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# Factors Affecting Master's Counseling Students Pursuing Doctoral Degrees

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Charity Ann Godfrey

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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by

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MS, Hodges University, 2013

BS, Hodges University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education and Supervision

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August 2020

Abstract

Student leadership identity development is becoming one of the most critical challenges in preparing mental health counseling students for the professional world. Leadership aids in the development of counselor self-efficacy and counselor professional identity development. But the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) does not mandate master's level mental health counseling programs to incorporate leadership curriculum, although current research indicates that counselors demonstrate leadership skills with clients and within organizational roles. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate master's level mental health counselor leadership identity and determine whether Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence (as measured by the SRLS-R2), gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. The SRLS-R2, designed from the social change model of leadership development, was used to collect data from 61 master's level counseling student participants regarding leadership identity using Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework for student learning. Results indicated that the variable gender predicted socially responsible leadership, yet did not predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree. Based on these results, master's level counseling students could benefit from leadership curriculum as preparation for leadership positions within the field and influence pursuance of higher learning.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother who demonstrated perseverance through life's challenges and succeeded on her own terms. She would be pleased to know that poverty does not determine how a person succeeds in life…only that a person can. I did it, Mom.

Acknowledgments

I especially want to thank Dr. G. Mihalyi Szirony and Dr. Rick Cicchetti for their guidance and patience. Without their brilliance, I would have been writing for the next ten years. Also, my husband deserves a huge thank you for supporting me for the last 12 years. He never complained, and I will be forever grateful for his love, support, and guidance in my academic journey. No woman is ever successful without the support of other empowering women. So, this dissertation is also dedicated to my numerous mentors, Dr. Terry McVannel-Erwin, Dr. Diane Kratt, and Courtney Faunce. I am forever grateful to be loved and cared for by such inspirational social change makers. Finally, I want to thank two important friendships. I want to thank Karyn Trail for her endless love and support at every hour of the night and belief in me. And lastly, Gina you have been my source of strength for the last 29 years. Thank you for lending me yours until I was strong enough to develop my own.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

College students are exposed to more personal and professional challenges than previous graduates (Hamann, 2016). With a growing concern to better prepare graduates for the professional world such as the many students graduating with master's degrees, student leadership identity development is becoming one of the most critical challenges universities are facing (Elwell & Elikofer, 2015). Currently, university leadership programs are designed for exposing students to educational opportunities to interdependently engage in positive actions as to accomplish change (Beatty, 2014). The literature from the last 20 years regarding student leadership identity has focused on master's business, engineering, and allied health student populations (Mombourquette & Bedard, 2016; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Shorter, 2014; Qahtani, 2015). But there is a need to investigate student leadership identity development of master's mental health counselors due to demands for counselors to engage in socially responsible leadership (SRL) roles within the counseling profession (Brat, O'Hara, McGhee, & Chang, 2016; Jensen, Doumas, & Midgett, 2016; Paradise, Ceballos, & Hall, 2010).

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether SRL Scale (SRLS) scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited counseling programs. This chapter includes a review of the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. Additionally, an introduction to social cognitive theory (SCT) is

provided in a section on the theoretical framework. Another section includes the definitions to clarify meaning of terminology used throughout the study. Lastly, a review of the study's assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations will be provided.

**Background**

Projections for increased employment opportunities for counseling professionals to the year 2026 highlight the need for counselors to develop a leadership identity, as the responsibilities of counselors expand beyond client care (Brat et al., 2016; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Fischer, Wielkiewicz, Stelner, Overland, & Meuwissen, 2015; Woo, Lu, Harris, & Cauley, 2017). Although counselors often engage in leadership duties as part of employment responsibilities, the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) requires counselors adhere to ethical standards of professional practice, which they violate when operating outside the scope of their professional practice due to a lack of formal leadership skills course training in master's level mental health counseling programs. Therefore, the incorporation of leadership curriculum for master's level mental health counseling programs has been discussed by the CACREP—an accrediting body responsible for approving curriculum for mental health counseling programs—and professional organizations such as the ACA and the American Psychological Association (APA). However, there have been no substantial efforts to incorporate leadership curriculum into master's level mental health counseling programs (Paradise et al., 2010). The results from this study can provide further evidence of counseling students' leadership identity and whether counselor leadership identity influences pursuance of

future professional advancements in the counseling field such as enrolling in a doctorate program.

