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Abstract
This manuscript describes an empirically designed internship course that utilized the Ecological Social Justice School Counseling theory to teach internship students how to engage in antiracist practice to address social determinants of health in schools. The research reports on the eight school counseling internship students' experiences, through five themes and 12 subthemes, highlighting the ways they increased awareness of SDOH, antiracist practice, and related constructs at their schools and with students including their action toward addressing SDOH, advocacy, barriers, and growth. Implications for counselor educators and site supervisors conclude.

KEYWORDS
antiracism, ecological social justice school counseling, school counseling internship, social determinants of health

Antiracism is rooted in action and is a process of actively identifying and opposing racism in all forms. Negatively influenced by systemic racism, the social determinants of health (SDOH) adversely impact vulnerable and underserved students and families (SDOH; Hassen et al., 2021). SDOH are conditions in the environments in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that affect health, wellbeing, and quality of life outcomes and risks. They are typically divided into the five domains of economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment (Healthy People 2030, n.d.). The SDOH are particularly influential for children including physical and mental health outcomes, educational opportunity gaps, and adverse health outcomes that have a lasting impact into adulthood (Healthy People 2030, n.d.).

One example of this is redlining, a racist practice by federal loan corporations which still adversely impacts minority communities today through fewer capital investment and service opportunities, and limited resources such as public transportation and supermarkets (Pearcy, 2020). Other examples include lack of school funding for Black and Brown communities and unequal access to the technology needed to shift to virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (Hassan & Daniel, 2020). To actively oppose, resist, and act on systemic racism is a large task, which can be addressed in multiple ways. Resistance of systemic racism which specifically targets addressing SDOH in school settings may occur through advanced and targeted training with school counselors in training (SCITs).

ANTIRACISM IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

Kendi (2019) defines an antiracist as "one who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea" (p. 13). By its very nature, antiracism is the active dismantling of racist policies, procedures, and systems in order to equitably distribute resources and power. To apply antiracism to school counseling, understanding of the racist policies and practices that permeate US school systems, and thereby school counseling, is necessary (Clemons & Cokley, 2022). For example, dress code policies are often examples of racism and anti-Blackness in schools, as student appearances which differ from white heterosexual standards are more often targeted by school administrations as rule violations (Martin & Brooks, 2020; Pettway, 2017). Recent events such as the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have also ignited the call for antiracist school counseling, and school counselor preparation programs must heed the call (Mason et al., 2021).

In response to the need for actionable antiracism in schools, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) created a position statement which provided suggestions for engaging in antiracism through increasing incorporation of antiracism into SCIT coursework (Mason et al, 2021). However, although we have statements and guidelines, current school counselors are requesting more practical action steps toward antiracist practice which requires concrete direction and focus on an antiracism issue such as SDOH (ASCA, 2022). Researchers have also suggested that school counselor training must include experiences beyond just a focus on social justice (Gantt et al., 2021; Johnson & Brookover, 2021). For instance, Gantt et al. (2021) found that although school counseling interns were aware of the SDOH challenges faced by students, they perceived themselves as unprepared to address those challenges, reporting lack of training and difficulty applying their theoretical understanding to real-world problems. Counselor educators have also noted challenges incorporating training on SDOH issues due to lack of support from colleagues and already full curriculums (Waters et al., 2022). To address these challenges, field-based courses are equipped to assist students in growth through the application of conceptual knowledge to action (Bohecker & Doughty Horn, 2016). The Ecological Social Justice School Counseling Theory (ESJSC) may be utilized by counselor educators and school counselors to this end.

ECOLOGICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOOL COUNSELING THEORY

The ESJSC theory focuses on engaging the ecological systems of students and addressing inequities within those systems which impact a student's personal and academic life (Johnson & Brookover, 2021), and positions school counselors to apply an antiracist lens to their efforts toward dismantling systemic racism within the targeted SDOH domains (Johnson & Brookover, 2021). The ecological focus of the theory implores school counselors to engage systems, which influence SDOH (Mcmahon et al., 2014), including policies, practices (intervention and prevention strategies), equity, and access issues (Griffin & Steen, 2011). Engaging in ESJSC includes four distinct actions (Johnson et al., 2021): (1) actively seeking to understand and increase awareness about SDOH, including the root causes being systemic racism; (2) implementing universal assessment of SDOH needs; (3) addressing

inequities for and with students, families, and communities; and (4) advocating for the expansion of school counseling to consider inequities in the ecological systems of students.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERNSHIP CLASS

The school counseling internship is a six-credit hour course that includes 600 h of supervised field experience in a school setting, including 240 h of direct work with clients and 150 min of supervision a week during the last semester in the program (CACREP, 2016). For the course described in this manuscript, the focus was intentionally centered on opportunities and efforts to address SDOH challenges faced by students and their families, and ESJSC theory was utilized. Utilizing ESJSC as the course framework modified the didactic and experiential portion of the internship course, while the standard course expectations as outlined by CACREP remained. In addition, the university supervisor provided a 45-min self-guided narrated PowerPoint training for on-site school supervisors, as well as zoom meetings to discuss any related questions.

