue & Sue, 1977), however, these ideas were not incorporated significantly for over three decades. Primarily through the analysis of medical and sociological literature, Liu (2001) brought social class into view in the counseling profession in, “Expanding our Understanding of Multiculturalism: Developing a Social Class Worldview Model.” Liu (2001; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004) developed the Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) and the Social Class Worldview Model-Revised (SCWM-R). These models provided language to understand the complexity of social class that included SES, but was not limited to SES. After Liu’s publications, the social class construct began to enter counseling literature more frequently, yet research studies continue to be scarce.

Scholars have acknowledged that social class is difficult to define (e.g. Aronowitz, 2003; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2007), and therefore, it is challenging to research and to develop guidelines for conscious social class counseling practice. Indeed, definitions of social class range from the unidimensional concept of SES to a more complex construct that includes a multidimensional expression of culture, including values, family meanings, attitudes, beliefs, practices and language (Liu, Soleck, et al., 2007). The latter description is emerging as a more comprehensive approach to understanding social class as a cultural construct. Because of the construct’s complexity, researchers continue to research, explore, clarify, and explain social class and its implications for counseling.

*Socioeconomic status* is an objective, ranked system that designates individuals' economic value based on their income, education, and occupation (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Muntaner, Eaton, & Diala, 2000). SES is quantified easily, and it has the capacity to shift rapidly if individuals' income, education, or occupation changes. *Social class* is a more subjective, yet often ranked term, that integrates individuals' SES factors with the totality of attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact their personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s) (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Smith, 2006; Smith, Li, Dykema, Hamlet, & Shellman, 2013). Social class designations and identities are influenced often by social stratification, class mobility prospects, and classism. Further, social class experiences are difficult to quantify, and if SES variables change, individuals may or may not identify as part of a different social class group.

In many cases, social class is reduced solely to discussions of SES because SES is discrete and measureable (Brown et al., 1996; Liu, Ali et al., 2004.) Income, education and occupation are a "snapshot" of economic standing at a particular moment, and although these factors say something about what people have obtained, they do little to describe how they actually live or experience the world based on their economic status. This lived experience is the main reason why *SES* cannot be used interchangeably with the term, *social class*. In the counseling literature, some authors use the term *social class*, others use the term *SES*, while still others use both terms synonymously. Significant complications arise when scholars use the terms, *social class* and *SES* imprecisely or interchangeably (Kurtz, 1966; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004). Further, via a content analysis of three counseling journals between 1981 and 2000, researchers

(Liu, Ali, et al., 2004) found 480 different terms synonymous with social class. The paucity of clear social class definitions is a common issue when exploring social class literature, and such issues are reflected in this study's data.

SES is nonetheless a necessary component of social class. For example, often, economic resources determine people's access to resources (e.g. educational opportunities, nutritional needs, housing), and in turn, these resources contribute significantly to people's power and their privilege (Beeghley, 2000; Brown et al., 1996). Therefore, the more economic resources people have, the more opportunities or life chances they have, and conversely, the fewer economic resources people have, the more limited their opportunities and life chances are. This statement is true particularly in capitalistic countries like the U.S. *Capitalism* is an economic structure, and it is also a social structure, both dependent upon and undergirded by social stratification. *Social stratification* refers to a society's hierarchical, layered structure, and how a society's valued resources are distributed within that structure (Beeghley, 2000). Valued resources include SES factors of income, education, and occupation, as well as the aforementioned concepts of power and privilege. Imbedded in social stratification is the concept of class mobility. *Class mobility* refers most often to upward class mobility: one's ability to move from a lower social class group to a higher social class group (Staton et al., 2012). Class mobility is both upward and downward, and many more U.S. citizens experience downward rather than upward mobility (Bradbury & Katz, 2002; Sawhill & Morton, 2007).

The Social Class Worldview Model (SCWM) (Liu, 2001) and the Social Class Worldview Model Revised (SCWM-R) (Liu, 2011) are theoretical frameworks that provide a context for how counselors can understand social class. Liu created the SCWM and the SCWM-R so that counselors could understand better how people interpret and make meaning of their

thoughts, feelings, acuties, economic settings, and culture related to their social class understanding, worldviews, and experiences. Further, these models suggest that people from different social class groups have different values, worldviews, points of reference, and strengths. For example, Hoadley and Ensor (2009), in their qualitative case study of 8 teachers and 80 students, discovered teachers who taught in a working class context prioritized students' personal development, as opposed to teachers who worked in a middle class context, who prized knowledge acquisition, subject knowledge, and overall student cognitive development. These findings are consistent with Lareau's (2011) observational, interview-based, long-term study with 12 working class and middle class families, who lived in or around Richmond, Virginia. She found Black children raised in working class homes were more similar to White children raised in working class homes than they were to Black children raised in middle class homes. The same comparisons were true for White children. The similarities were not due to race, but rather to social class norms, and the differences between class groups were most salient with regard to parental child rearing conceptualizations, and the function of the parent-child relationship. Both studies revealed social class value differences, initiated by the family system, which made an indelible impact on how children and adults viewed themselves, the world, and their interactions.

Recently, scholars have begun to publish literature addressing how social class impacts the counseling relationship. For instance, in a conceptual article about social influences on counseling, Vontress (2011) pointed out that although clients run the gamut of social differences, counselors tend to be middle class, and, subsequently, hold middle class values and worldviews. He stated further how elements such as the therapeutic setting, counselors' traditional displays of empathy, the structure of counseling, mandatory client self-disclosure, counselors' lack of



personalism, and counselors' communication style, often reflect middle class values and worldviews, and can hinder the therapeutic process for clients from lower class groups. Additionally, Kim and Cardemil (2012) shared their clinical experience with clients from LSC, and indicated counselors must "attend to social class issues in an explicit and ongoing manner" (p. 29) with regard to social class assessment, the integration of social class into the therapeutic process, and attention to class differences between counselors and clients.

Ranchor, Bouma, and Sanderman (1996) found social class experiences could affect personality variables as well. They conducted a quantitative study with 2663 men, aged 30-70 years, in the northern Netherlands, in order to understand the relationship between social class, personality, and social support from a health care perspective. They discovered a negative correlation ( $r = -.036$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ) between low social class (LSC) and hostility subscales, particularly suspicion. This correlation was absent in men from high social class (HSC). Additionally, they found a positive correlation between social class and social support system availability during stressful times. One of the study's limitations was the use of income and education to measure social class, which did not present a full picture of participants' reality. Despite this limitation, results suggest clients from LSC may have higher levels of hostility, especially suspicion, than clients from middle social class (MSC), and relationship building may look different. Or, clients from LSC may have support systems access issues that are different from clients who are MSC or HSC, particularly when they are under stress and need those resources the most.

Kraus, Côté, and Keltner (2010) conducted a three-study quantitative research project ( $N = 387$ ) to ascertain whether people from LSC judge emotions more accurately than people from HSC. The results of all three studies revealed empathetic accuracy was higher for people from

LSC than people from HSC (Study 1: LSC,  $M = 106.02$ , M/HSC,  $M = 99.40$ ; Study 2:  $r(104) = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Study 3: LSC,  $M = 27.08$ , HSC,  $M = 25.23$ ). The authors posited that because people from LSC lack “resources and control,” they relied on “external, social context to understand events in their lives” (p. 1721). Further, they claimed people from LSC “orient to other people to navigate their social environments” (p. 1721). The authors’ research results are helpful for counselors because counselors’ use of empathy and rapport building must be particularly keen and genuine in order for clients from LSC to judge the therapeutic relationship as authentic and effective. These researchers, too, measured social class solely on the basis of income and education levels.

Social class status can affect how individuals perceive themselves and their capabilities, especially when they compare themselves to people in other social class groups. Kudrna, Furnham, and Swami (2010) hypothesized that people from HSC would estimate higher self-assessed intelligence than people from LSC. They conducted a quantitative study ( $N = 343$ ) in which participants self-assessed their social class via the MacArthur Ladder of Subjective Social Class Status (Adler et al., 2000). In addition to providing demographic information, they indicated their intelligence by placing themselves on a normally distributed bell curve that displayed intelligence quotient scores (Furnham, 2001;  $M = 100$ ;  $SD = 15$ ). The authors found that when social class identity is salient, people from HSC ( $n = 91$ ) assessed their intelligence as much higher than people from LSC ( $n = 71$ ) ( $M = 120.50$ ;  $SD = 15.22$  and  $M = 109.24$ ;  $SD = 15.87$ , respectively).

Similarly, Ostrove and Long (2007) conducted survey research with 324 mid-western college students. They measured social class based on SES demographic collection, participants’ access to resources, a 6-item measure created for this study that investigated participants’

concerns about money, friends, and time; a measure that “assessed each of the categories of ‘ease of life,’ ‘financial security,’ and ‘hours of work’ with a one-item measure” (p. 371); and a 5-item measure that assessed classism and exclusion (Langhout, Rosselli, and Feinstein, 2007). They measured sense of belonging at college and adjustment to college using the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker & Siryk, 1999) and the College Self-Efficacy Instrument (CSEI) (Solberg, O’Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993).

According to Ostrove and Long (2007), “social-class background was strongly related to a sense of belonging at college, which in turn predicted social and academic adjustment to college, quality of experience at college, and academic performance” (p. 381). Therefore, social class had an indirect, rather than a direct effect on college outcomes. The authors reported college students from LSC experienced consistent feelings of marginalization and alienation from their MSC and HSC peers, which could lead to poor college outcomes. Although both studies had a smaller sample size that affects generalizability, the results suggest to counselors that introjected, culture-bound messages about social class can affect deeply how clients understand their “place” in the world. And further, if counselors from MSC or higher are not aware of their social class position, they could unknowingly continue to impose middle class values and worldviews on their clients.

A review of the literature revealed social class is a salient cultural variable (e.g. Hoadley & Ensor, 2009; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004). Although, scholars have identified significant information about social class and how social class impacts individuals, none has tackled what comprises counselors’ social class understanding or awareness (e.g. values, beliefs, awareness, and worldviews about social class). The purpose of this study was to describe licensed professional counselors’ social class awareness and understanding via qualitative methods.

## **Methods**

There is a dearth of information about counselors' social class awareness and understanding. Therefore, a qualitative design was the most appropriate choice for this exploratory study. Specifically, I used the phenomenological tradition because phenomenology “requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience a specific phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Therefore, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with nine Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **Participants and Location**

I used purposeful sampling techniques to identify participants who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) current, practicing counselors in a clinical mental health or private practice setting in the Commonwealth of Virginia, (b) LPC in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and (c) graduate counselor training program completed no more than 10 years prior to participation. Participants were excluded if they earned their counseling master's degree from either of the two universities with which the researcher had a relationship. Licensed counselors were recruited because of the rigor and clinical experience required to become licensed. Additionally, it was deemed important narrow the focus of this study to counselors with a singular professional identity in order to understand results within a singular professional practice scope. Graduate counselor training was limited to no more than 10 years ago so that participants were likely to have received multicultural training in their master's program.

I recruited participants using the Virginia LPC database in addition to the Virginia Counseling Association member database, and various public internet information sources (e.g.

private practice websites and “find a therapist” websites). Initially, I contacted participants via email or phone and asked screening questions to insure they met recruitment criteria.

I began to work through the Virginia LPC database to determine participants. All LPCs in Virginia totaled 3,627 up through December 2012. I set up a spreadsheet of potential participants whose license date range fell between 2006 and 2012 ( $n=1342$ ). Then, I eliminated Virginia LPCs who did not live in Virginia ( $n=138$ ). I removed those who live in AK, AP, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WV. The total number of LPCs who were living in Virginia who were licensed between 2006 and 2012 was 1204.

The remaining 1204 potential participants were organized into six regions (Central, Northern Virginia, Southside, Southwest, Tidewater, Valley) based on the town listed in the licensure database. I decided to eliminate Northern Virginia because it is culturally very different from the rest of Virginia, and people in that region often hold licenses in more than one state because of its proximity to Maryland and Virginia. As a result of eliminating LPCs living in Northern Virginia ( $n=411$ ), the total number remaining was 793. I then began a search for possible participants' contact information. I searched for all potential participants who met the screening criteria using Google, the Virginia Counseling Association membership directory, Goodtherapy.com, PsychologyToday.com, NetworkTherapy.com, and LinkedIn. I also looked at health insurance websites such as Aetna, but did not find anyone listed. Other insurance companies' websites were password protected and available only to members.

In the Central region, there were a total of 276 eligible participants. I contacted 56 whose contact information was available. Of those, 14 responded to my inquiry of interest, 8 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 6

scheduled interview appointments. In the Southside region, there were a total of 59 eligible participants. I contacted 6 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my inquiry of interest, 2 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none were left to schedule interview appointments. In the Southwest region, there were a total of 95 eligible participants. I contacted 7 whose contact information was available. Of those, 3 responded to my inquiry of interest, all were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher). In the Tidewater region, there were a total of 255 eligible participants. I contacted 41 whose contact information was available. Of those, 12 responded to my inquiry of interest, 9 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 3 scheduled interview appointments. In the Valley region, there were a total of 108 eligible participants. I contacted 21 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my inquiry of interest, 14 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none scheduled interview appointments. In sum, a total of 131 potential participants were contacted, 33 responded, 43 were eliminated, and 9 completed interviews.

In phenomenological studies, the number of participants is not predetermined. Participants were recruited and interviewed until the data were saturated, or until no new data emerged (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). A total of nine counselors participated in this study. All participants identified as female, three identified as African American/Black and six identified as White. Participants' ages ranged from 32 to 59 years old, with a mean age of 39 years. All participants identified on the middle social class spectrum. Participants completed their counseling master's programs between 2004 and 2009, and eight graduated from CACREP accredited programs. All participants held an LPC and no other counseling licenses, and had

between five and 11 years of clinical experience. Seven participants worked in clinical mental health settings and two in private practice; three participants worked in rural environments, two in urban, two in suburban, one in a town, and one participant worked in both rural and urban environments.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

I obtained university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to any participant contact, and conducted all research procedures in accordance with IRB protocols and the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2005). Participants provided written consent prior to interview commencement, and were given a copy of the consent forms for their records. During the consent process, participants chose a pseudonym, if they so desired. If not, I assigned a pseudonym to them. I audio recorded interviews for transcription purposes, and video recorded for my review. After having the interviews transcribed, I reviewed them against the recorded material.