A literature review on higher education and leadership programs revealed that students develop a leadership identity when engaged in leadership educational opportunities (Cureton, Davis, & Giegerich, 2019; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2016; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Shorter, 2014; Qahtani, 2015). Additional research revealed that students apply learned leadership skills after graduation to improve professional performance. Although research indicates higher education is providing leadership courses that benefit master's level student leadership identity development, similar educational programming for master's mental health counseling students has not been provided (McKibben, Umstead, & Borders, 2017; Meany-Walen et al., 2013).

Further, an examination of students' pre-existing beliefs regarding leadership identity development revealed that bachelor's level students view leadership as inherent qualities rather than a developmental process (Caza & Rosch, 2014). Student views regarding leadership identity highlight the need for higher education to provide leadership education across all learning domains to prepare future graduates for leadership positions (Sönmez, İspir, Azizoğlu, Hapçıoğlu, & Yıldırım, 2019). Additionally, leadership has been viewed as a Caucasian male-dominated authoritative approach to managing employees, which may contribute toward students' perceived views of leadership (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017; McKenzie, 2018). However, a SRL approach, which emphasizes team-building oriented attributes, aligns with contemporary views on student leadership (Dugan, Morosini, & Beazley, 2013; Dugan,

2015; Sönmez et al., 2019). Higher education encourages SRL as an approach for developing student leadership identity, as the style increases psychosocial aspects of professional development (Buschlen & Johnson, 2014; Cauthren, 2016; Hamann, 2016). The SRL encompasses eight core values (Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Citizenship, and Change) developed from the social change model of leadership development (Astin, 1996; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). Student's personal growth beyond academics such as engaging in co-curricular activities demonstrates SRL values and growth, inciting individual leadership identity as a social change agent (Buschlen & Johnson, 2014). SRLs operate from a principled standpoint of social change through individual, group, and community initiatives in an effort to create positive social change (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Dugan, 2015; Hamann, 2016). SRL engages collaboratively with others to satisfy the common good.

Although researchers have investigated SRL of college students in business, engineering, and allied health programs, researchers have yet to investigate SRL of master's mental health counseling students. This study addresses this gap on whether master's level mental health counseling students identify as SRLs and whether leadership is a factor influencing the development of professional advancements after graduation. Factors such as gender and race were also explored to further detail student leadership identity development of master's mental health counselor students. This study is intended to aid counseling student understanding of leadership identity development from a SRL lens. Furthermore, findings from the study can support the need to incorporate leadership

programming within master's level mental health counseling programs and encourage student early engagement in leadership roles within the profession.

## Problem Statement

An important directive of higher education is its development of student leadership and socially responsible citizenship (Callahan, 1985; Cauthen, 2016; Hevel, Martin, Goodman, & Pascarella, 2018; Morse, 1992). Counselor engagement in leadership is an important part of professional identity development (Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017), especially during education (Spurgeon, 2012). Leadership training during counselors' academic experiences can provide professional identity development and positive client outcomes (Paradise et al., 2010; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Leadership aids in the development of counselor self-efficacy (Gibson, Dooley, Kelechner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012), which is essential in the delivery of services between counselor and client (Brogan, Suarez, Rehfuss, & Shope, 2013). Although counselors can self-learn leadership skills, counselors need to employ evidenced-based approaches to ensure alignment with professional standards of conduct (ACA, 2014). However, counselors may not receive formal leadership training within master's level mental health counseling programs (Green, Miller, & Aarons, 2013; Paradise et al., 2010). Further, there is a lack of attention regarding the integration of leadership curriculum in counselor related programs as well as whether developing a leadership identity influences pursuance of higher education (CACREP, 2016; Paradise et al., 2010).

There is also a need to investigate leadership, race, and gender of master's level counseling students attending CACREP-accredited programs as to determine whether

these factors are a catalyst to pursuing a doctoral degree within the counseling field.