Didactic modification

Utilizing ESJSC theory, the first action focuses on knowledge, specifically "Actively seeking to understand and increase awareness about SDOH." Each week, the internship course started with a 30- to 45-min discussion on an SDOH topic and resource provided by the instructor. Time was spent on explaining the concept in the reading and/or video, as well as discussing the applicability to their specific internship sites. A developmental approach was taken with the didactic materials in that the readings/resources started broad (i.e., Week 1—resources that define SDOH) and began to narrow in focus with an emphasis on practicality (i.e., using a SDOH screening tool). Students also brought in additional resources for discussion (e.g., podcast, research articles, government, and community resource websites).

Assignments

The assignments were specifically developed to increase knowledge, skills, and action from an antiracist, social justice, and ecological perspective, specifically targeting SDOH challenges at their site. The three foundational assignments included accountability measures for their personal growth and development around SDOH and their action in supporting students and communities. Assignments were pass/fail and were submitted via an online course management system.

Exploring circles of influence

This assignment directly aligned with the third ESJSC theory action, "Addressing inequities within their systems of influence and other systems for and with students, families, and communities." For the circles of influence assignment, SCIT were asked to map their systems of power and influence in addressing inequities. They were to focus on *Influence*, things they believe they can manage or address (i.e., assess students for food insecurity), their *Concern*, things they believed would be difficult to manage or address (e.g., provide access to healthy food for all students), and their access to *Supports*, the people, organizations, policies, elected officials, university colleagues and supervisor, or other things they identify that can support their efforts toward addressing and managing SDOH challenges at their school. This assignment assists SCIT in understanding the power they currently possess and developing a plan for barriers they might incur while addressing SDOH.

Supervisor ESJSC theory discussion and goal setting

This assignment is related to the charge of ESJSC to actively seek to increase awareness about SDOH and the fourth action, "Advocating for the expansion of school counseling to consider inequities in the ecological systems of students." Students were prompted to have a discussion with their on-site supervisor and administrators about their application of ESJSC to the school counseling internship experience. The discussion was structured and included three components: (1) *Theory*, SCIT discuss the use of ESJSC as a theoretical framework for their internship experience; (2) *Approach*, SCIT discuss addressing SDOH challenges in the school; and (3) *Goal*, SCIT co-develop shared goals with their supervisors related to continuing education on SDOH, assessing for SDOH (i.e., which approach), and other goals that are important toward dismantling systemic racism at their site. The goal was to build SCIT self and professional advocacy skills, increase awareness of SDOH, and develop co-conspirators in such efforts.

Journaling

This longitudinal reflective assignment reinforced all actions as described by the ESJSC and focused on accountability for action and inaction while providing space for reflection on SCIT utilization of ESJSC at their sites. Accountability was built into the prompts for the journal entry. For example, in one prompt, students were asked to "reflect on SDOH issues they addressed and SDOH issues they noticed but did not address." The journal allowed them to track their action and inaction, fears, successes, and overall feelings as they grew into using a more systemic ecological lens for school counseling.

Thus, the focus of this manuscript is twofold: (1) to describe a curricular innovation, namely, an empirically designed internship course that utilized the Ecological Social Justice School Counseling theory (ESJSC; Johnson & Brookover, 2021) to teach internship students how to engage in antiracist practice to address SDOH in schools and (2) to explore SCIT experiences using ESJSC theory during internship. This study was guided by one research question: *What are the experiences of SCIT engaging in antiracist practice through an ecological social justice framed internship experience?*

METHODS

This study sought to explore SCIT experiences using a qualitative approach to gain a rich and complex understanding of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis (TA), with a social constructivist lens in which meaning is viewed as co-created by experiences and interactions with others in society (Andrews, 2012), was chosen as most aligned with the data and goals of the study. The data in the current study is composed of varying perspectives and experiences. King (2004) noted that TA should be utilized when examining multiple perspectives and summarizing key features of the data; our goal was to understand the experiences and actions of SCITs as they embarked on using ESJSC theory to engage in antiracist school counseling practice.

Procedure and participants

At the conclusion of the internship course, participants ($n = 8$) received an email from a graduate assistant not affiliated with the course. In the email students were asked if they consent to their assignments being deidentified and utilized as data to further explore the use of ESJSC as a framework for internship. All students consented. The students identified as women ($n = 6$) and men ($n = 2$), Black ($n = 1$) and White ($n = 7$), and in elementary ($n = 4$), middle ($n = 2$), and high ($n = 2$) school