I conducted semi-structured interviews following the interview protocol (Appendix D), which was not a script per se, but rather an outline to guide the interview process. I constructed open-ended, and intentionally simple, yet meaningful interview questions (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Seidman, 2006). Although I listed “probes” in the interview protocol approved by Virginia Tech’s IRB that provided additional information to participants, I did not use these probes. Rather, I stayed with the open-ended questions, and used probes that elicited additional information but did not provide additional information. I made this choice when I conducted the first interview so I would not impose my definitions or views of social class or SES on the participants. I collected participant demographics during the interview process, and did not require participants to give written responses of any kind during the interview.

## **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, researchers must identify their “positionality” or social location, so potential biases can be identified, and so researchers can apply reflexive rigor to their research pursuits (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco Jr., 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Further, researcher positionality descriptions allow research consumers to analyze qualitative research findings more thoroughly, and moreover, to understand researchers’ motivations and theoretical lenses. I recognize there are no “value free” research pursuits, and I acknowledge my social location, power, privilege, and values, and the iterative process inherent to reducing bias in my research. I identify as a White woman, raised in an upper-lower (Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1960) social class environment, who has gained entrée into middle social class via education. I am a counselor who serves couples, families, and individuals; a counseling supervisor; and a counselor educator who infuses multiculturalism into all aspects of my professional and personal life. Because of my professional identities, I acknowledge my emic perspective as I conducted interviews with people with whom I share a professional identity. I live solidly in a post-modern context, I operate from a social constructionist perspective, and I do not seek to find one ultimate truth about social class (Anderson, 1990; Gergen, 2000). Rather, as a social constructionist, I seek to identify the multiple, personal truths people have *constructed* about social class.

## **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is an interpretive enterprise that involves several steps to uncover categories, themes, and meanings (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I began initial coding after two interviews were completed. This procedure aided me in knowing quickly when the data reached saturation. Further, throughout the coding processes, I



kept detailed notes of hypotheses, assumptions, biases, and reflections that developed while I was immersed in the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

As a single coder with peer reviewers, I coded the research data in several stages, following Corbin and Strauss's (1990; 1998) model of open, axial, and selective coding. Open, or initial coding, is a line-by-line, fluid process through which I broke down the units of data analytically (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Holton, 2007). In this study, I considered each interview a unit of data. During open coding, initial concepts emerged and I noted them by underlining words and phrases, making color notations, and labeling them with *in vivo* codes. During axial coding, I formed categories based on the *in vivo* codes identified during open coding. I retained *in vivo* codes and placed them within overarching categories. In the final stage, selective coding, multiple salient categories surfaced that explained "central processes of the phenomenon of study" (Buckley, 2010, p. 124) within the context of their relationship to the research questions.

### **Trustworthiness**

Techniques utilized to ensure research trustworthiness included member checking, peer debriefing, and consistent, thorough documentation. I invited participants to "member check" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) their transcripts, and allowed them to amend and add to their transcripts to aid clarity and accuracy. I emailed transcripts to participants within one week of their interviews, and gave them two weeks to check their interview transcripts. Six out of nine participants chose to member check their transcripts. I recruited two peer debriefers with qualitative research experience to review transcripts and ensure coding accuracy, to discuss emerging themes and research findings, and to process any potential bias in interview proceedings or data analysis. Each of the two peer debriefers employed open coding, using *in vivo* codes to review two different transcripts. This approach involved having each peer debriefer

go line by line through the transcripts, developing her or his own codes as these codes emerged for them from the data. The purpose of this approach was for the debriefers to act independently in the coding procedure so their coding results could be compared to the researcher's coded transcript for consistency and accuracy. After the researcher completed axial and selective coding described above, the peer debriefers reviewed the categories, themes, and the codes within categories and themes to ensure accuracy. Also, peer debriefers helped process potential bias with the researcher in order to ensure trustworthiness, consistency, and applicability. For example, one peer debriefer offered an additional contextual lens related to the data regarding participant responses to questions related to the American Dream. She indicated it was possible that participants' immigration status and the length of time they had been living in the U.S. might influence their understanding and appropriation of the American Dream construct. In sum, the peer debriefing process was a system of checks and balances created to increase researcher objectivity in a subjective methodology. I used their feedback to check myself on possible bias in the data interpretation.

I kept a detailed audit trail, and recorded field notes after I completed each interview in order to record contextual variables, insights, and reflections. Field notes provided a "thick description" of events, and data, and aided me in data analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

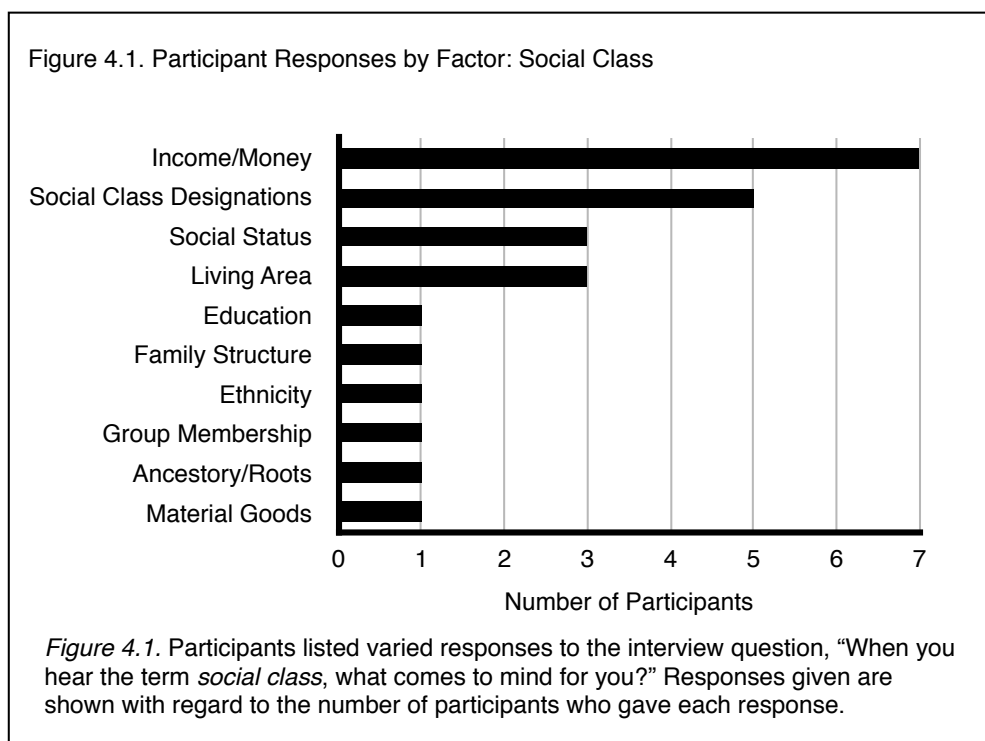
### **Findings**

In this section, I focus on the themes that emerged in response to the two research questions with regard to participants' awareness and understanding of the constructs of social class and SES. Four themes (income/money, social class group designations, social status, living area) emerged related to social class, and three themes (income, education, financial stability)

related to SES surfaced. Participant quotes illustrate each theme. Participants mentioned “factors” which, when taken together formed themes.

### Social Class

Participant responses varied greatly, both in terms of the number of factors they believed comprised social class, as well as the types of factors they believed contributed to what social class is. Participants listed from one to five factors to describe social class. Figure 1.1 depicts the range of factors participants gave. Three participants named only one factor that came to mind when they heard the term social class, four participants named two or three factors, while only two participants named five or six factors. Four themes emerged: income/money, social class designations, social status, and the places people live. Table 4.1 summarizes social class factors by participants.



The most common social class factor named by seven of the nine participants was income or money. One participant, Ruby Rose, stated income was the only factor she connected with social class:

Interviewer: What comes to mind for you when you hear the term social class?

Ruby Rose: Money.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything else?

Ruby Rose: That's really it. Money.

Ruby Rose was the only participant to cite money as the singular aspect of social class. More commonly, participants discussed income/money in addition to other factors. Another participant, Averie, mentioned income but acknowledged, further, that when she hears the term, *social class*:

I think about pockets or groups of people who are connected by status, whether it's working class, middle class, upper class . . . I think about the type of education someone may have had. I think about the type of environment they grew up in, in terms of where they raised in a suburban area, rural, or urban? I think about whether or not they grew up in a two-parent household or single parent. Whether or not they live with just their immediate family, or was there extended family that lived there as well?"

The next theme, and the second most common, reported by five participants, was social class designations associated with different social class groups (e.g. low social class, middle social class, and high social class). Paula noted, "The stratification of middle, upper, lower." Another participant, Christine, talked about social class designations, and tied those designations to income: "Generally with social class what comes to mind is poverty, rich, middle class. I'm looking at the financial levels." Christine named income or "financial levels" as the mediating

force between social class groups. Linda, a participant who also discussed class designations in terms of class stratification, stated, “I sort of connect it more to economics than anything.” Both Christine and Linda connected social class designations with income, while Paula was not as clear. For all three women, social class group designations captured what social class meant to them.

The third and fourth themes, each discussed by three different participants, were social status and the areas where people lived. Madison shared tentatively, “Money. Yeah, I guess prestige, status. I guess those are the main things.” Jane discussed social status in terms of how power is distributed across the social class spectrum:

The haves and have-nots basically . . . I think that there can be such a presumptuousness with those who have. The comfort level of blindness of the empowered versus the, ‘having to note everything’ of the disempowered. And I mean that as far as social status and income, both.

Participants talked about the places where people live related to social class. For example, Joan discussed the region in which people might live as well as the neighborhood of which people may be a part, while Averie noted suburban, rural, and urban as area differences that might be associated with social class. Sophie shared how she noticed a regional difference in the types of dwellings based on social class groups. She said in her current locale people who are poor live in trailers. She added, “Where I grew up, there would be trailer parks, but it was more . . . it was like retirement, it was more for elderly.”

Below is a table summarizing which participants offered which factors relative to their understanding and awareness of social class:

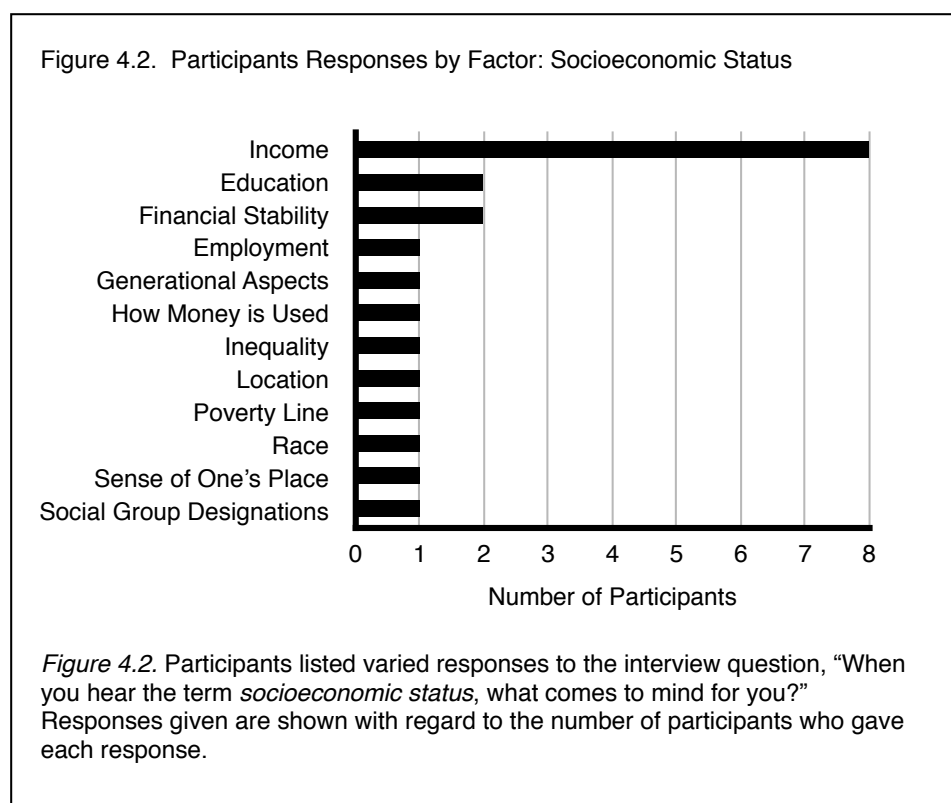
**Table 4.1*****Social Class Factor Responses by Participant***

Participant	Factors									
	Income/ Money	Social Class Designations	Social Status	Living Area	Education	Family Structure	Ethnicity	Group Membership	Ancestry/ Roots	Material Goods
1	X	X	X	X					X	X
2	X	X	X	X	X					
3	X							X		
4	X	X	X							
5	X					X	X			
6	X			X						
7		X								
8		X								
9	X									

**Socioeconomic Status**

Much like the responses given for the question about social class, the responses given for SES also varied greatly. Participants offered between one and five factors associated with SES. Two participants cited one factor, five participants named two factors, and one participant mentioned either three or five factors. Although 30 singular responses were given to capture SES, only one strong theme emerged: Income. There was participant overlap with two other concepts, financial stability and education, yet only two participants voiced each of these concepts. Regarding SES, participants were much more likely to disagree than agree in terms of what they believed comprised SES (see Figure 1.2).

All but one participant noted income as a factor related to SES. For Joan, income was the sole factor of SES. She said it was “Mostly how much money you are making,” while all other participants cited income in addition to other factors. For example, Jane mentioned income, and then parsed the concept further: “We can break it [SES] down. We could precise the terminology [sic] and think, what’s your background, your education? How does that contribute to your income?” Madison, too, named other factors: “Money. Location. And I have to say maybe even generational.”



For two participants education was part of SES, and two participants discussed financial stability as part of SES. Paula stated simply, “Education and money. Education and income,” and did not elaborate further. Jane, however, cited education in addition to income, financial stability, inequality, and race, and she spoke specifically to education as a “middle class opportunity”:

“The first thing I would think are those who don’t have middle class opportunities for education. That’s also culturally taught . . .”

Jane discussed financial stability in terms of financial difficulties, and what people who experience financial difficulties might feel: “. . . We have the fact that there’s many financial difficulties. There is a big difference with people who are trying to make basic ends meet, who feel irritable, feel stressed out, feel angry.” Averie, too, considered financial stability:

I look at whether or not you have someone who’s living paycheck to paycheck. Someone who’s able to comfortably pay all their bills, and then maybe, put some away. Someone who’s able to pay all of their bills, and put a lot away and still have plenty. I look at it that way.

Only one participant, Ruby Rose, discussed employment as part of SES. Ruby Rose stated, “Money. And then employment. Like employers type of thing. Yeah, like where people work, like if you worked at IBM or you worked at Apple versus if you worked at, you know, versus working at Wa-Wa [gas station/convenience store], that type of thing.”