Research has indicated that women are more likely to engage in counselor leadership

roles and hold more leadership positions than men because women enroll at higher rates

than men in master's level counseling programs (National Center for Statistics, 2019;

Aarons, Ehrhert, Moullin, Torres, & Green, 2017). Additionally, the APA (2011)

reported a gender disparity with men pursuing doctoral degrees; women outnumber men

in counseling doctoral programs by three to one (Willyard, 2011). The U.S. Census

Bureau (2019) also indicated age as a factor for pursuing a master's and doctoral degree

with 2.1% of students ranging from age 35 to 54 and 55 and up who pursue a doctoral

degree, whereas students ranging from 25 to 34 and 55 and up pursue a master's degree.

Further, statistical data regarding race indicates that Asian Americans comprise of 17.5%

of master's students in comparison to Caucasian master's students (9.5%), African

American students (7%), and Hispanic students (4.1%). Thus, data indicate that gender

and race may influence whether individuals pursue a doctoral degree.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate whether SRLS scores for

Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence (as measured by the SRLS-R2), gender,

and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health

counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. The U.S.

Department of Education reported that 773,000 master's degrees and 181,000 doctoral

degrees were conferred in the 2016-2017 academic year (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow,

2018). Four factors that contribute toward master's level degree completion include

cohort connections, establishing professor–student trust, engaging in social integration activities and classroom activities, and personal growth (Jensen et al., 2016). Further research has confirmed that master's completion rates, in general, are influenced by promoting student leadership orientation and practice, which contributes to the development of counselor leadership identity (Boylan, 2016).

Investigating factors that predict pursuance of a doctoral degree is essential to the professional identity development of master's level counseling students. Leadership development is essential to the development of ethical practitioners (Gibson et al., 2012). Positive leadership traits are developed from counselors' academic experiences and practical applications of skills (Luke & Goodrich, 2010). Thus, there is growing support from the mental health profession regarding the need for evidence-based leadership training for master's level counseling programs (Green et al., 2013). Recently, the ACA, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and the APA have recognized the importance of incorporating formal leadership skills, knowledge, and practices within master's and doctoral education counseling programs as essential for counselor professional identity development (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). The Southern ACES also supports the development of counselor leadership identity through their workshops titled emerging leaders (Southern ACES, 2018), which focuses on counseling program graduates.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

Do SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree

among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

$H_a$: Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

$H_0$: Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race does not predict intent to pursue doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

## Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's influence on the field of psychology had significant impacts toward psychologists' views regarding human behavior and development (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Burnett, Enyeart-Smith, & Wessel, 2016). Bandura (1977) hypothesized that cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences shape human development in his SCT. SCT was developed from two theories of human influence: Mediating processes occur between stimuli responses, and observational learning influences behavior changes. Bandura theorized that an individual's thought process regarding personal efficacy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy were influenced through social modeling. Individuals learn from observing others as well as personal experiences, which in turn promotes new behaviors, cultivates new competencies, and incites positive behavioral outcomes (Eslami, Norozi, Hajihosseini, Ramazani, & Miri, 2018). For example, the Bobo doll

experiment showed that children's behavior were influenced by adults displaying aggressive behavior toward an inflatable doll (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017).

One attribute identified within Bandura's SCT model is self-efficacy (Burnett et al., 2016). High levels of self-efficacy tend to increase the ability to adapt and persist through life challenges (Fischer et al., 2015). Individuals who encapsulate a leadership mentality demonstrate self-efficacious behaviors (Nguyen, 2016). College students can increase develop leadership by engaging in faculty, peer, and/or mentorship relationships. Through academic social modeling, students gain opportunities to increase self-efficacy through engagement in leadership activities (Berkovich, 2014; Fassinger & Shullman, 2017). Hence, social modeling plays an important role in student professional development as emerging leaders and future professionals.

SCT was used to investigate master's level counseling student professional identity development, which SCT theorizes is influenced through social modeling. In this case, SCT could be modeled through student interactions with faculty members and staff, peers, educational environments, and professional organizations. The ability for students to encompass leadership roles demonstrates the ability to form critical thinking skills and problem solve, which aligns with master's level counseling educational training. Additionally, professional interactions could enhance student exposure for leadership opportunities to create positive social change that contributes toward the counseling profession (Dugan, 2011; Read, Betancourt, & Morrison, 2016; Weng & Yan, 2018).