TABLE 1 Participant and site demographics

Participant demographics			Site placement demographics				
Pseudonym	Sex	Race	Site	Total pupils	Percentage of free & reduced lunch	Racial-ethnic diversity	School counselor caseload
Anita	Female	White	Middle school	979	15% free 2% reduced	10% Asian, 8% Black, 6% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, 73% White	696:1
Ella	Female	White	Elementary school	733	77% free 15% reduced	1% Asian, 27% Black, 60% Hispanic, 19% multiracial, 10% White	413:1
Nia	Female	White	Elementary school	696	35% free, 9% reduced	2% Asian, 28% Black, 7% Hispanic, 6% multiracial, 57% White	367:1
Lisa	Female	Black	Elementary school	588	95% free, 5 % reduced	93% Black, 2% Hispanic, 2% multiracial, 3% White	229:1
Kaylin	Female	White	Middle school	1023	12% free, 3% reduced	27% Asian, 10% Black, 6% Hispanic, 5% multiracial, 52% White	350:1
Tia	Female	White	High school	1828	12% free, 2% reduced	8% Black, 7% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 66% White	341:1
Mark	Male	White	Elementary school	825	34% free, 8% reduced	3% Asian, 33% Black, 14% Hispanic, 5% multiracial, 44% White	326:1
Jeff	Male	White	High school	N/A	100% free lunch	N/A	1 PT school counselor

settings. The school settings were diverse, as noted in Table 1. Before the course started, the first author obtained approval from the University Institutional Review Board.

Trustworthiness

We engaged in several methods to ensure trustworthiness in findings, including a meticulous audit trail of initial and continuing assumptions, a codebook, and memos related to the analysis and emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility of the study was achieved through triangulation of data (e.g., analyzing both participant journals and the mapping assignment) and researcher triangulation (Creswell, 2013). We also engaged in consensus coding through reaching shared agreement on codes and themes during research meetings (Creswell, 2013). Transferability was achieved through using

thick rich descriptions of the participant experiences increasing the ability for others to determine if the findings from the current study can transfer to their setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability of the study was achieved by utilizing an audit trail and the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which are logical and traceable, and documented below in the data analysis section. Finally, the first author, as instructor of the course, was involved in prolonged engagement with the participants and the subject matter.

Data analysis

Theoretical TA was utilized for the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through a theory-driven approach (i.e., deductive) to TA, we systematically coded and analyzed the qualitative data linked to the ESJSC theory (Johnson & Brookover, 2021), while remaining open to emerging codes and themes. We closely followed the phases of TA as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, each research team member became familiar with the data through reading and rereading the entire dataset (i.e., assignments); we then each verbally shared our initial thoughts in a meeting; Next, we each coded the qualitative data (i.e., three transcripts each which allowed for overlap between coders), through the ESJSC tenets while allowing for other codes to emerge. The entire data set was systematically worked through, and a shared spreadsheet was used to copy extracts of the data and collate each code together. This allowed us to then meet and review the list of codes to search for themes, which produced a collection of candidate themes, subthemes, and the coded data extracts related to them. The next step was to review the transcripts using the updated codebook and add additional coded data extracts; next, we refined the themes and each assessed the themes to ensure a coherent pattern which reflected the meaning of the data set as a whole. Discrepancies were addressed through discussion and reaching consensus. Lastly, we collaborated to define and name the final themes.

Researcher positionality

The research team consisted of five members: four counselor educators and one counselor education doctoral candidate. All researchers were women, with two identifying as Black and three identifying as White. All five have experience in teaching and supervising counselors-in-training and research experience in antiracism and SDOH. The first author was the instructor of the internship course, and while she has always taught the course with a focus on ecological systems, this was the first time the course was taught using ESJSC theory. As a team, we engaged in collaborative and Socratic dialogue consistently in research meetings to monitor bias and main assumptions prior to beginning data analysis, which included: (a) that students would be excited, but also challenged, by the course's call for action in antiracist school counseling and (b) ESJSC theory provides a valuable framework leading to SCIT engaging in antiracist school counseling practices.

FINDINGS

The ESJSC theory includes four distinct actions that were used as the four priori themes; one additional theme emerged from the data (i.e., theme 5: Growth), and 12 subthemes captured the experiences of SCIT who utilized ESJSC theory during internship.

Actively seeking to understand and increase awareness about SDOH

Theme one is identified by participants' description and reflection of the activities they engaged in to increase their understanding, knowledge, skills, and awareness as it relates to SDOH, social justice,

and antiracist practices. Several participants discussed choosing websites, podcasts, internet media, and articles. Tia noted, "I picked this article because it offered insight into how anyone can become a leader for social justice and change in their school… it inspires and reminds us that we are powerful and can make a change." Ella noted that she chose an article to essentially gain basic familiarity with the topic of SDOH: "I chose the SDOH article I found because it helped me to learn more about SDOH. I did not have a familiarity with SDOH before this class." Three subthemes explained SCIT reasoning for engaging in certain activities to increase their understanding: motivation, consultation, and exposure.