Although some participants repeated factors such as income/money, education, or social class group designations when they discussed social class and SES, only one participant stated explicitly social class and SES are the same thing. When asked about what comes to mind when she hears the term, *socioeconomic status*, one participant, Christine, stated it is the same thing as what comes to mind when she thinks about social class: “Same thing. Same thing. I’m sorry.”

### **Discussion**

Social class is a complex concept that includes people’s attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact their personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s) (Kraus et al.,



2012; Liu et al., 2004; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2013). On the whole, participants' awareness and understanding of social class were confined primarily to the economic realm or to factors that contained some association with income. For example, high, middle or low social status is, in part, determined by finances, as are social status and living areas. Even though only one participant, Ruby Rose, indicated "money" was the sole factor associated with social class, seven of the nine participants (including Ruby Rose) mentioned income or money when they heard the term "social class." Income and monetary resources are an important part of social class, and they impact how people's worldviews, values, beliefs, and attitudes may develop. The construct of social class is rich and multi-dimensional. Therefore, the notion of financial resources only begins to describe people's lived experience of social class. Granted, the participants were asked to speak about a complex construct in an interview setting and their responses were spontaneous, with an almost "stream of consciousness" style. That said, none of the participants indicated they considered varied worldviews, values, attitudes, or behaviors, when they heard the term, *social class*. Interestingly, many participants were able to *describe* interactions or experiences the researcher would label as related to social class worldviews, behaviors, or attitudes, but participants did not make those links or connections or *name* what they described as social class. The question associated with this observation is, "If participants lack social class awareness and understanding in the interview context, how does their existing degree of awareness and understanding affect their work with clients?" As a result of their limited awareness and understanding, it is possible that counselors may unintentionally impose middle class values on their clients, and inadvertently reject client worldviews that deviate from middle social class norms.

Social class is a viable, cultural construct that is broader than SES, and impacts clients' lives much like race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion/spirituality. The focus on social class is not meant to trump or to negate other multicultural identities (Constantine, 2002; Pearce, Down, & Moore, 2008). In fact, the intersections that often occur for people with multiple non-dominant-group identities increase the likelihood that these persons will experience heightened marginalization (Crenshaw, 1991). From this perspective, it is even more critical for counselors in all work settings to endeavor to increase their social class awareness and understanding not only to understand better clients' worldviews, experiences, and level of oppression, but also for counselors to use their understanding and awareness to be more effective therapeutically.

SES is comprised of the discrete factors of income, education, and occupation (Brown et al., 1996; Muntaner et al., 2000). Although almost all participants cited income as a part of SES, only two participants discussed education, and no participants named occupation. One participant mentioned prestige associated with various workplaces, and, in particular, referred to people who work at a convenience store versus a computer company, hinting at low prestige associated with one work setting over higher prestige working at another. Workplace, however, does not define occupation, an SES factor contributing to social class.

Based on the definitions given for social class and SES in the literature review, all participants at some point during the interview used one of the terms imprecisely or used the terms interchangeably—probably unintentionally. Nevertheless, participants' terminology usage was similar to the terminology issues found in social class related counseling literature (Liu, Ali, et al., 2004). This issue most likely is linked to participants not having a clear understanding about what social class is, and how SES relates to social class. This finding substantiates researchers' (e.g. Liu, Ali, et al., 2004) call for counselors to gain further knowledge about social

class and SES and how they function. The imprecise or incorrect use of the term, *social class*, is not a simple semantic mistake. It is an issue in which meaning, value, and depth of client experiences can be masked, diminished, ignored, or simply reduced to an economic bottom line. The responses made by participants in this study suggest they have an inkling that social class involves more than income and money, and yet they struggled to articulate the multifaceted dimensions of both social class and SES. These findings indicate it is important for counselors to gain further training so their understanding and knowledge about these terms become more comprehensive. As a result, counselors will be more prepared to attend to clients' social class as a cultural variable.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are some limitations to this study. First, the sample represented nine licensed professional counselors in one state in the southern U.S. It is not possible generalize to other populations. Second, the use of semi-structured interviews makes data collection and analysis vulnerable to bias despite the fact I took measures to insure trustworthiness, to execute interviews consistently, to build rapport with participants, and to empower participants throughout the interview experience (Seidman, 2006). The use of research teams and different researchers would enhance the body of knowledge on this topic, and potentially strengthen the veracity of the data found in this study.

### **Conclusion**

As stated earlier, participants discussed their experiences of social class, including where people lived, where people worked, income, and financial stability. And, they struggled to connect the various aspects of their experience specifically to the social class construct. This study's results suggest that social class is a construct more easily experienced than described,

and more easily described than defined. In fact, when asked to reflect on the concepts of social class and SES, participants focused primarily on financial resources. Although a few mentioned social status, class stratification, work environments, housing types, and education, none appeared to grasp fully the depth and breadth of social class as a cultural variable, that is, a construct that involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices. Further, although some participants recognized and acknowledged the cultural status of identifying as middle class, none clearly linked the power differential between people from MSC and LSC. Nevertheless, social class is an important client characteristic, and counselors who explore clients' social class may discover worldviews, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that connect to clients' presenting issues. Indeed, by exploring the multiple layers of social class, counselors may enhance their empathy and relationship-building abilities, uncover client's unearthed strengths, and thereby empower clients toward health and wellbeing.

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**Chapter Five**

**Article 2**

Counselors and Classism: Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

Jennifer M. Cook

### Abstract

Nine licensed counselors discussed experiences with classism via semi-structured interviews. Two categories emerged related to classism: participant classism experiences and participant demonstrations of classism during the interview process. Classism themes are described. Recommendations for counselor educators and supervisors are provided.

*Keywords:* Social Class, SES, classism, microaggressions

### Counselors and Classism: Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

The United States (U.S.) has always been a place of diversity. Takaki (1993) aptly noted, “America has been racially diverse since our very beginning on the Virginia shore, and this reality is increasingly becoming visible and ubiquitous” (p. 2). Despite the U.S.’s longstanding, visible and ubiquitous diversity, people who represent aspects of the non-dominant culture, (e.g. those who are not White, male, heterosexual, middle class, Christian, or able-bodied), consistently have been made invisible and hidden vis-à-vis discrimination, oppression, and violence (Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 2007).

Counseling professionals and scholars acknowledged the disparity between those in the dominant, privileged ranks and those at the margins, and focused on discrimination perpetrated by the those of the dominant culture with particular attention to how these dynamics occurred in counseling (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Consequently, they responded by prioritizing multicultural standards, education, and practice (Pedersen, 1988; Sue et al., 1992). However, it was not until the early 2000’s that social class received any serious attention from researchers (e.g. Fouad & Brown, 2000; Liu, 2001; Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004). To date, the majority of social class and counseling literature has been theoretical in nature, and few studies exist that examine counselors’ social class awareness, knowledge, and skills. What the limited amount of literature does reveal is social class significantly impacts clients’ worldviews, including how they perceive themselves, and that middle class privilege pervades U.S. culture (Liu, Pickett, & Ivey, 2007).

Similarly, cultural archetypes reinforce privileged and biased class beliefs. The pervasive myths about the U.S. being a *classless society* and all people having the ability to *pull themselves up by their bootstraps*, coupled with socially accepted jokes about *trailer trash* or the *people of*

*Wal-Mart*, indicate negative beliefs, stereotypes, and discrimination toward people who comprise the low social class (LSC) (Staton, Evans, & Lucey, 2012). Few authors have discussed how counselors can examine their biases related to social class, or how social class bias might manifest in the therapeutic relationship (Vontress, 2011). West-Olatunji & Gibson (2012) hypothesized, “perhaps helping professionals have been slow in developing discourse around clinicians and social class because of our implicit beliefs about this construct” (p. 5). The majority of counselors are middle class (Vontress, 2011), many of whom may hold strong beliefs in meritocracy, a marked middle class value, that can yield bias toward people from LSC (e.g. they are *lazy*) and people from high social class (e.g. they did not work for what they have) (West-Olatunji & Gibson, 2012). West-Olatunji & Gibson challenged helping professionals to examine their “socially embedded messages” about social class, to understand the source of these messages, and to seek help confronting them. Inevitably, counselors reflect the socio-political realities of the cultures in which they live (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue & Sue, 1999). And, because stereotypes and discrimination surround social class in the U.S., counselors must examine their privilege and bias specific to social class in order to raise their awareness, and increase their knowledge and skills, thereby providing more culturally competent services to clients.

### **Literature Review**

Defining socioeconomic status (SES), social class, classism, and privilege are germane to providing a framework for how social class and SES bias may intentionally and unintentionally manifest. *Socioeconomic status* is determined and defined objectively by one’s income, education, and occupation (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto, & Wicker, 1996; Muntaner, Eaton, & Diala, 2000). *Social class* is a multidimensional, subjective concept that includes SES, as well as

beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors based on experiences within one's social class group affiliation(s) (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Liu, Ali, et al., 2004; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Smith, 2006; Smith, Li, Dykema, Hamlet, & Shellman, 2013). Often, social class groups are ranked according to SES factors, and those rankings are influenced significantly by social stratification and cultural narratives about which social class values, beliefs, and behaviors are more desirable. Such cultural narratives can lead to classism. *Classism* is discrimination, prejudice, oppression, or bias toward a person or group based on social class or SES (Pope & Arthur, 2009; Smith, 2005). It is similar to other "-isms" (e.g. racism), yet based on social class and/or SES. Liu (2011) identified four forms of classism: *downward, upward, lateral, and internalized*. The concept most relevant to this investigation is that of downward classism. Downward classism occurs when people in higher class groups discriminate against (explicitly or implicitly), or marginalize people whom they perceive are in lower classes (Liu, 2011). Such behavior is the most common and obvious form of classism.

Brown, Riepe, and Coffey (2005) stated, "classism results from the unequal and unearned privilege of those who have the power to discriminate" (p. 79). Such classism occurs frequently when people in a higher class group prefer a *higher* class group's resources, values, or worldviews over the resources, values, or worldviews over those of a lower class group. Particular emphasis is placed here on *higher* class group's preferences rather than that of *lower* class groups because in U.S. society, individuals who are middle class and higher have the power and the privilege to discriminate against individuals who are lower class. Classist behaviors often take the form of microaggressions, which are everyday, brief interactions (Sue, 2010). These interactions can manifest as behaviors, verbalizations, or environmental factors that intentionally or unintentionally degrade, insult, or diminish the humanity, customs, or values of people in

nondominant groups (Sue, 2010). Class-denying statements or behaviors (e.g. “class does not matter”) (Johnson, 2006) are an example of a class-based microaggression. Other class microaggressions make people who are poor invisible (e.g. relocation of people who are homeless to another town) (Lott, 2002), and include belief systems that induce blame (e.g. people are poor because they do not work hard enough).

*Privilege* is an unearned benefit based on qualities determined to be valued by the dominant culture (McIntosh, 1998). People who are male, White, heterosexual (Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1998; Johnson, 2006), able-bodied (Johnson, 2006), Christian (Larson & Shady, 2012; Liu et al., 2007), and middle class (Liu et al., 2007) are privileged in U.S. culture. In many cases, privilege, especially unrecognized privilege, translates to power, and often, power over others (Johnson, 2006; McIntosh, 1998). Johnson (2006) noted how people in the dominant culture are “oblivious” to privilege, and do not see privilege as a “problem” because: (a) they do not recognize privilege exists; (b) they are not required to acknowledge privilege because they do not have to; (c) they think people “get what they deserve,” so they relinquish issues of privilege to being a “personal problem;” (d) they want to retain their privilege; (e) they may be prejudiced toward people who are different from them; and (e) they have deep fear of people who are different from them. In the U.S., social class privilege is afforded to people who are considered to be middle class (Liu et al., 2007). This privilege can present significant issues if counselors, the majority of whom are middle class (Sue & Sue, 1977; Vontress 2011), are unaware of their privilege when they counsel clients from lower class groups.

Smith, Mao, Perkins, and Ampuero (2011) investigated whether clients’ social class presentation influenced counselors’ therapeutic impressions, and whether counselors’ just-world beliefs impacted their opinions about their clients. Participants ( $N = 193$ ) were clinical and



counseling psychology graduate students, the vast majority of whom reported being from middle social class (MSC) or higher (82%). Using four written case vignettes, each vignette represented a high social class (HSC), MSC, working class, or poverty class client, participants assessed the four hypothetical clients in multiple ways, including the Belief in a Just World Scale (BJW) (Dalbert, 1999). Researchers found when participants had high BJW scores, which indicated strong belief that the world is just (e.g. people get what they deserve) they believed clients who were working class or living in poverty were lower functioning, had more mental health symptoms, unfavorable clinical outcomes, and a higher probability of “less meaningful” clinical work with these populations. These findings are significant because they point to a potential source of bias for counselors—an entrenched, prejudicial belief that people’s social class status is inextricably linked to something they have done or failed to do. Research shows this belief, though pervasive and ubiquitous throughout U.S. culture, is flawed and unfounded because upward economic mobility has more to do with the resources with which one is born, rather than how hard a person works (Sawhill & Morton, 2007; Staton et al., 2012). U.S. beliefs/biases about economic mobility are not substantiated by economic facts, and if counselors are not aware of the beliefs/biases they hold about social class and economic mobility chances, there can be serious, negative implications for clients from LSC who receive mental health services from these counselors.

Smith et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the lived experiences of counselors who work with people in poverty. The researchers completed one-hour interviews with 10 participants, 9 of whom reported being from MSC or higher. The researchers analyzed the data via consensual qualitative research methods. Twelve domains were identified. They found some participants, prior to working with people in poverty, avoided people who were poor

and/or held stereotypes about people from LSC. Common stereotypes participants reported were that people who are poor are “dirty, lazy, or violent” (Smith et al., 2013, p.141), and poverty causes mental illness. Even after participants were invested in their work with people who were poor, some participants’ continued to have difficulty distinguishing clients’ psychological symptoms from symptoms that might be related to how poverty might be affecting the client. Further, results revealed some participants’ biases with responses such as the belief that people who are poor cannot hold a job, they cannot meet their basic needs, they have mental health issues, and that they do not have the ability to make good decisions.

Toporek and Pope-Davis (2005) sought to understand how counselors reduced their biases and became more multiculturally competent. They surveyed 158 graduate students from 10 U.S. counseling master’s programs. Via forced-entry hierarchical regression analyses, the authors examined “the degree to which multicultural counseling training and racial attitudes served as predictors of attributions of poverty” (p. 265). They controlled for variables that previously demonstrated positive correlations such as general trainings, immersion experiences, and significant demographics. They found that “cognitive racial attitudes ( $B = .224$ ,  $SE B = .036$ ,  $\beta = .458$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the number of multicultural courses contributed a significant portion of the variance above and beyond other variables ( $B = .407$ ,  $SE B = .157$ ,  $\beta = .194$ ,  $p < .05$ ),  $F(4, 158) = 13.908$ ,  $p < .01$ ” (p. 266). Therefore, the more multicultural training students had, and the more sensitive their racial attitudes, the more likely they were to explain poverty in terms of structural inequality. Conversely, students who received limited multicultural training had less sensitive racial attitudes, and were more likely to explain poverty in terms of how individuals caused or contributed to their poverty. Interestingly, and unsurprisingly, based on the paucity of social class counseling literature, the researchers found students’ racial and ethnic multicultural training

was much more substantial than their social class training. The results from this study demonstrated the more multicultural training counselors have in terms of awareness, knowledge, and skills, the more multiculturally competent they can become.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that social class and SES bias manifests in multiple ways (e.g. Smith et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2011). The purpose of this article is to report results of semi-structured interviews regarding participants' awareness and experiences of classism, and to describe observed social class and SES bias that emerged during the interview process.

### **Methods**

Because there is a lack of information surrounding counselors' classism experiences, a phenomenological, qualitative design was the best fit for this exploratory study. Semi-structured interview questions allowed participants to describe their experiences of classism. Accordingly, participants were asked explicitly about experiences related to classism. However they were not asked explicitly what biases they held about different social class or SES groups. Rather, themes emerged through the interview process that suggested implicit social class bias. These data reveal potential microaggressions (Sue, 2010) and unexamined privilege that may impact clinical interactions and further, may result in counselors imposing their values and biases on clients (ACA, 2005).

### **Participants and Location**

Participants were identified via purposeful sampling in order to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) current, practicing counselors in a clinical mental health or private practice setting in the Commonwealth of Virginia, (b) Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and (c) graduate counselor training program completed no more

than 10 years prior to participation. Participants were excluded if they earned their counseling master's degree from either of the two universities with which the researcher had a relationship.

Participants were recruited using the Virginia LPC database in addition to the Virginia Counseling Association member database and various public, internet information sources (e.g. private practice websites and "find a therapist" websites). The researcher contacted participants via email or phone and asked screening questions to insure they met recruitment criteria.

I began to work through VA LPC database to determine participants. All LPCs in Virginia totaled 3,627 through December 2012. I set up a spreadsheet of potential participants whose license date range fell between 2006 and 2012 ( $n=1342$ ). Then, I eliminated Virginia LPCs who did not live in Virginia ( $n=138$ ). I removed those who live in AK, AP, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WV. The total number of LPCs who were living in Virginia who were licensed between 2006 and 2012 was 1204.

The remaining 1204 potential participants were organized into six regions (Central, Northern Virginia, Southside, Southwest, Tidewater, Valley) based on the town listed in the licensure database. I decided to eliminate Northern Virginia because it is culturally very different from the rest of Virginia, and people in that region often hold licenses in more than one state because of its proximity to Maryland and Virginia. As a result of eliminating LPCs living in Northern Virginia ( $n=411$ ), the total number remaining was 793. I then began a search for possible participants' contact information. I searched for all potential participants who met the screening criteria using Google, the Virginia Counseling Association membership directory, Goodtherapy.com, PsychologyToday.com, NetworkTherapy.com, and LinkedIn. I also looked at

Aetna's website, but did not find anyone listed. Other insurance companies' websites were password protected and available only to members.

In the Central region, there were a total of 276 eligible participants. I contacted 56 whose contact information was available. Of those, 14 responded to my inquiry of interest, 8 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 6 scheduled interview appointments. In the Southside region, there were a total of 59 eligible participants. I contacted 6 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my inquiry of interest, 2 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none were left to schedule interview appointments. In the Southwest region, there were a total of 95 eligible participants. I contacted 7 whose contact information was available. Of those, 3 responded to my inquiry of interest, all were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher). In the Tidewater region, there were a total of 255 eligible participants. I contacted 41 whose contact information was available. Of those, 12 responded to my inquiry of interest, 9 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and 3 scheduled interview appointments. In the Valley region, there were a total of 108 eligible participants. I contacted 21 whose contact information was available. Of those, 2 responded to my inquiry of interest, 14 were eliminated (for failure to meet screening criteria, or they were known by the researcher) and none scheduled interview appointments. In sum, a total of 131 potential participants were contacted, 33 responded, 43 were eliminated, and 9 completed interviews.

Because this was a phenomenological study, the number of participants was not predetermined. Participants were recruited and interviewed until the data were saturated, or until no new data emerged (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Nine counselors participated in

this study. Participants' ages ranged from 32 to 59 years old ( $M = 39$  years), three identified as African American/Black and six identified as White, and all participants self-identified as female and as part of the middle social class spectrum currently. Participants' counseling master's programs were completed between 2004 and 2009, and eight graduated from CACREP accredited programs. Participants had between five and 11 years of clinical experience, and all participants held only an LPC. Seven participants worked in clinical mental health settings and two in private practice; three participants worked in rural environments, two in urban, two in suburban, one participant worked in both rural and urban environments, and one in a town.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative, phenomenological research, the researcher is an active, critical component to the study, therefore the researcher must define her position and potential biases so the study is conducted rigorously, and research consumers can analyze findings comprehensively (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco Jr., 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I identify my privilege as a White person with advanced education, and I recognize my nondominant identities as a woman raised in an upper-lower social class context (Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1960). My identity as a person from LSC is particularly relevant to the research findings because my LSC group membership allowed me to name perceived classism behaviors during the interview process. A researcher without this *insider perspective* may not have identified such behaviors as classism, because they may lack knowledge and experience with classism.

Pearce, Down & Moore (2008) conducted a qualitative study with college students who were working class, and one of their findings resonated with my desire to understand counselors' social class experiences: "Students from working-class backgrounds seek the status and power afforded by middle-class occupations not for their own improved status but rather so they can

work to improve the life chances of others from a similar class background” (p. 267). I, too, seek to use my power as an academic to bolster the life chances of others who come from a social class background similar to mine. My goal is to raise counselors’ social class awareness so they can develop culturally competent skills to work with clients from all social class backgrounds, but especially with clients from the varied groups that comprise LSC, who often have few choices about the mental health services they receive.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to any participant contact, I obtained university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Preceding interview commencement, participants provided written consent, were given a copy of the consent forms for their records, and chose a pseudonym. Although participants chose pseudonyms, no names are used in this article in order to provide an additional layer of anonymity because of the sensitivity of this subject. I audio recorded interviews for transcription purposes, and video recorded them for my review. After interviews were transcribed, I reviewed them against the recorded material for accuracy.

I created the semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix D) so that questions were open-ended, simply constructed, and meaningful (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Seidman, 2006). I adhered flexibly to the interview protocol for each interview. I included a conversation about participant demographics in the initial phase of the interview in order to build rapport with participants, and to help put them at ease.

### **Data Analysis**

As a single coder with peer reviewers, I coded the research data in several stages. Interview data, including observational data recorded in field notes and reflection journal, were organized and coded in several stages via Corbin and Strauss’s (1990; 1998) model of open,

axial, and selective coding. Coding commenced once two interviews were completed in order to discern quickly when data reached saturation. During the coding process, I logged budding hypotheses and reflections, as well as reactions that reflected bias or assumptions.

During the first phase, open coding, I performed a line-by-line analysis of each transcript, and assigned *in vivo* codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Holton, 2007). Codes were labeled and color-coded to differentiate codes. In the second phase, axial coding, I used the *in vivo* codes identified during open coding to form categories. During selective coding, the final phase, I identified multiple salient categories that emerged from the data. These categories illuminated descriptions related to the phenomena under investigation (Buckley, 2010).

### **Trustworthiness**

I implemented procedures to ensure trustworthiness throughout the course of this study. Multiple strategies were employed: consistent and detailed documentation, member checking, and peer debriefing. I documented all research activities via a comprehensive audit trail, and after I completed each interview, I recorded field notes in order to record contextual variables, insights, and reflections. The field notes I recorded added depth to the interview interactions and data, and aided me in data analysis. In order to increase transcript clarity and accuracy, I invited participants to amend and add to their transcripts via a “member check” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), and six out of nine participants chose to member check their transcripts.

I recruited two peer debriefers with qualitative research experience to review transcripts and ensure coding accuracy, to discuss emerging themes and research findings, and to process any potential bias in interview proceedings or data analysis. Each of the two peer debriefers employed open coding, using *in vivo* codes to review two different transcripts. This approach involved having each peer debriefer go line by line through the transcripts, developing her or his



own codes as these codes emerged for them from the data. The purpose of this approach was for the debriefers to act independently in the coding procedure so their coding results could be compared to the researcher's coded transcript for consistency and accuracy. After the researcher completed axial and selective coding described above, the peer debriefers reviewed the categories, themes, and the codes within categories and themes to ensure accuracy. Also, peer debriefers helped process potential bias with the researcher in order to ensure trustworthiness, consistency, and applicability. For example, one peer debriefer offered an additional contextual lens related to the data regarding participant responses to questions related to the American Dream. She indicated it was possible that participants' immigration status and the length of time they had been living in the U.S. might influence their understanding and appropriation of the American Dream construct. In sum, the peer debriefing process was a system of checks and balances created to increase researcher objectivity in a subjective methodology. I used their feedback to check myself on possible bias in the data interpretation.

Within one week of their interview, I emailed transcripts to participants, and they had two weeks to add to and amend their interview transcripts. To further enhance accuracy and reduce bias, I recruited two peer debriefers with qualitative research experience. The peer debriefers reviewed transcripts and ensured coding accuracy, discussed emerging themes and research findings with me, and they processed potential bias in interview proceedings and data analysis.

### **Findings**

Two overarching categories emerged with regard to classism during this study: participant classism experiences and participant demonstrations of classism during the interview process. I asked participants directly about their experiences with classism, that is, if they had ever felt discrimination as a result of their class membership. In the course of the interviews as a

whole, seven participants reported experiences with classism. Participants experienced and responded to classism in different ways from one another, therefore the tangible thread through all of these accounts was participants' recognition that they were some how different. All participants also displayed some form of classism during the interview process. Three themes emerged: class microaggressions, misconceptions about class, and class privilege.

### **Classism Experiences**

Seven participants discussed experiences with classism. The theme that connects these experiences is that all participants conveyed a sense of knowing they were different, yet all participants responded to the experiences in different ways. One participant, raised in a rural, working class family, talked about the first time she traveled abroad with students from her university. She shared, "I was traveling with kids who had been all over the world and of course they thought I was some dumb country girl and they all had to protect me, and like I didn't know how to get a cab." Further, she reflected on the experience:

That's the way they thought about it, which was sort of awkward and funny to me. I'm like, "Do you all think I'm an idiot?" It was like so funny, but it was endearing in a way too that they were like, "You're going to stay right with us."

Another participant, raised in an urban, low social class family, described her experiences feeling judged by peers when she began to shop at different stores after she left the inner city. As she recounted her experiences, she explained why her friends might say what they said to her:

Yeah, and then, just it's weird. Like Target. I like Target . . . but a lot of people like Wal-Mart and they call Target "Tar Jay." Just different things like that. Oh I don't go to Target, Target's kind of expensive. I'm thinking I don't know, or Harris Teeter, Kroger.

You know what I mean? But they have the kind of foods . . . I'm a vegetarian. They have the kinds of foods I get organic; some things I get organic . . . I think it's geographical sometimes in that usually people from the inner city are not really exposed to Harris Teeter or Kroger or some of those other stores or World Market, or Trader Joe's; they aren't in the inner city so it's not a store that they would even think about. You know they probably drive by it and wonder, "What's in there?" Or even if they went in there sometime they'd probably see the food [and say], "Who eats that?"

The participant reported she felt judged about what she eats and what she does not eat, particularly related to her identity as a vegetarian. Yet when she was asked about classism experiences she stated initially, "I can't really remember and I think because I blended in a lot. I blended in a lot, and I looked up a lot."

Throughout the interview, a participant raised in a suburban, middle class family, discussed how she never knew her family of origin was middle class until she left home. This issue resurfaced when she discussed an incident related to classism:

One of the reasons I never thought I was middle class is because the middle class that my father did hang with in [the northeast], they had [etiquette training] programs. Jack and Jill, and several other type things, and I wasn't good enough to be part of those programs . . . My father was pushing me this way [toward etiquette training], he wanted me in those type of things. [But they told him,] "She's not what we're looking for." And this was within the African American culture. I was never good enough [to go to etiquette training] because I was willing to play in the projects and it was okay with me. I wasn't good enough for several things, and I noticed when I got older.

### **Participant Demonstrations of Classism During Interview Process**

During the coding process, an overarching category emerged in which all participants, at some point during the interview process, unknowingly displayed a class-related microaggression, voiced an erroneous misconception about class, or demonstrated some form of class privilege.

**Class microaggressions.** The most common form of class microaggression during the interview process involved the ways in which participants talked about people in LSC. All participants with the exception of one, referred to people in low social class as “SES challenged,” coming from “troubled economic status families,” “special circumstances,” “poor people,” and most frequently, “them” or “those people.”

Another way class microaggressions arose was in the context of working with clients. Three participants revealed class denying behaviors. With regard to clinical work, one participant stated:

I think you have to recognize where that person’s coming from, but your skill set should be able to actually supersede that. It shouldn’t be that this is my person that’s from the projects and I’m from this upper middle class. It should be that there’s no class in here.

Another participant shared her belief that economic issues are simply human issues:

It's that part where trying to be able to be relatable to them because I've been in a lot of the socioeconomic classes just throughout my adult life and it's being able to say “Yeah, I can remember that time,” or, “I know how hard it is,” and I still, I may make money now but I still don't like to give it to anybody. I want to keep it for myself. I would prefer to. I don't want to give it to bills. And it's that being able to relate to them and get them to see that yeah, we are all human. That's just the human experience type of thing.

**Misconceptions about class.** Eight out of nine participants stated that hard work leads to success. One participant stated:

People that work hard in school; that if they're not provided for, they're able to get there on their own . . . A lot of times, these kids [from low social class] don't think they can go to college, and they can. They can go to college. They just got to work hard, and they'll have to do it a different way, but they can get there.

Another participant stated, "I think with enough hard work and stick-to-itiveness you can, at least in America, you have the opportunity to be whatever you want to be." Another participant shared:

I don't suss it out specifically on class but some of the values of if you work really hard, you can. You can live it. You can have a very good life, a comfortable life. That opportunity is there, you have to look for it.