Motivation

The first subtheme is defined by SCIT reason for their choice of topic and medium to increase their understanding and awareness of SDOH and related topics. Many participants discussed choosing information to support their efforts with a specific student. For example, Nia said, "I started looking into SDOH as they relate to mental health access because of my student who misses having a counselor but knows that they are expensive." Similarly, Kaylin noted, "The topic was chosen because my internship site has a few McKinney Vento students … I realized I needed to understand what made families eligible for this service." For context, McKinney Vento is federal legislation to support unhoused students (https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/). Other participants discussed wanting to be a successful school counselor in the future and wanting information they deemed as important to move toward that goal. Lisa described how as a school counselor it is critical to "…understand how you will ensure equity for all students through education and in general. Also, to see how I can teach, advocate, and talk about social justice to help my students be successful in school and after." In addition to why SCIT chose certain areas to delve deeper into as it relates to SDOH and related topics, SCIT also increased their awareness through their consultation and exposure.

Consultation

Subtheme 2 is defined by SCIT describing meeting with experts to seek advice that would increase their understanding of SDOH. Lisa said, "I plan to ask my site supervisor if they have any data regarding this school and how it compares to other social determinants because I have noticed that this school has extremely high needs." When Kaylin discussed wanting to understand options to support students who were experiencing housing instability, she also noted consulting with her school counselor: "Ask [blinded name of PSC] what qualifies as permanent housing under McKinney Vento. Ask how they currently disseminate information about the McKinney Vento program…"

Exposure

Subtheme 3 is described by participants discussing an influencing experience that increased their SDOH knowledge and awareness. For example, Mark discussed how working in a diverse environment increases his awareness and influenced the types of readings he chose:

> This month I read an article on creating culturally sustaining classroom practices… I have learned a lot in my current placement at [Elementary School]. It has been the most diverse group of students that I have worked with, and I have continued to learn a lot about working from a more culturally aware standpoint.

Similarly, Ella shared,

I have been aware that many of the students at my site come from families with low socioeconomic status, but it became more apparent to me this week how some of the families are struggling. This is because I went on a series of six home visits with the school social worker.

Universal assessment of SDOH with all students

Theme 2 describes participants' experiences attempting to apply and understand universal assessment of SDOH. The participants had a general understanding of the importance of universal assessment, though seemed to long for continued opportunity to engage in such assessments. For example, Lisa stated that she desired to "…see if there is a way to assess by asking students about what may go on in their environment." Moreover, participants further expressed both how they planned to engage in universal SDOH assessment, as well as their perspectives in general conveyed by two subthemes: preparation and perspectives.

Preparation

This subtheme reflects participants' efforts to prepare for engaging in universal assessment and surveillance of SDOH with students. Nia highlighted her action toward developing a universal assessment: "I was able to start working on a universal screener for the school…. I'm beginning work on the universal screener especially focusing on food insecurity, housing insecurity, and access to mental health." Moreover, some students discussed their plan for developing an assessment tool other students discussed their plan along with their reasoning for developing the tool; for example, Kaylin noted:

I believe the counseling department relies too heavily on the free meal program to solve food insecurity issues for all students. I also believe the school underestimates how many students are food insecure. I will propose a beginning of the semester needs survey to try to reach families who are struggling with food, housing, and health issues. My biggest advocate will be my site supervisor. I believe she also feels that the need is not being addressed enough, but she does not have the time to deal with the issue. I feel that if I take on the time-consuming steps, she will help me send out surveys and speak about food insecurity in intervention team meetings.

Additionally, some students noted they were unable to deploy their assessment, but that the school could potentially use their assessment tool the following year. For instance, Nia stated: "I am winding down…but I did finish my universal screener with my supervisor so I'm at least leaving one thing accomplished here."

Perspectives

This subtheme conveys how participants' experiences and exposure led them to value and understand the importance of universal SDOH assessments. Their perspectives on universal assessments grew and expanded over time. For example, Nia noted:

When we did a classroom lesson last week, we had a student who repeatedly told us that he was depressed. I met with him and he showed me his bed that was just a platform

with no mattress because they couldn't afford it, as well as the cardboard cell phone he had made, and more. I don't know if I would have looked at him originally as someone in need of assistance but I can definitely tell after speaking to him… He's at least one student who could have benefitted from a universal screener but at least one person that I can take concrete steps to provide some help.

Another SCIT, Kaylin, explained how their experience led to the realization that a universal assessment tool was needed:

I noticed that another McKinney Vento student was being talked about this week and that sparked my attention to the fact that housing, food, and employment is an issue even though the counseling staff tell me they are not. What was interesting is that the Mckinney Vento case that was being discussed was a case where the family is not getting the services they could because they did not know they qualified. This alerted me to the fact that we should be asking more housing questions and promoting housing resources to the parents and community members.

Additionally, one SCIT out of eight developed and deployed a universal SDOH assessment tool. This participant was in a high school setting and described how they planned to use the results from the universal assessment they deployed. Jeff stated:

Now that I am nearly done with collecting the data, I have begun working on resource and information packets to give to the students and their families based on the student's identified needs (if any). These packets will contain information and resources in the [County area] for food assistance, healthcare clinics, Medicaid information, as well as housing assistance resources. I hope to have this information both in a hard copy as well as digitally so that the families and students can access it from anywhere and if they do not have access to view the information electronically, they will be able to have hard copies so that they can get the assistance they need.