Three participants spoke about how class awareness can affect people's happiness. One participant stated, "It seems to me that people who are most aware of it [their class group affiliation] are the least happy because they are so focused on where they want to be versus where they are and being okay with that." Another participant stated: "I could relate better with those who had nothing and were happy. Not the whiners, who wanted to keep up with the Joneses but those who had nothing and were still happy. I can have nothing and be still happy."

**Class privilege.** Five participants made statements that revealed class privilege. When asked how she believed social class groups are delineated, one participant indicated, "It's just not something that it benefits me to think of. You could watch me think for much longer, but it's just something I don't think much about." When asked what class group she affiliates with currently, another participant stated, "I think I had never really thought about what class I was in, but okay.

I just hadn't." Another participant, raised in MSC, discussed an ongoing struggle she has had in her adult life with friends from her childhood who were raised in LSC: "I've never been on that level . . . I didn't stand on line to get cheese or . . . not that I'd want to."

One participant talked about the advantages of a counselor from MSC working with children and teenagers from LSC. She stated, "When you're in therapy with them, they can see that this is not how everybody lives. There are different ways." While discussing the strengths of working with clients from MSC, another participant stated clients from MSC have:

. . . that expectation that anything is possible. "Yeah, okay, yeah, I can do that." If I make a recommendation, you might want to, what do you think about consulting with so and so, "Yeah, sure, sure," expecting they will go out [and do it]. As opposed to [clients from LSC], "Well, let me think, how do I do that?"

### **Discussion and Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision**

Classism was a salient experience for the majority of participants in this study. They reported varied experiences and reactions, and all conveyed a sense of feeling different. One participant acknowledged confusion about her movement from LSC to MSC. She indicated she had attempted to "pass" as someone from MSC during her years as a member of LSC. Another participant reported embarrassment about the fact she had been on reduced lunch. In fact, she said she tried to hide this information from her peers by bringing her lunch to school. Ironically, all participants also unknowingly participated in classism via a lack of social class and SES awareness and/or understanding. For example, participants seemed steeped in the middle class value of individualism, and appeared unaware of the systemic structures at work in U.S. culture that prevent some of those who work hard from automatically becoming successful. For example, some participants indicated they believed that those who worked hard could attain any

of their goals. They did not mention the notion of privilege that is that some people are born into groups with more power in the society than others (Johnson, 2006). Although they may have experienced marginalization in some personal ways, they did not state specifically that being born White, male, able-bodied, or middle class could impact their access to resources and opportunities. This attitude is problematic because as a result of systems of privilege hard work does not always lead to success, and counselors can find themselves inadvertently blaming individual clients for being in the social class group to which they belong. A more balanced view would be to understand clients as individuals in embedded in a complex societal structure. Further, some participants made comments suggesting that social class difference is insignificant, and that the focus, rather, should be on the unifying concept of shared humanity. Such a perspective of denying difference is similar to the notion of being “colorblind” vis-à-vis racial difference (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1998). To deny aspects of clients culture denies clients’ worldviews, values, beliefs, and experiences, which again can cause clients to feel blamed, invalidated, and wrong, all of which are the antithesis of culturally competent counseling.

Moreover, some participants used pejorative terms such as “*those people*,” and “*them*” when referring to people from LSC, unintentionally using class-related microaggressions (Sue, 2010). When counselors choose to “otherize” clients, they distance themselves from their clients, a move that can fracture the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore, clients may interpret such distance as the counselor implying something is “wrong” with them, a perception that increases the likelihood they will not return to counseling. At least one participant underscored her own class privilege by referring to the luxury and “benefit” of not having to think about class (Johnson, 2006). Counselors are in a position of power and privilege in the counseling relationship, and when counselors do not address their power and privilege, at best they may

struggle to understand clients' worldviews, and at worst, they risk harming clients. Although I did not ask them directly, none of the participants made any comments indicating they understood classism to be related to other "-isms," nor did they connect prior multicultural training to the construct of social class (Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005). Because social class and SES have not been integrated consistently into counselor education and supervision, some counselors may not have not been given the opportunity to develop their social class awareness, knowledge, and skills in the same ways they have had opportunity to develop other areas of multicultural competence (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation). Indeed, if counselor educators and supervisors can help students and supervisees connect with their own experiences of classism, this connection may increase their empathy for clients from LSC.

In order for counselors-in-training and supervisees to develop social class and SES awareness, knowledge, and skills, counselor educators and counseling supervisors must first increase their social class and SES awareness, knowledge, and skills, and prioritize multicultural competence in this area (West-Olatunji & Gibson, 2012). The findings from this study indicate some counselors do not have adequate awareness and understanding about class-related microaggressions as evidenced by "otherizing" and class denying behaviors. Further, findings demonstrate some counselors have limited understanding about meritocracy, and how hard work may or may not lead to success. Additionally, participants in this study seemed reluctant, or possibly unaware, of the need to examine their class privilege. These areas are important places to begin in order to increase counselor educators' and counseling supervisors' social class and SES awareness and knowledge. Further, these areas give counselor educators and supervisors information about where counselors-in-training and supervisees may need the most support.



Counselor educators and supervisors have committed to training counselors who provide ethical, multiculturally competent services to clients from all diverse groups, including clients from LSC. Therefore counselor educators and supervisors must use their power and privilege to spearhead learning experiences that allow students and supervisees to grow in their social class and SES awareness, knowledge and skills. Particularly, it is important to create opportunities for counselors-in-training and supervisees to examine their class privilege, debunk misconceptions, and identify ways clients are marginalized by class microaggressions. Researchers have found that increased multicultural training increases counselor multicultural competence, and to date, multicultural training in social class and SES has been limited (Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005). Counselor educators and supervisors hold the power and privilege to rectify this oversight, and provide opportunities to increase trainees' social class and SES awareness, knowledge, and skills.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are some limitations associated with this study. First, the sample for this qualitative study was confined to one U.S. state. Therefore it would add to the body of literature to replicate this study in other areas and with more participants. Second, this article is part of a larger study on social class, not a specific study on classism, so studies designed to understand the breadth and specificity of classism are warranted. Third, even though measures were taken to insure trustworthiness and bracket bias, semi-structured interviews are vulnerable to these issues, and study replication with different researchers may prove beneficial.

### **Conclusion**

Experiences of classism are an unfortunate reality many people face, including counselors. However, steps can be taken to ensure counseling clients do not experience implicit

or explicit classism. Counselor educators and supervisors can assist students and supervisees in acknowledging and claiming their class experiences, and using these experiences in their work with clients. In addition, counselor educators can model ways of broaching (Day-Vines et al., 2007) class as well as take responsibility for providing didactic and experiential opportunities for students and supervisees to learn about social class and the affects of classism. They can be intentional about training ethical, multiculturally competent counseling professionals to ensure clients receive the highest quality mental health services possible.

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## Chapter Six

### Other Findings

In this chapter, I describe data obtained as part of this research study, and not included in the manuscripts that comprise chapters four and five. In the aforementioned manuscripts, I addressed the research questions for this study via two dimensions (1) counselors' social class and socioeconomic status (SES) awareness and understanding, and (2) counselors' classism experiences and awareness. Recall the research questions for this study:

*How do counselors understand SES and social class?*

*What awareness (Personal awareness [person-of-the-therapist] and other-awareness [clients]) do counselors have about SES/SC?*

I concentrated on the first research question primarily in manuscript one (Chapter 4), and I attended to the second research question in manuscript two (Chapter 5).

I discussed throughout this project how social class is a multifaceted construct comprised of multiple aspects, with complex significance for the people who occupy different social class groups. It would be erroneous and over-reaching to assert I was able to answer such complex questions within the body of two manuscripts. Rather, because of the paucity of research that targets counseling, social class, and SES, the manuscripts are intentionally specific in order to provide counseling research consumers with precise data they can use and integrate in a way that (a) raises counselors', counselor educators', and supervisors' understanding and awareness of social class and SES, (b) spurs changes in counselor education and supervision, and (c) demonstrates how clients may be affected if change does not occur. Research findings not reported in Chapters Four and Five provide additional, layered answers to the research questions. These findings fell outside the scope of the manuscripts and will be addressed in future

manuscripts. When taken together, these findings will help counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors understand further dimensions of social class and SES.

### **Other Findings**

Other findings not reported in Chapters Four and Five revealed aspects of participants' understanding and awareness of social class and SES, and fell into four broad categories: (a) their beliefs about the differences between social class groups, (b) the strengths and limitations associated with those class groups, (c) how they understand the *American Dream*, and (d) clinical experiences. All of these categories and the themes therein, exemplify additional facets of both research questions, and will provide counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors with further dimensions of social class and SES in future manuscripts. Some data contained in these categories were alluded to or mentioned cursorily (e.g. classism statements) and were not fleshed out fully due to journal page limitations and the desire not to diverge too far from the topic being discussed.

### **Social Class Group Designations**

Three overall themes emerged from the data related to social class group designations: how social class groups are defined, how people know their social class group, and changes in social class group affiliation.

**How social class groups are defined.** Participants had little consensus about what contributes to how people's social class group is defined. Two participants stated money/income as a factor, while all other participants alluded to money/income with responses such as "material goods" or "resources." Three participants listed where a person lives and education as factors. For example, Averie explained how she viewed each social class group, and noted the type of residence, whether people rent or buy, and the type of neighborhood people from

different social class groups might inhabit:

They (people in middle social class) would probably be living in a home; in a house, I would say. I'm going to back-track, because lower socioeconomic, I think you would more so find individuals in this class maybe renting an apartment or renting a house from someone. Versus you would have in the middle class, homeowners.

And, further, she discussed people in upper-middle class and higher:

The thing is, they would live in certain areas. They would live in an area where you would probably see houses that are anywhere from 350- to 500-thousand. You would see that they would, of course, be in some type of suburban area, or some type of community setting.

Two participants listed generational aspects and family situation as factors that impact social class group designations. Singular responses included people's language, the way people speak, how one "holds oneself," where people "fit in," the number of children a person has, and what occupation a person holds.

**How people know their social class group.** Three participants stated they are not sure people know which social class group of which they are a part. Sophie stated, "Now that I think about it, I don't think a lot of people do know exactly what all the classes are. I think people maybe just ... they struggle, but they don't maybe know exactly what class they're in." Two participants shared that some people know their social class group, and most do not. Ruby Rose explained people know or do not know their social class group based on economics:

I think the higher your socioeconomic class is, the more conscious you are of it. That, you know, I think people who would consider themselves poor are just, they are not thinking about how poor they are, they are just trying to get by. They are not thinking of

their socioeconomic class where people who are striving for, “I want to rule the world,” you know, “I want to run a corporation, I want to have the Bentley in the driveway,” they are striving for this top echelon in the socioeconomic class and they know it and they are striving for it.

Four responses were given as to how people figure out the social class group to which they belong: from their parents/families or by watching their parents/families, through the media, by comparison with others, or if they receive public assistance. The final response, if people received public assistance, was mentioned by two participants. Sophie explained it this way:

Sophie: Family members or maybe just based on income or something, or if they received food stamps or SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program] benefits or all the different benefits they have out there. I mean, that could be kind of ... Or, just if they can't pay their bills or struggling, they kind of have an idea of what class they're in.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, the people who are on the lower end, it sounds like they're definitely going to know?

Sophie: Yeah. Because they're going to get the extra benefits from government resources.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So, people who might be a little bit higher, they wouldn't be kind of pushed to figure that out because they're not trying to get any government assistance of any kind ...

Sophie: Right.

**Changes in social class group.** Several participants talked about how people change social class groups. Almost all participants talked about upward class mobility or “class

jumping” (Nelson, Englar-Carlson, Tierney, & Hau, 2006). Often, participants discussed upward mobility prospects as tied to exposure. Joan stated, “I think mostly through their school, through public education. If you have a good guidance counselor, or if you're in some sort of clubs or sports, and sometimes even through mentors in the community.” Averie concurred:

I think that exposure piece, it's huge. You can have a coach or a teacher that imparts something in this child's life, and it changes the course of their life. You might have this person coming from a low socioeconomic status, and them going on to college, and ending up in the higher class. It's all about exposure.

One participant, in addition to upward class mobility, discussed people’s possible desire to affiliate with a social class group lower than the group of which one is a part:

There are some other people, I think my son and some people, who are identifying with some groups that have a more challenged SES. He’s more identifying with that as being more real, as being something maybe as more authentic about it or maybe it’s richer for more complex reasons than I can think of now or that I would need to interview him about.

And further:

I’m not sure somebody wants to say they’re moving down, but I think there would be some benefit in it for them personally that I couldn’t just glean superficially. I would have to really look into what somebody had to say and really sincerely question them about what is it here that is important to you, that’s a value here that you seek, that you enjoy, that you want. I think that there are benefits and there’s costs. I hate the cost benefit analysis of every association and I think with different socio-economic class and status there’s benefits and there are some costs, serious costs.

## **Social Class Groups' Strengths and Limitations**

Participants were asked to describe different social class groups' strengths and limitations within the context of their work with clients, and from their perspective as a member of a particular social class group. Because participants identified as being middle social class (MSC) or low social class (LSC) either currently or in their family of origin, and because participants reported the majority of clients they work with to be people in LSC or MSC, the data reflect strengths and limitations for LSC and MSC only. This section is divided into four subcategories: low social class strengths, low social class limitations, middle social class strengths, and middle social class limitations. Themes are identified within each subcategory.

**Low social class strengths.** Participants reported a range of strengths associated with people from LSC. Nineteen different strengths (see Appendix F) were given, and three themes emerged: strong, supportive families; hard work; and resilience. Averie, a participant whose family was LSC stated:

I think too, I learned, I guess you could say, a sense of family. I'm not saying that people who aren't in that class, that they don't gain this, but I think it was like, we're in this together. We got each other, and when one person does well, they will make sure they pull the others with them. I got so much from my family. So much of who I am is because of my family. Not just as a child, but grown up, I have the same closeness I had as a kid with my family—I have that same closeness now.

Joan, a participant whose family was working class shared:

I think it helped us in a lot of ways because it gave us a lot of drive. Even though we didn't know that we didn't have a lot, there was like this work ethic growing up in like a

farming community where you would get up really early, you would work, you would go to school, you'd have to get your work done, all of us did sports, come home, finish whatever needed to be done, feeding or cleaning up, or getting things out of the garden. It was just constant work ethic and I think that's what we took away from it was just learning how to work really hard. We valued that.

Participants whose families of origin encompassed LSC stated 19 strengths they think people from LSC have, while participants whose families of origin comprised MSC and work with clients who are LSC stated seven strengths. One participant from MSC stated, "I can't think of any (strengths) that are distinctive." Three of the seven strengths stated by participants from MSC could be interpreted as "backhanded strengths." For example, one participant stated:

The weakness is that they have no money. The strength is that they have no money because without the money they don't know what they're missing and they're happy, their kids are happy, but once they learn what they're missing, because they make Christmas happen and they've got that [seasonal] job for a whole month and a half and they put things on layaway and everybody was happy, it's just a whole different kind of, I don't know...

**Low social class limitations.** Participants gave a vast range of responses for LSC limitations, with 29 different responses (see Appendix G). Twenty-two of the 29 limitations stated were by participants who were raised in families that were MSC. Because of the vast array of responses, only one theme emerged: educational limitations.

Four participants discussed limitations related to education. Joan stated:

A lot of them (children from LSC) are just behind so much academically and that they're cognitive functioning isn't where it should be and it's because of the delays because of

trauma that they've been through, so the brain hasn't come online fully the way that it should. Not even advanced, but not even for a typically developed child.

Madison, a participant whose family was LSC shared, “if your parents don't have the information or the resources to pass down to you, it's difficult.” Similarly, Linda, a participant whose family was MSC stated:

For some of them the other weakness, which is not a personal weakness of theirs but of the fact that they came to school without parents to support them and people that knew how to go to college is that they don't know what to ask for or that help is possible. Then they're afraid of looking stupid by asking. I have to work with them on basically teaching them what they would have had if they had come from a MSC home with parents that went to college.

There were 24 singular responses (see Appendix G) not linked to the theme of educational limitations. These responses varied significantly, and a few are listed below as illustrations.

- Lack of motivation due to parents not graduating from high school or parents being incarcerated
- Rigid thinking
- Sense of distrust
- Ignorance

**Middle social class strengths.** Participants’ reported a range of strengths associated with people who are MSC, similar to the array of responses related to LSC strengths. Twenty-one responses were given (see Appendix H), and two themes emerged: Strengths related to resources and strengths related to accessibility. Overwhelmingly, the responses given about MSC strengths



were made by people from MSC, accounting for 20 of the 21 responses.

In terms of resources, all resources mentioned were linked to money. Three participants shared the ability to save or manage money is a MSC strength. Paula, who identified as always being MSC stated, "Save money. It's more about, save money and . . . be conservative in favor of adventure." Another participant, Sophie, who also identified as being MSC throughout her life stated:

I think there's less worry about money. I mean, you still worry. I mean, we're not perfect. We don't . . . It's not like I can just go out and buy anything. But, I don't have to worry about bills not being paid, or having to move because I can't pay rent or a mortgage or anything like that. I feel pretty secure that the house is okay. I own my car. Well, at least, I could pay for a car if I needed to. I think it's just more . . . I think the biggest strength is more security.

Other participant responses related to this theme included the ability to go to college, security, and general resources.

Three participants' responses comprise the second theme, strengths related to accessibility. Paula stated clients from MSC have, "that expectation that anything is possible. Yeah, okay, yeah, I can do that." Another participant, Jane, who identified as being MSC throughout her life stated:

It's being aware of accessibility. Being aware of accessibility of resources, accessibility is huge and when people don't realize that they have this concrete block on them or this wall in front of them they can't reach through, I think that is so unfair, and it's so awful how many people have to deal with that. I think that that is a benefit that people in the MSC and above are able to have.

Singular responses not linked directly to the themes of accessibility were varied. The following represent sample responses:

- Have higher self-esteem because they feel more successful
- Hard work leads to a comfortable life
- Able to trust more quickly
- Heal more quickly because they have fewer negative messages related to trauma

**Middle social class limitations.** Participants identified 22 limitations (see Appendix I) related to MSC, and half were directly connected to money. The other half were related more to ways of being. These two identifications represent the themes for this subcategory. Participants who identified throughout their lives as MSC identified the majority of MSC limitations, with only five limitations stated by participants raised in LSC. One participant, who identified as MSC throughout her life, was unable to come up with any MSC limitations:

That's a hard question for me. It's difficult to say. I think the only thing I can vaguely come up with is ... but I can't know is I think sometimes ... but I think it's hard to tell because I think this could be psychodynamically more or systematically more of a family system thing where you just eat the roles that are handed to you. I think though that people would probably do that across all SESs. That's a hard one for me to discern.

Limitations subsumed under the theme of monetary limitations ranged from participants who stated people who are MSC do not make enough money and cannot go out and buy whatever they want, to participants who stated the limitation of having to “keep up with the Joneses.” Sophie shared, “So one of the limitations is you kind of think it it'll always be fine. Something can happen. A lot of times, I think people may think, that famous thing, ‘That's not going to happen to me.’” While Paula stated:

The limitation was be careful, be conservative. Don't put yourself out on a limb. It's more about, save money and do the, be conservative in favor of adventure. Don't...yeah, the restriction was be careful, and I didn't hear much about following your bliss.

Participants stated several ways of being they associated as being MSC limitations. Linda stated:

(They) can find themselves feeling in want because they can't afford that pair of boots they really want. Maybe I'm extrapolating from some of my clients, I don't know and certainly my sisters. When that pair of boots would feed a family of four in the country where those boots were made for a year. So why are you kvetching about this item that you can really live without and you got a pair of boots last year and all that stuff? Maybe it's also from raising two kids (laughter), so that I think that if you get too used to where you are and not conscious of it, and you don't instill in yourself and sort of grow gratitude, you can become a little bit cup half empty instead of cup half full. I don't know if that's unique to the middle class though. Also, you can assume that if you're middle class, everybody is. Whereas I don't think the poor do that, and I don't think the rich do that.

Joan discussed whether young adults from MSC are prepared when they leave home, and shared what she observed with a younger family member who is MSC:

She just graduated from (college) and she's moved to Atlanta. Her parents are like, "You're an adult now. You're on your own. No longer can you be on our health insurance. No longer can we get you free airline tickets. No longer can we bail you out." I don't feel like they did a good enough job preparing her for that, but she's going to be okay. She's got a job, she's working it out.

Participants cited also impatience, high anxiety, and entitlement with scheduling counseling appointments as other limitations associated with MSC.

### **The American Dream**

Participants were asked to describe what comes to mind when they hear the phrase, *the American Dream*, and who they believe has the ability to obtain the American Dream in the United States today. The definition of the American Dream, and who can obtain the American Dream are subcategories, and themes emerged in each subcategory.

**American dream definition.** All participants reported a definition related to some form of the “traditional” American Dream—if people work hard enough, they can achieve wealth, and often, that wealth is characterized by a house, a car, a white picket fence, 2.5 kids, and a dog (Dollarhide, 2012; Hanson & Zogby, 2010). Three themes emerged: Participants who did not question the American dream, different definitions of the American Dream, and difficulties associated with the American Dream.

Three participants stated what they know the American Dream to be via the traditional definition, and did not question its validity. For example, Ruby Rose stated, “I think it is supposed to be marriage and two kids. Two kids, two car garage, house with three to five bedrooms, you know, and I think a college savings account so vacations to somewhere glamorous.” Sophie stated,

A house with a family, the kids, the pets, the yard, the white picket fence . . . Having a good job and making enough money to be able to take care of your family. I think that’s just what . . . When you hear the “American Dream,” that’s [white picket fence] what people always throw in.

Four participants offered ways they define the American Dream differently than it is

generally defined. Averie stated:

For me, it's being able to recognize what your purpose is, and being able to fulfill it. It may be that you're a school teacher, and you're not making much, but guess what? I'm living out my American dream, because I'm doing what I love to do. I'm doing what I'm passionate about. I don't care that I don't make what the next person makes. What I care about is my purpose here, is to give children an opportunity maybe, I struggled to have. This is my purpose, and I'm living it out. For me, that's the American dream.

Christine redefined the American Dream in this way:

(It's) Martin Luther King. I know that sounds odd saying that . . . The American dream is to have a house . . . the picket fence, the 2.5 kids, *and* to be able to have neighbors and to be a culturally diverse link. That came about when I started living again in [a racial divided place]. I know it changed for me because I had the house, I had the kids and I had more than 2.5 . . . I had the kids, I had a husband that went to work everyday and I worked nine months out of the year because I was with the kids. I was like a stay at home mom that works, and I would . . . I literally had the economic dream . . . but the race issue was so prevalent . . . I did not feel I had the Martin Luther King American dream.

Further, four participants stated problems associated with the American Dream. Paula asked, "Is there an American dream anymore?" and Jane shared:

There are some things we can change and some things we can't, but I think that it lends to overall a sense of impotence culturally that we cannot control everything that we want to control. We can't be absolutely everything we want to be and we don't know how to be happy with really good things that we do have. It puts us in a lot of binds, the American Dream.

Linda stated a similar sentiment:

In actual reality, there's a little bit of luck involved and networks. I do think it's possible, but it's a lot more possible if you have education and a network. And if you have a network of people with means especially. It's much, much harder if you come from a network with very few means and little education, and no support for getting more. It's basically sticky.

**Who can obtain the American dream.** Participants discussed what people have to have in order to obtain the traditional notion of the American dream. Two participants stated people with advanced education or who work hard can achieve the American Dream. Four participants noted how people from the dominant culture have a better chance to achieve the American Dream than people from the nondominant culture. Madison stated, “White. White people. The dominant culture or who seems to be the dominant culture.” Sophie shared, “I guess, people who are able to get a job and a good job, a well paying job; and that come from a family that maybe provides for them when they’re younger to be able to get to that place.” Two participants mentioned the role luck plays in the American Dream. Jane stated, “That dream, people with privilege and some other people who just have personality disorders and really good luck.”

### **Clinical Experiences**

Clinical experiences were discussed throughout the interview process because the interview was conducted with counselors who were interviewed by a counselor. Specifically, participants were asked to talk about how they conceptualize client cases in order to ascertain whether participants use a general multicultural framework (Sue et al., 1992) to conceptualize client cases or if they integrate multicultural broaching (Day-Vines et al., 2007) into relationship building. No participants indicated they use multicultural frameworks, assessment, or broaching

when conceptualizing client cases. Two participants responded, “Everything,” and then expanded further. For example, Joan stated, “Oh, gosh, everything. I worked with children through adults. Now I've just been working with children and families too. That's a key component of what we do in everything. Their family history, medical, financial, academic, and everything. I'm very holistic.”

Three participants stated they ask clients what has brought them to therapy, what their family history is, and what their goals are. Two participants stated they ask clients about their early development and their substance use/substance use history. Eleven other singular responses were given and included client strengths and barriers, trauma history, and medical background.

### **Summary**

The other findings from this study include information about social class group designations, strengths and limitations of social class groups (MSC and LSC), perceptions regarding the *American Dream*, and how counselors use social class in clinical case conceptualization. Generally, participants indicated social class group designations were based on money or other resources, education, and type of housing people had. When asked how people know what social class they are in, again, most participants responded in terms of financial strength or whether one relied on public assistance. Others were not sure people had awareness of their social class. When responding to the interviewer regarding their notions of how people changed social classes or “class jumped” (Nelson et al., 2006), most participants spoke of upward mobility based on income or exposure to opportunities. While some participants mentioned downward mobility, they indicated it, too, was related to finances, or perhaps a value choice.

When asked about the strengths and limitations of social class (MSC and LSC) responses

were varied. Participants described LSC strengths as strong, supportive families, hard work, and resilience. They noted education as the LSC limitation. Participants reported they thought resources and accessibility were the greatest MSC strengths, while the chief limitations were related to money (not having enough to do anything one wanted) and ways of being (being conservative and not taking too many risks).

When asked about their understanding of the *American Dream*, most respondents reported some aspect of the traditional definition of the concept: those who work hard will be rewarded with success. In this case, participants described success using the iconic images of the house, cars, 2.5 children, pets, and a white picket fence. When asked who could attain the *American Dream*, some respondents indicated attaining it required education, others said it was attained mostly by the dominant culture, and others mentioned the role of luck.

When asked how they used the concept of social class in their clinical work, none of the participants indicated they use a multicultural counseling framework, cultural broaching (Day-Vines et al., 2007), or cultural assessment, and accordingly, no participants mentioned social class as part of their case conceptualization. Some participants may have implied they considered social class when they spoke about including “everything” when conceptualizing clinical cases, but this is not clear.

While participants in this study were aware of the SES dimensions of social class and spoke of it frequently, they did not focus on the broader notions of social class that relate to a cultural understanding of the construct that includes the totality of attitudes, beliefs, consciousness, values, behaviors, and interactions that impact person’s personal and group worldviews based on their social location, resources, and experiences with their social class affiliation(s) (Kraus et al., 2012; Liu, Soleck, et al., 2004; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Smith, 2006;



Smith et al., 2013). These other findings provide a richer understanding of how the counselors in this study perceived social class and SES, and the degree to which they considered these constructs as part of their counseling practice.

## Chapter Seven

The purpose of this study was to describe counselors' understanding and awareness of social class and socioeconomic status (SES) via qualitative, phenomenological inquiry. I posed two research questions:

*How do counselors understand socioeconomic status and social class?*

*What awareness (Personal awareness [person-of-the-therapist] and other-awareness [clients]) do counselors have about SES and social class?*

These questions guided semi-structured interviews designed to understand how counselors' experience and understand social class both in their professional and personal lives.

## Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One, I provided a rationale for the research purpose, and I grounded the research purpose in foundational, multicultural counseling literature. I offered definitions of terms pertinent to this study, and I identified limitations and delimitations. In Chapter Two, the literature review, I defined germane terms more deeply, explicated a theoretical framework, and I reviewed relevant studies related to social class as culture, social class bias, and social class and the counseling relationship. In Chapter Three, I outlined thoroughly the methodology for this study, and I attended to the role of the researcher, the research design, research procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Throughout these three chapters, I exposed a gap in the literature related to social class and SES: There are no authors who explore counselors' understanding and awareness of social class and SES. This study began to fill that gap, and more is known now about how counselors' understand social class and SES, and what awareness they have about social class and SES.

Chapters Four and Five encompass two manuscripts I prepared that answer the research questions for this study. The manuscript that comprises Chapter Four, *Describing Counselors' Understanding and Awareness of Social Class and Socioeconomic Status*, was written for mental health practitioners who work in a variety of settings. In this manuscript, I described four themes related to social class, and three themes related to SES that emerged from the data, and I illustrated each theme with participant quotes. I discussed the results, and outlined limitations and future research. In Chapter Five's manuscript, *Counselors and Classism: Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision*, I presented themes that emerged related to participants' classism experiences and participant demonstrations of classism during the interview process, and supported themes with participant quotes. This manuscript was written for counselor educators and supervisors, therefore implications and discussion centered on counselor education and supervision needs.