Addressing inequities within their systems of influence and other systems for and with students, families, and communities

Theme 3 is defined as the participants' actions toward working to eliminate inequities and engage in antiracist school counseling practice. These actions were in various formats and settings, such as classrooms, individual counseling, and with community partners. For example, Nia noted her overall impact due to her actions addressing SDOH:

I have done some things, I have moved the needle, and I have made conversations happen. I've made my supervisor do more and think more. I've brought up SDOH with almost every student that we've talked to for behavior or other issues. Am I able to solve everything? No. But I do think that forward progress has been made…because of me.

Another exemplary quote noting the actions a participant took to address inequities was shared by Jeff:

I did spend some time with a student as she was applying for rent forgiveness assistance to avoid being evicted from her apartment. Her mother recently passed away and left this student with massive amounts of debt so my supervisor and I were helping the

student apply for rent forgiveness, food stamps, and Medicaid so that she could focus on graduating this year.

There are five subthemes within theme 3, representing the various strategies and areas through which action by the SCIT was taken.

Classroom lesson and groups

The first subtheme highlights direct services the SCIT engaged in to address or bring awareness to an SDOH challenge occurring in the school or surrounding community. Tia noted, "This month we will be addressing the SDOH of the social and community context within the special education population. I will be working with this population by running a few classroom lessons in order to help combat bullying/cyberbullying…." Another SCIT, working in an elementary school described their SDOH lesson: "For focusing on SDOH my goal for this [classroom lesson] was to focus on health, community, and understanding of community. Through teaching the students about how kindness affects their mental health, they can understand how it affects others." Similar to the classroom lessons, the groups that SCIT developed incorporated SDOH along with a general curricular topic such as wellness. Lisa described her group:

> This week I addressed social and community context and neighborhood and built environment… I was able to approach this topic on wellness by teaching students how important it is to live a healthy life mentally, physically, and emotionally. I was able to inform students of how everyone doesn't have the access to what we may need to ensure a healthy lifestyle. For example, not everyone has ability to get healthier foods or get counseling if they are suffering mentally.

Utilizing counseling skills and individual interactions

The second subtheme details the actions the participants took specifically in individual counseling sessions and during student interactions. Ella noted, "I have been incorporating some SDOH related questions into my individual sessions." She went on to share about a particular individual interaction centered on addressing food insecurity:

> [student] disclosed to me that her parent has been having a hard time affording food lately and she sometimes does not have enough to eat. I helped to get her onto the list for receiving a food bag each week as part of my school's Feed More partnership.

Tia shared, "I met with one student whose family is not able to afford outside of school therapy for him so we are going to discuss getting him involved with someone that could be more cost-efficient and refer him out to [county mental health center]." Other SCIT noted the importance of building rapport, trust, and positive therapeutic relationships with students to address SDOH.

School community collaboration

The third subtheme refers to the active role the participants played in creating partnerships within the surrounding community to address SDOH needs of students. Jeff shared, "I did… contribute to helping alleviate food insecurity by going to a local church and picking up a shipment of food

for our pantry. I also stocked several take-home food bags for our students to have for the week-end." Nia and Ella also shared how they worked with community partners to address food insecurity. Lisa also collaborated with local employers to address education access through providing a virtual career day. Finally, Tia noted addressing access to healthcare in her collaboration with local providers,

> The student we met with from a few weeks ago who needed assistance through [county mental health center] we were eventually able to consult with [mental health center] and ensure that his family's insurance covered his care. This was a first hand experience on ensuring that a student was able to get the best care possible.

Family engagement

The fourth subtheme describes how participants worked with their students' families to address SDOH and further ensure their sites were engaging in antiracist practices. Participants noted making phone calls to parents, in-person meetings with families, and home visits. Kaylin noted her plans to continue to advocate for a child by speaking with a parent, saying "… continue to talk to the parent about the risk of not getting her child help and also offer suggestions in case it is a financial reason…" Lisa took several steps to connect and support families:

> I've been trying to brainstorm different ways that students and families can trust people within the building of the school, specifically the school counselor….I have suggested making pamphlets and having the community advocate pass those out, reintroduce what we do and how we can help the students and the family.

Advocacy

The fifth subtheme covers the plans and the advocacy action that participants engaged in during internship directly related to SDOH or a related topic. As a result of community safety concerns, Lisa noted, "Look at [the] school board stance on active shooter and lockdown drills…Look for letters I can write to my legislature about gun control and active shooter drills." Kaylin's advocacy topic was related to the SDOH domain of social and community context: "I would like to talk to this student more about how we can support them in changing their name and pronouns in the school. I also would like to push for more LGBTQIA advocacy in the building." Ella, noted advocating on behalf and with students, "I plan to advocate for students who express need and help in whatever ways I can, whether that is by helping with actual food or giving out information about community resources." Ella also noted: "I plan on continuing to work on my advocacy skills for students who need help with SDOH concerns." Tia shared a similar insight, saying, "As a future school counselor, SDOH is very important, I should advocate for my student's wellbeing and health." In summary, the participants did engage in addressing inequities within their systems of influence and other systems, utilizing their collaboration, advocacy, and systemic thinking skills.