In Chapter Six, I outlined study findings outside the scope of the two prepared manuscripts that comprise Chapters Four and Five. I discerned that the additional study findings did indeed inform the answers to the research questions for this study, yet they did so in a different way than the prepared manuscripts. Other findings conveyed in Chapter Six comprised four broad categories: (a) participant beliefs about the differences between social class groups, (b) the strengths and limitations associated with those social class groups, (c) how participants understood the *American Dream*, and (d) clinical experiences. These data will be reported in future manuscripts.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

There are a few limitations associated with this study. First, the sample for this study represented several geographic areas in one state, the Commonwealth of Virginia. If this study

was replicated, it may be helpful to both expand the sample to include participants from other U.S. states, and to restrict the sample to one geographic area or city. It may be helpful to replicate this study in different regions of the U.S. and compare and contrast results from those different areas. Second, the sample size may be different if this study is replicated. Many, but not all, interview questions reached saturation in this study. Saturation was relevant to answering the research questions, and that saturation was reached; yet it would add to the body of literature to reach saturation with all interviews questions, and clearly more participants and resources would have been needed for this to occur.

Third, trustworthiness is vital component of all research endeavors, and especially qualitative research. I took trustworthiness seriously during this study, and I identified my position as a researcher, recorded field notes, used a reflection journal, utilized peer debriefers, and employed member checks. However, these methods do not ensure complete trustworthiness, and data collection and analysis should be replicated by different researchers.

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## Appendix A

### Participant Informed Consent

#### Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

#### Informed Consent Form for (Insert Name of Participant) \_\_\_\_\_

This informed consent is for interview those participating in the dissertation research study entitled, "Understanding Counselors' Social Class Awareness and Knowledge," conducted by counselor education doctoral candidate Jennifer M. Cook, M.Div., M.A., NCC. This research study is approved by Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB), IRB # <INSERT IRB # upon approval> .

#### **This Informed Consent Form has three parts:**

1. Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
2. Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)
3. Pseudonym Selection Sheet

**\*You will be given a copy of all documents\***

#### **Part I: Information Sheet**

##### **Purpose of the Research and Participant Requirements**

I am conducting dissertation research to understand counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. You are invited to participate if you are currently a practicing, licensed counselor (LPC), working in clinical mental health or private practice settings in the Commonwealth of Virginia, who graduated from a counseling master's program no more than 10 years ago. You may **not** participate in this research study if you do not meet all of the above criteria or if you graduated from the counseling master's program at either Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University or Radford University.

##### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your professional standing, and your choice to participate or not will be kept confidential. You may change your mind later and end participation, without consequence, even if earlier you agreed to participate.

##### **Type of Research Intervention**

This is a phenomenological, interview-based research study. You will be interviewed for approximately 60 minutes, and the interview will be take place in a confidential location convenient for you.

##### **Procedures**

You are being asked to participate in a research study about your social class awareness and knowledge. If you accept you will be interviewed by the principal researcher, Jennifer M. Cook.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential, and only the principal researcher will have access to the information from your interview. The interview will be audio and video recorded. The tape/digital file will be kept in a secure location. Interviews will be transcribed by a professional, secure transcription service. After audio recordings are transcribed, you will be invited to review the transcript, and make revisions or additions to the transcript if you wish to do so. The tape/digital file will be destroyed within five years from the date of the interview.

**Duration**

Interviews will take place between October 2013 and December 2013, and will last approximately 60 minutes. As mentioned above, once your interview is transcribed, you will be invited to read over the transcript to verify the transcript and make any revisions or additions you wish. This review process should take no longer than 40 minutes, and will take place via email. I request that comments, if any, be returned within two weeks of receipt.

**Risks**

This research project poses minimal or no risk to participants. Foreseeable risks may include disclosure of personal or confidential information or discomfort discussing feelings pertaining social class or classism experiences. Please note you have the right to stop the interview at any time, to choose what you disclose, or to opt out of the study at any time during or after the interview.

**Benefits**

Benefits may include gaining clarity about your experiences with social class, deeper social class awareness, and gained knowledge about social class.

**Participant Compensation and Reimbursements**

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

**Confidentiality**

None of your identifying information will be shared with anyone outside the interview. The information collected will be kept private and every possible effort will be made to mask any identities. A pseudonym will be assigned for use. Only the researcher will know what your pseudonym is, and the key linking your identity to your pseudonym will be stored separately.

**Sharing the Results**

None of the information you share will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge attained from this research will be shared by the way of a summary of the results. Any direct quotes used in reporting will be written about in terms of your participant pseudonym, not your name. The results and knowledge gained from your participation may be used to contribute to the broader knowledge base of social class via scholarly articles and conference proceedings.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so. Choosing to participate or stopping participation in the interview at any time will not be shared with anyone by the interviewer.

You will have the opportunity to read the transcript of your interview and review your remarks, and/or modify/remove any portions of the interview.

**Who to Contact**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact any of the following:

**Jennifer M. Cook**  
Principal Researcher

303-909-2999  
jmcook@vt.edu

**Dr. Gerard Lawson**  
Dissertation Chairperson

540-231-9703  
glawson@vt.edu

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB). The IRB is charged with the task to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, please go to: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/>.

**If you have questions about your rights in the study, contact:**

Dr. David M. Moore  
Asst. Vice President for Research  
200 Kraft Drive (0497)  
Suite 2000, CRC Bldg. VIII  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  
Telephone: (540) 231-4991  
Email: moored@vt.edu

**Part II: Certificate of Consent**

I have been invited to participate in research about my social class awareness and knowledge. I have read the above information, and have had the opportunity to ask any questions about it, and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily consent to be a participant in this study. By signing below, I give my consent to participate in this study, and I attest to the fact that I am 18 years of age or older.

Print Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III: Pseudonym Selection

Any research findings reported in conference proceedings, journal articles, etc. will use a pseudonym to protect your identity. You may choose your own pseudonym, or one will be assigned to you.

**Do you wish to choose your own pseudonym?**

**Please initial in front of either the word “yes” or the word “no.”**

\_\_\_\_\_ **yes**      \_\_\_\_\_ **no**

**If yes, please write the pseudonym you wish to use here:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Recruitment: Email

#### 1. Initial Email Contact

Dear <INSERT POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT'S NAME>:

My name is Jennifer M. Cook, and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). I am writing to you because I am seeking interview participants for my dissertation study exploring counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. I am hopeful you will consider participating. This research study is approved by Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB), IRB # <INSERT #>.

To date, no research has been conducted about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. Because of this, there is little information about how to help counselors develop skills appropriate for clients from different social class groups. Sharing your social class awareness and knowledge can help to inform other counselors, and to help clients who may not be receiving culturally appropriate counseling services. Any responses you give will not be attributed to you, and your identity will be concealed in any journal articles or conference proceedings.

To participate, you must be a licensed counselor (LPC), practicing in clinical mental health or private practice settings in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and graduated from a counseling master's program less than ten years ago. Right now I am seeking participants who graduated from accredited counseling programs. Unfortunately, graduates from the counseling programs at Virginia Tech or Radford University cannot be considered for this study.

Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, and we can meet in a confidential location at a time and place convenient for you. If you would like to participate, or would like more information, please email me (jmcook@vt.edu) or give me a call: 303-909-2999. I am happy to share more details with you!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Cook, M.Div., M.A., NCC

**2. Follow-Up Email (No response from participant. To be sent seven (7) days after initial contact.)**

Dear <INSERT POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT'S NAME>:

You recently received an email invitation to participate in a research study about social class. Your participation is important to me, and I would like your perspective to be included in our research. Please see original email below:

My name is Jennifer M. Cook, and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). I am writing to you because I am seeking interview participants for my dissertation study exploring counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. I am hopeful you will consider participating. This research study is approved by Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB), IRB # <INSERT #>.

To date, no research has been conducted about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. Because of this, there is little information about how to help counselors develop skills appropriate for clients from different social class groups. Sharing your social class awareness and knowledge can help to inform other counselors, and to help clients who may not be receiving culturally appropriate counseling services. Any responses you give will not be attributed to you, and your identity will be concealed in any journal articles or conference proceedings.

To participate, you must be a licensed counselor (LPC), practicing in clinical mental health or private practice settings in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and graduated from a counseling master's program less than ten years ago. Right now I am seeking participants who graduated from accredited counseling programs. Unfortunately, graduates from the counseling programs at Virginia Tech or Radford University cannot be considered for this study.

Interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, and we can meet in a confidential location at a time and place convenient for you. If you would like to participate, or would like more information, please email me (jmcook@vt.edu) or give me a call: 303-909-2999. I am happy to share more details with you!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Cook, M.Div., M.A., NCC

### 3. Follow-up Email (Response from participant is, “Yes.”)

Dear <INSERT PARTICIPANT NAME>:

Thank you for your response! I am excited you have agreed to participate in my research study.

I want to be sure that you meet the criteria for this study. The criteria is as follows:

1. You are licensed (LPC) to practice counseling in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Your primary work place is either a clinical mental health or private practice setting.
3. You graduated from your counseling master’s program no more than ten years ago.
4. You did **not** graduate with your counseling master’s degree from either Virginia Tech or Radford University.

Please let me know if you do not fit the above criteria.

I want to respect your time and other commitments so I would like to schedule our 60-minute interview as soon as possible. The following are times I am available to meet with you <INSERT THREE (3) DATES/TIMES>. If none of these dates/times work for you, please offer me some dates/times you are available.

I am attaching the consent form for this study to this email so you can review it before we meet. We will go over it in person, and if you have any questions about it prior to our meeting, please let me know.

Thank you again for your response, and your willingness to contribute to the counseling profession!

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Cook, M.Div., M.A., NCC



**4. Follow-up Email (Response from participant is, “No.”)**

Dear <INSERT PARTICIPANT NAME>:

Thank you for your response. I am disappointed you will not be a participant in my research study, but understand you are very busy. If you decide you are able to participate, please do not hesitate to contact me by <INSERT DATE>.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Cook, M.Div., M.A., NCC

## Appendix C

## Recruitment: Telephone Script

Hello, my name is Jennifer Cook, and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). I am calling you because I am seeking interview participants for my dissertation study exploring counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. Do you have a few minutes to speak with me?

**If yes, continue with script. If no, determine a day/time to connect in the future if the participant is interested.**

I am asking licensed counselors to participate in a 60-minute interview at a place and time convenient for them. This research study is approved by Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB), IRB # <INSERT #>. To date, no research has been conducted about counselors' social class awareness and knowledge. Because of this, there is little information about how to help counselors develop skills appropriate for clients from different social class groups. Sharing your social class awareness and knowledge can help to inform other counselors, and to help clients who may not be receiving culturally appropriate counseling services. Any responses you give will not be attributed to you, and your identity will be concealed in any journal articles or conference proceedings.

Is this something you think you would be interested in participating in?

**If yes, continue to screening questions. If no, thank the person for her/his time.**

Would it be okay if I ask you a few questions to ensure you fit the study criteria?

Are a licensed counselor (LPC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia?

**If yes, continue. If no, thank the person for her/his time. Unfortunately she/he does not fit the study criteria.**

Is your primary work place either in clinical mental health or private practice?

**If yes, continue. If no, thank the person for her/his time. Unfortunately she/he does not fit the study criteria.**

Did you graduate from a counseling master's program more than ten years ago?

**If no, continue. If yes, thank the person for her/his time. Unfortunately she/he does not fit the study criteria.**

Which counseling program did you graduate from?

**If the person graduated from a program other than Virginia Tech or Radford University, continue. If the person graduated from Virginia Tech or Radford University, thank the person for her/his time. Unfortunately she/he does not fit the study criteria.**

**If the person meets all research criteria, continue.**

You meet the criteria for this study. Do you have any questions so far? Would you like to participate?

**If yes, continue. If no, thank the person for her/his time.**

As I mentioned, interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, and we can meet in a confidential location at a time and place convenient for you. Can we schedule that time now?

**If yes, schedule interview. If not, set up how (email or phone) and when to make the appointment.**

Do you have an email address? I would like to send you the consent form for your review prior to our meeting. We will go over it when we meet, and I am happy to answer any questions about it prior to our meeting as well.

**If yes, record email address and send consent form. If no, ask for U.S. Postal Service Address and send consent form there.**

Thank you for your time. I'm excited to talk with you in person, and to hear about your experiences. I look forward to seeing you on <INSERT DATE/TIME> at <INSERT PLACE>. My phone number is 303-909-2999, and my email is jmcook@vt.edu if you need to

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

Let me begin by thanking you for taking time to talk with me about your experiences of social class. Before I begin the interview, I am required to have you sign a consent form indicating your consent to participate in this study. Additionally, it provides you with my contact information if you have any questions or comments about the study. *(Give participant the forms. Go through the different sections, answer any questions, and participant will sign the consent form and fill out the pseudonym sheet).*

### Semi-Structured Interview

#### Introduction

As I mentioned to you earlier, this interview is about social class, and the way *you* understand social class. There are no right or wrong answers because your experience is your truth, and I value the experiences you've had. I want to remind you that you have the option to not answer any questions I ask you, and that you are free to disclose or not disclose anything you choose. Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### Demographic Questions

What counseling license(s) do you currently hold? \_\_\_\_\_

In what setting(s) do you practice counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you characterize the geographic area where you practice?

\_\_\_\_ Urban    \_\_\_\_ Suburban    \_\_\_\_ Rural    \_\_\_\_ Other

What year did you graduate from your counseling master's program? \_\_\_\_\_

At which college/university did you complete your counseling master's program?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your race? \_\_\_\_\_

How old are you? Or if more appropriate, which range best describes your age?

\_\_\_\_ 21-29    \_\_\_\_ 30-39    \_\_\_\_ 40-49    \_\_\_\_ 50-59    \_\_\_\_ 60-69    \_\_\_\_ 70 and over

What other demographics are important to you that help me to understand your identity?

#### Questions and Probes

1. First, when you hear the term, "social class." what comes to mind for you?

*Probe: Provide some elements of what social class can mean if participant is unable to come up with anything.*

2. What about the term, “socioeconomic status (SES)?” What comes to mind when you hear that term?

*Probe: Provide the indicators of education, income, and occupation if participant is unable to come up with anything. Possibly fill in categories the participant has missed in question one and two.*

3. What do you think defines the differences between social class groups?

4. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, *American Dream*?

*Follow-up: Who is able to obtain the American Dream?*

5. Do you think most people are aware of their social class standing? How does that happen?

6. Tell me how social class was part of your experiences growing up?

*Follow-up: What about now? How does social class impact your life?*

*Follow-up: If the participant has changed social class groups: What events/experiences marked that change for you?*

7. What strengths do you have that come from your social class group?  
Limitations?

8. Tell me how you’ve felt advantaged/disadvantaged because of your social class.

*Follow-up: Tell me how you’ve felt advantaged/disadvantaged because of social class? (opposite of the initial question)*

9. Let’s move on to talking about your experience with clients. What elements do you take into account when you conceptualize client cases?

10. Consider your current counseling setting. What social class groups do most of your clients come from?

*Follow-up: What are the strengths of clients from that social class group?*

*Follow-up: What are the limitations they face?*

11. When you notice a difference between your clients’ social class group and your own, how does that affect the counseling relationship?

*Probe: How did the difference(s) affect the counseling relationship?*

*Follow-up: What are the advantages of counseling someone from the social class group the same as your own? Disadvantages?*

*Follow-up: What are the advantages of counseling someone from a social class group **different** from your own? Disadvantages?*

12. Do you remember if social class was ever discussed in your counseling master’s program?

*Follow-up: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?*

Thank you for your time. It has been great to talk with you, and to hear about your experiences. I will email you a copy of the transcript of this interview as soon as I receive it. You are welcome to make any additions you would like.

## Appendix E

## IRB Approval Letter



**Office of Research Compliance**  
 Institutional Review Board  
 North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech  
 300 Turner Street NW  
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959  
 email irb@vt.edu  
 website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 25, 2013  
**TO:** Gerard Francis Lawson, Jennifer Michele Cook  
**FROM:** Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)  
**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Describing Counselors' Social Class Awareness and Knowledge  
**IRB NUMBER:** 13-770

Effective October 25, 2013, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

**PROTOCOL INFORMATION:**

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7**  
 Protocol Approval Date: **September 12, 2013**  
 Protocol Expiration Date: **September 11, 2014**  
 Continuing Review Due Date\*: **August 28, 2014**

\*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

**FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:**

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

*Invent the Future*

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY  
*An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution*

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

\* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.



## Appendix F

## Participant Responses: Strengths of People from Low Social Class

<b>Strength Given</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Hard work	3
Resilience	3
Strong, supportive families	3
Ability to see different perspectives	1
Appreciation for education	1
Community	1
Determination	1
Drive	1
Independence	1
Know value of money	1
Loyalty	1
Name/reputation means something	1
Togetherness	1

## Appendix G

## Participant Responses: Limitations of People from Low Social Class

<b>Limitation Given</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Educational limitations	4
Not coming to sessions	2
Assuming hostile intent	1
Chaos at home	1
Defensiveness	1
Don't have a secure family system	1
Don't have everything they need	1
Don't know help is possible	1
Don't prepare for the future	1
Don't think through things	1
Ignorance	1
Lack of motivation*	1
Lack of motivation stems from parents not graduating high school*	1
Lack of motivation stems from one parent being incarcerated*	1
Lack proper nutrition	1
Life circumstances out of children's control	1
Limited exposure to experiences	1
Moving too frequently/switching schools	1
No money	1
Parents don't have information to pass down	1
Rigid thinking	1
<b>Limitation Given</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Sense of distrust	1

Think change is unrealistic	1
Too much resilience and independence when trying to work through trauma	1
Transportation	1

\*All responses about lack of motivation came from the same participant

## Appendix H

## Participant Responses: Strengths of People from Middle Social Class

<b>Strength Given</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Accessibility	3
Resources	3
Able to open up	1
Comfort	1
Empathetic/caring	1
Family support	1
Get to go to college	1
Happier because there's less worry	1
Hard work leads to comfortable life	1
Heal faster because they have fewer negative messages related to trauma	1
Helpful	1
If you try hard, there will be a path	1
Life is easier	1
Security	1
Self-esteem is higher, because they feel more successful	1
Trust quickly	1
Willingness to come back to counseling	1

## Appendix I

## Participant Responses: Limitation of People from Middle Social Class

<b>Limitation Given</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Money	11
Be careful; don't follow your bliss	1
Can lack gratitude	1
Don't always have compassion for people	1
Have to make sure everything looks good on the outside, even if things aren't good on the inside	1
High anxiety	1
Impatience	1
May not be prepared to be on their own after college	1
Scheduling conflicts	1
Sense of normal can be "judgey"	1
Struggles with employment	1
You can assume everyone is middle class because you are	1

## Appendix J

## Audit Trail

Date	Activity
09/03/2013	Defended prospectus. Prospectus approved with minor revisions. Integrated suggestions/changes recommended by committee.
09/04-09/10	Prepared/Revised IRB
09/10/2013	Met with GL to approve changes for IRB re: participant selection, method to obtain participants. Determined a \$10 thank you gift card will be given to participants. Divided VA into five geographic regions to obtain a variety of participants (NoVa, Valley Region, SW VA, Tide Water, Richmond). Initially will contact 8 people in each region.
09/11/2013	Finalized IRB. Submitted IRB to VT.
09/13/2013	Received IRB approval.
09/14/2013	<p>Began to work through VA LPC database to determine participants. Set up spreadsheet of potential participants. License date range is between 2006 and 2013. Will expand earlier if number of participants are not met.</p> <p>Eliminated LPCs who do not live in VA. Removed folks who live in AK, AP, CA, CO, DC, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WV. Included DC in the elimination.</p> <p>All LPCs in VA = 3,627  LPCs with a VA license licensed between 2006 and Jan 2013 = 1342  LPCs with a VA license NOT living in VA = 138  Remaining list = 1204</p>
09/20/2013	GL sent email to folks who may be available to do pilot interviews. Decided that graduates from VT/Radford OK for pilot interviews. Rest of criteria will continue to be in place.
09/21/2013	Sent emails to those who responded with interest to GL's initial email. Notified one person I could not interview her because I have a prior relationship with her, and notified another person I could not interview her because she is not LPC.
09/23/2013	Set up first pilot interview with JS. Will meet with her on Wednesday, 09/25 at 1:30pm at her office in Roanoke.
09/25/2013	<p>Finalized second pilot interview with MS for Thursday, 09/26 at 1pm at her office in Roanoke.</p> <p>Familiarized myself with audio equipment.</p> <p>Set up an interview "checklist" to be sure I bring everything I need to each interview.</p> <p>Conducted first pilot interview.</p> <p>Recorded field notes/reflections.</p>
09/26/2013	<p>Conducted second pilot interview.</p> <p>Made adjustments to interview questions.</p> <p>Filled out field notes/reflections.</p>
09/30/2013	Reflected on pilot interview experience and decided to eliminate NoVa for the time being because it is culturally very different from the rest of Virginia, and people in that region often hold licenses in more than one state because of it's proximity to Maryland and Virginia. Will revisit this criterion if finding participants becomes an issue.

	Began Google search of participant emails. Found one email.
10/23/2013	Exhausted goodtherapy.com list of therapists. Sent emails to 6 therapists.  Looked for email addresses via Aetna website. Does not give email addresses.  Exhausted networktherapy.com list of therapists. Sent emails to 2 therapists. (had to abbreviate invitation email due to space issues on site).  Exhausted psychologytoday.com list of therapists. Sent emails to 32 (had to abbreviate invitation email due to space issues on site).
10/24/13	Responded to two potential participants. No further response yet.  Submitted revised IRB to add an additional question to the interview protocol about the "American Dream."
10/25/13	Decided to try to use "Linkedin" to try and find more participants, especially from Southwest VA and Southside (least number of contacts from other sources). Found one email address.  Received IRB revision approval today.
10/27/13	Began to cull through the VCA directory, searching each person, individually, by name. Made it through southside (4/57), southwest (6/87), and valley (13/100) regions. 23 new emails were sent.
10/28/13	Continued to work through the VCA directory. Went through about 100 more names, and sent 10 new emails.
10/29/13	Scheduled first full interview for 11/8 in Petersburg, VA!!  Continued to work through the VCA directory. Finished Central region list (17/159).  Have been asking each person who does not qualify if they know someone who does. Has not given me any thing yet, and will continue to ask.
10/30/13	Finished going through VCA directory and concluded with Tidewater region list (21/255).  Current stats of emails sent: Central: 51 Southside: 6 Southwest: 8 Tidewater: 36 Valley: 19  Cross-referenced VCA database with emails sent from goodtherapy, network therapy, and psychology today sites. Only found one cross over, and sent follow-up email.  Scheduled second interview for 11/15 in Charlottesville, VA.
10/31/13	Scheduled third interview for 11/10 Lynchburg, VA; fourth interview scheduled for 11/14 in VA Beach, VA; fifth interview scheduled for 11/6 in Forest, VA.  As of tonight, five interviews are scheduled over the next two weeks.
11/03/13	Sent follow up emails to people found on psychtoday, goodtherapy, and network therapy sites. Discovered today that these external sites have a "website" button, and many therapists I'm following up with have websites with emails addresses (doh! Moment).  Sent follow-up emails to all VCA folks who were sent an email on 10/27 and did not respond (7 days ago). Will follow-up with folks from 10/28 tomorrow, 11/4.  Scheduled 6 <sup>th</sup> interview for 11/14 in Williamsburg, VA.
11/04/13	Sent next round of follow-up emails.

	Scheduled 7 <sup>th</sup> interview for 11/13 in VA Beach, VA.
11/05/13	Sent final round of follow up emails.
11/6/13	Conducted first interview in Forest, VA.
	Scheduled 8 <sup>th</sup> interview for 11/16 in Chesterfield, VA.
11/7/13	Submitted audio recording 1 for transcription.
	Scheduled 9 <sup>th</sup> interview for 11/15 in King George, VA.
11/8/13	Received transcript 1 from transcriptionist.
	Conducted second interview in Petersburg, VA
11/9/13	Edited/checked transcript 1. Sent to participant for review.
	Submitted audio recording 2 for transcription.
11/10/13	Received transcript 2 from transcriptionist. There were major errors with this transcript. Made all changes/corrections myself.
	Conducted third interview in Forest, VA
11/11/13	Submitted audio recording 3 for transcription.
11/12/13	Finished making edits to transcript 2. Sent transcript 2 to participant for review/member checking. Received transcript 3 from transcription service.
11/13/13	Conducted fourth interview in Virginia Beach, VA  Received transcript 1 back from participant. She read transcript and did not make any changes.  Continued coding transcript 2.
11/14/13	Edited/checked transcript 3. Sent transcript 3 to participant for review/member checking.  Conducted fifth interview in Virginia Beach, VA  Conducted sixth interview in Williamsburg, VA
11/15/13	Submitted audio recordings 4, 5, and 6 for transcription. Did not have correct cable to pull audio from recorder, so had to wait until I reached a store to be able to get a new one.  Sent member checked transcript to a researcher outside this project for coding.  Conducted seventh interview in Charlottesville, VA  Conducted eighth interview in King George, VA  Submitted audio recordings 7 and 8 for transcription.
11/16/13	Conducted ninth interview in Richmond, VA  Received transcripts for interviews 6 and 8 from transcription service.
11/17/13	Submitted audio recording 9 for transcription. Edited/checked transcripts 6 and 8. Sent transcripts 6 and 8 to the respective participants for review/member checking.  Received audio recordings 5 and 7 from transcription service.  Received transcript 2 back from participant. She made edits, particularly with regard to



	<p>concealing identifying information contained in the transcript.</p> <p>Printed transcript 1, and began coding.</p>
11/18/13	<p>Edited/checked transcripts 5 and 7. Sent transcripts 5 and 7 to the respective participants for review/member checking</p> <p>Waiting to receive transcripts 4 and 9 from transcription service.</p> <p>Received transcript back from participant 7. Px made changes to document.</p> <p>Continued coding.</p>
11/19/13	<p>Received transcript from participant 8. She did not make any changes and said the transcript was "fine."</p>
11/20/13	<p>Received transcripts 4 and 9 from transcription service.</p> <p>Did not receive a proofed transcript from participant 3; Deadline was today.</p> <p>Received transcript 1 back from external coder. Compared/contrasted external coder's codes/comments. Differences were minimal.</p>
11/21/13	<p>Edited/checked transcripts 4 and 9. Sent transcripts 4 and 9 to the respective participants for review/member checking.</p> <p>Printed transcripts 3, 7, and 8. Continued coding.</p>
11/22/13-12/13/13	<p>Continued open coding.</p>
12/13/13	<p>Finished open coding. 339 total transcript pages. Hundreds, maybe thousands of codes.</p>
12/23/13	<p>Began sorting codes (axial coding). Sorted codes based on interview questions as well as other information that came forth not elicited specifically by interview questions.</p> <p>Used Excel spreadsheet with different "pages," with each page indicating different themes in the transcripts. Participant pseudonym, code, and text were recorded. Some codes were modified from the original coding if they were not inline with px wording or if meaning was being imputed.</p> <p>Some codes were categorized more than one time because they fit more than one category.</p>
01/13/14	<p>Finished code sort. 1,330 codes in 26 categories.</p> <p>Sent sorted code spread sheet to external reviewers to ensure 1) codes are not imputing meaning 2) codes are sorted into themes that make sense 3) other themes are not emerging that I am not seeing.</p>
01/15/14	<p>Received sorted code spread sheet from external reviewers. Made modifications based on feedback.</p> <p>Began selective coding. Began coding field notes and reflective journal.</p>
01/20/14	<p>Finished selective coding.</p> <p>Assessed selective codes re: manuscripts for dissertation. Made broad outline for manuscripts</p>
01/21/14	<p>Met with GL. Given deadline for manuscripts: 01/27/14.</p>
01/22/14-01/27/14	<p>Determined direction of both manuscripts.</p> <p>Researched and decided on journals for each manuscript, and geared each manuscript to particular journals (manuscript 1: JCD; manuscript 2: CE&amp;S)</p> <p>Wrote two manuscripts for dissertation</p>
01/27/14	<p>Submitted both manuscripts to GL for feedback.</p>

01/29/14	Received example of chapters 6 and 7 needed for dissertation.
01/30/14- 02/02/14	Wrote chapters 6 and 7. Submitted to GL for feedback.
02/03/14	Received edits for chapter 4 from GL.
02/10/14	Received edits for chapter 5 from GL.
02/12/14	Full dissertation revisions began.
02/14/14— 02/16/14	Continued dissertation revisions.
02/15/15	Contacted committee to set defense date.
02/16/14	Received chapters 6 and 7 from GL.
02/17/14	Sent final draft to committee for review.
03/18/14	Defended dissertation.