Advocating for the expansion of school counseling to consider inequities in the ecological systems of students

Theme 4 is marked by how participants sought to increase awareness of SDOH, ESJSC, and other related topics throughout their internship experience with school stakeholders. For example, Nia mentioned: "I reminded my supervisor that she should try to talk about SDOH and especially food

and housing insecurity with her colleagues." In addition to the direct approach, some SCIT also engaged in advocacy efforts. For instance, Kaylin mentioned: "I plan to advocate within the counseling department to make food insecurity a bigger priority."

Barriers

This subtheme is reflected in the stories participants shared related to barriers to increasing awareness related to SDOH, ESJSC, and other similar topics. These barriers presented in various ways, such as the behaviors of others, resistant staff, inadequate actions, and uncertainty regarding social justice advocacy steps. Related to the behaviors of others being a barrier, Anita noted, "I have not had any negative experiences during my internship thus far, but I do recognize that the behaviors of others impact me sometimes more than I would like them to." This is important when considering successfully engaging in interprofessional collaboration for the best outcome for the student. Kaylin identified a barrier in collaboration, stating, "I believe the counseling staff would benefit from further explanations as they seem to be burnt-out due to COVID and resistant to taking in new information." This is a realistic sentiment that many school counselors experienced as the pandemic dragged on and many were working on-site engaging in distance and in person school counseling. When trying to learn more about the SDOH that are experienced by students, Kaylin mentioned difficulty in finding trends and inadequate attention given to students in need:

> I am in the process of learning more about what SDOH the students most commonly face at [school]. I have been struggling to find the trends/areas of need so far. I am talking to my supervisor about what data they have for me to review and what they have noticed themselves. I worry that because it is a privileged area, the counselors are not paying attention to large SDOH needs as they are not expecting them.

Finally, participants mentioned barriers to properly engaging in advocacy. Ella mentioned: "I also wonder how we can be social justice advocates for students while still conforming to school policies about advocacy."

Inclusion of all school stakeholders

This subtheme is defined as inclusive actions and initiatives that intentionally involve all school stakeholders, regardless of their roles. One participant, Jeff, who seemed to be very involved in advocacy and inclusion, mentioned: "I participated in a counseling advisory council meeting along with my supervisor, one student, a parent, and our instructional assistant." Jeff further shared about their development of an SDOH screener, discussed the importance of this as it relates to equity, and how they were invited to speak about SDOH in an upcoming Equity Council meeting. Other participants discussed their intentions and efforts to include essential members for support. Ella noted: "I know my supervisor and the other school counselor will support me in this effort. I wonder if I could try to get the school admin on board as well." Several other participants shared these thoughts, as they understood the importance of intentional inclusion; Kaylin shared, "The registrar staff member sits in the counseling office and I think it would be crucial to bring her into the conversation. Being proactive would make a lot of her job easier." The mention of being proactive and inclusive is essential in the mission to expand school counseling to actively consider prevalent inequities within the students' ecological systems.

Growth

The fifth theme is defined according to the SCITs' self-assessment during internship and their statements that reflect their advanced understanding of how the content they learned applied to action in the real world. Ella noted her growth in her understanding of appropriate duties as a school counselor as they relate to SDOH: "I used to think that this was the domain of social workers, but now I can see how school counselors can also ask about these issues and help in ways that are appropriate for the role of a school counselor." Ella also described the growth in her thought process and comfort in addressing SDOH: "I feel comfortable now asking SDOH questions and I have refined my manner of asking the questions." Nia discussed a specific SDOH issue and her thoughts on how to address it:

> I asked my supervisor about the need for more financially accessible mental health care and what they already had in place, based on last week. She gave me a pamphlet that [county] gives out that has one option for a sliding scale pay rate…I don't know how much I can change county-wide planning. I guess that's kind of the point of this theory is pushing those boundaries. I might ask her what other counselors might be of use in the immediate area and reach out to them myself.

Two participants discussed their growth in the areas of cultural competency as a result of serving as interns in diverse and high needs areas, and participants reported that the use of the ESJSC theory helped them to see students holistically, "as much more than just students, but as individuals with complex stories, backgrounds, and experiences." Lisa's statement sums up the fifth theme:

> After this semester I can honestly say I understand SDOH fully, especially after reflecting on my internship experience in class. I realized that the things I talked about in lessons and with my school counselor all fall under SDOH and I believe I've thoroughly explained it for people to understand this framework. Internship was definitely an experience I won't forget, and I think I've grown tremendously since the beginning of the academic year.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore SCIT experiences of engaging in antiracist practice through an ecological social justice framed internship experience. The internship experience used ESJSC theory and its four main tenets to guide SCIT development and growth. The SCIT who participated in this study showed engagement with ESJSC and antiracist practice through their growth in knowledge, action, and advocacy on SDOH. Additionally, 5 themes and 12 subthemes answered the research question related to the experiences of SCIT applying ESJSC during their internship experience.

The theme of increasing awareness of SDOH, which encompassed their motivation for choosing resources as well as how they increased awareness, aligns with research focused on how students learn and make theoretical knowledge concrete (Bohecker & Doughty Horn, 2016). For example, concepts such as SDOH and antiracism can be considered abstract for SCIT and there is action needed on the part of counselor educators as well as the students to increase awareness; course innovation is also needed so SCIT can develop the skills needed to act on and behalf of students who are adversely impacted (Johnson & Brookover, 2021; Mason et al., 2021). Embedding autonomy to choose SDOH and related topic literature, along with ways to increase awareness, led to action. This is a newer finding in the literature that highlights the importance of increasing awareness and providing opportunities for experiential learning to apply theoretical and conceptual knowledge to social justice and antiracism action (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019; Stickl Haugen et al., 2022). Thus, when engaging students in

new or emerging topics of significance, pairing content knowledge with experiential opportunities is important (Mason et al., 2021), while giving students autonomy to make decisions within an existing class structure.

While all SCIT highlighted their activities to grow in understanding of SDOH, social justice, and related topics, the application of this understanding to other tenants in ESJSC theory, namely universal assessment (theme 2) and addressing inequities (theme 3), were applied at varying levels of success. For example, many students struggled to understand how to develop and deploy a universal assessment at their school site. Participants discussed consulting with their supervisors about the need for universal SDOH assessment, doing research on how to create a universal assessment, and understanding the importance of a universal assessment, and many discussed engaging in nonuniversal SDOH assessment. These findings are interesting because comprehensive school counseling programs should be data driven (ASCA, 2019), yet many students noted confusion on how to collect and use data as well as receiving push back from their supervisors. These results highlight the research-to-practice gap in which students struggle to apply information learned in an academic context, especially information that is supposed to lead to social justice, antiracist, or SDOH action (Gantt et al., 2021). However, out of the eight students, there was one student who created a SDOH assessment and deployed it to the entire student body, effectively engaging with tenet two of ESJSC theory and antiracist practice. Antiracist practice is about addressing systemic inequities, and one such approach is looking within the system to understand the needs that should be addressed; deploying a universal assessment is a systemic approach to understanding the school wide needs as it relates to SDOH.

While participants seemed to struggle with universal assessment, they excelled in addressing inequities within their systems of influence for and with students, families, and communities (i.e., theme 3). These actions might be more closely aligned with the training of school counselors, as SCIT are trained to engage in a comprehensive school counseling program which entails creating classroom lessons, individual and group counseling, amongst other tasks (ASCA, 2019). The training is reflected in the subthemes, which highlight how the participants addressed SDOH. While many of the participants' actions were aligned with expected activities of a professional school counselor, their targeted focus on addressing SDOH is directly connected to the use of ESJSC theory, and the instructors focus on the need to address SDOH (Johnson & Robins, 2021). Further, participants engaged in transformative actions as outlined by Mason et al. (2021), which include establishing an identity as a leader by seeking allies and mentors, investing time in developing relationships in the school building, and implementing culturally sustaining direct and indirect counseling services. The actions of the SCIT during internship are directly aligned with an antiracist counselor preparation approach.

The participants' engagement with advocacy was related to their action to address SDOH and included efforts to educate and motivate their supervisor and other stakeholders at the school to address inequities that students and families are faced with. This is the fourth tenet of the ESJSC theory and represents theme 4. Advocating for school counselors to expand their practice to include addressing SDOH is reflected in research on the expansion of PSC to include other important topics of social justice, diversity, equity, and antiracist school counseling practice (Atkins & Ogelsby, 2018; Stickl Haugen et al., 2022). School counselors in training sometimes report that advocacy is difficult due to uncertainties and a lack of training (Crook et al., 2015). The participants in the current study were trained to utilize the ESJSC to guide their advocacy for students and the profession. For example, some participants noted not only discussing their action plan with their school counselor but also with school admin and family members of students. This is aligned with multicultural school counseling research and shows growth in their understanding, action, and their willingness to push real and perceived barriers (Leibowitz-Nelson et al., 2020). Although their advocacy intentions were purposeful, the participants were met with barriers at times, which is reflected in the subtheme barriers. Barriers to addressing anything new are expected and reflected in the literature on addressing social justice topics (Singh et al., 2020). Despite these barriers, SCIT seemed to persist, while recognizing there was still work to do.

Lastly, the final theme, which was outside the structure of ESJSC, was Growth. These findings are aligned with the research literature that highlights the growth that occurs for SCIT during their

clinical experiences in practicum and internship (Gibson, et al., 2010). Similar to our study, research highlights students who gained concrete experiences during their graduate program also experienced personal and professional growth (Bohecker & Doughty Horn, 2016). However, a newer finding is how students grew in their antiracist practice identities and abilities. For example, students' abilities to identify systemic issues occurring at their school, identify actions they can take to address these issues, and deploy themselves and motivate others are specific types of growth not fully explored in the extant SCIT literature. This finding highlights how implementing the ESJSC prepares SCITs to address SDOH using antiracist strategies.

IMPLICATIONS

Counselor educators

CACREP (2016) requires adequate inclusion of and training in diversity, advocacy, and social justice domains; they do not specifically address various components of these overarching ideas, which should be incorporated into counseling graduate programs. The CACREP section that focuses on social and cultural diversity is commendable; however, could be expanded upon to address more specific concepts and theories, which are necessary for prevalent social justice issues in today's society. For example, they do not require counseling graduate programs to specifically discuss SDOH, yet Johnson and Robins' (2021) study found that issues of SDOH are being covered in courses such as ethics, human sexuality, and social and cultural foundations. More specificity within requirements maybe a neccessary next step for CACREP to ensure SCIT have the foundation to practice from an antiracist and equity focused lens. Furthermore, as explored within this manuscript, ESJSC theory will assist in changing SCITs lens so that they think systemically and are hyperfocused on addressing inequities within students' SDOH domains (Johnson & Robins, 2021). The implications for counselor educators in general lean toward the integration of frameworks, theories, and models in school counseling internship courses and across the curriculum that focus on addressing systemic challenges that students, families, and communities face. O'Connor (2018) discusses school counselors' expressed desire that their training in graduate programs align with actual on-the-job tasks. Integrating theories such as the ESJSC allow for SCITs to develop necessary skills through their field experience courses that relate directly to their on-the-job tasks. Additionally, frameworks, theories, and models can provide the structure necessary for proper implementation of antiracist practices that address SDOH.

Lastly, counselor educators should prepare SCIT for potential push-back they may experience when addressing systemic racism, disenfranchisement, and inequities within the school community. Some parent groups and school boards are showing a strong resistance to antiracist approaches to education and are targeting school counseling (Kingkade & Hixenbaugh, 2021). ASCA has responded to such attacks with facts, standards, and position statements about what school counseling is and what school counselors do. Counselor educators must take care to expose SCIT to the support available for persons engaging in antiracist practice, utilize ASCA resources and training in class to bolster SCIT stance against the resistance, and support SCIT being involved in professional communities dedicated to antiracism.

Site supervisors

Research and the current study highlight the need for proper site supervisor training (Wambu & Myers, 2019). School counselors serving as site supervisors should seek training in different supervision models, antiracism, and SDOH, and the integration of all three. Structuring the SCIT's site activities and duties driven by theory may serve to move antiracist work from conceptual to action oriented. Site

supervisors must also work to cultivate school-community partnerships to help address SDOH needs within the schools. For example, Clemons and Johnson (2019) found churches in low socioeconomic areas have a wealth of resources such as school supplies, food banks, and clothing closets, and are ready to assist local schools and families with various SDOH issues. ASCA (2021) named collaboration with community organizations and advocating for school counseling resources as antiracist practices, and Bryan et al. (2021) proposed a potential framework. Thus, resources are available, but perhaps additional training for site supervisors is necessary for actual implementation. Providing site supervisor training opportunities in new antiracist approaches, theoretical frameworks, and models will inevitably benefit SCITs, and their internship experience will reinforce the conceptual knowledge through meaningful experiential activities.

Limitations and future research

There are a few limitations that are of note. This study analyzed written reflections from participants, as compared to interviews. Interviews allow for follow-up and additional prompting, which is not possible when using prewritten reflections. Future research can consider using a qualitative approach, which utilizes interviews as well as artifacts, such as assignments, in examining the participants' experiences. The current study was longitudinal in nature in that the journal entries were made weekly, allowing us to understand participants' experiences over the course of internship; however, it did not investigate past this experience. Researchers should consider a study that follows SCIT from internship into their first year as a school counselor to understand the impact a specialized internship experience has on their actions as a first-year school counselor. Additionally, using TA poses limitations such as decreased consistency and coherence throughout themes, and limited interpretive power (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). The current study is grounded in theory which minimizes this known limitation of using TA; however, in future studies, researchers can consider other qualitative methods which might support further interpretation of the participant reflections.

CONCLUSION

The Ecological Social Justice School Counseling Theory (ESJSC) may be utilized in field-based courses to assist SCIT in the application of conceptual antiracist knowledge to action. The participants in the current study were trained to use ESJSC, which assisted them in addressing social determinants of health of students in school settings. The study highlights the impact of targeted antiracism training on the actions of SCIT. While barriers emerged throughout the experience, the utilization of theory, trained university and site-based supervisors, and the support of other SCIT addressing systemic injustice and other SDOH-related challenges supported SCIT resilience as they persisted through their internship.

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