**Nature of the Study**

The nature of this quantitative analysis was investigating factors that could predict the pursuance of doctoral degrees for master's level mental health counseling students attending a CACREP-accredited counseling program. The functional relationships between five predictor variables (Change, Consciousness of Self, Congruence, gender, and race) and an outcome variable (intention to pursue doctoral degree) were investigated using a multiple regression analysis. The advantages of using a multiple regression analysis include a more accurate and precise understanding of the association of each individual factor with the outcome variable, which yields a clearer understanding of the association of all of the factors as a whole with the outcome as well as the associations between the various independent variables themselves (Fang, 2013).

The SRLS is an instrument based on the social change model of leadership development of students (Hevel et al., 2018). The constructs have decreased slightly from the original SRLS, 103-item scale to the SRLS-R2, 68-item scale, with an increase in reliability for the variable change. Thus, the SRLS-R2, was employed, which measures students' values of the social change model of leadership development developed by Astin and Higher Education Research Institute including Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Common Purpose, Collaboration, Controversy with Civility, Ctizenship, and Change (Astin, 1996). The SRLS-R2 consists of 68-items with the same eight constructs as the original scale with 6-11 questions per construct and decreases participant time to complete the instrument. The student participants respond using a 5-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). A link to

complete the SRLS-R2 instrument and demographic form was provided to participants after participants provided consent via a HIPPA-compliant e-mail server Protonmail. Data were transposed to SPSS (v26) software and interpreted using a linear multiple regression.

## Definitions

The following operational definitions were used throughout this study.

*Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP):* The accrediting body assures graduate counseling programs on-campus and online throughout the United States and the world meet educational standards (CACREP, 2016).

*Higher education:* Educational institutions, online or on-campus, that provide learning to students enrolled in bachelors, master's and doctoral educational programs.

*Master's mental health counseling students:* Students who are attending an on-campus or online master's mental health counselor program in the United States that is accredited by the CACREP (CACREP, 2016).

*Professional identity development:* A continuous developmental process of learning about self, others, and environment in which results in a professional identity for optimal performance (Cureton, Davis, & Giegerich, 2019).

*Socially responsible leadership (SRL):* Value-based leadership that is collaborative in nature and results in positive social change. The socially responsible leader SRL demonstrates seven core values: *consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship.*

The values contribute toward change for the common good, which is the eighth

leadership value of a SRL (Dugan & Komives, 2010).

*Social change model of leadership development:* Developed by Astin and Higher

Education Research Institute, the model is designed to enhance leadership development

in all participants as to promote a process that is inclusive and actively engages all who

seek positive social change (Dugan & Komives, 2010).

*Student leadership identity development:* Student personal and social identity that

acknowledges individuals can make a difference by working with others to create change

(Renn & Ozaki, 2010).

## Assumptions

The following assumptions served to guide this research study. I assumed that

student participants completed the SRLS-R2 instrument accurately, honestly, and without

emotional distress. I also assumed that student participant responses reflect authentic

measurement of their perceived leadership aptitude. Further, it was assumed that the

SRLS-R2 instrument would accurately measure the intended data, and the designed

demographic form would accurately collect intended data. Each student participant was

asked to complete SRLS-R2 instrument and demographic form in its entirety. The

participants took 5-10 minutes to complete SRLS-R2.

## Scopes and Delimitations

Participants for this quantitative research study consisted of master's level mental

health counseling students attending an online or on-campus mental health counseling

program in the United States accredited by the CACREP. Using the SCT allowed me to

best understand what factors influence leadership identity development of master's level mental health counseling students. Participants were recruited using a nonprobability sampling technique. This study addressed whether master's level mental health counseling students can identify SRL aptitude and whether possessing a SRL aptitude influences a student's decision to pursue a doctoral degree post master's graduation.

## Limitations

Online surveys pose challenges for the researcher such as low response rates (Kýlýnç & Fırat, 2017). But participants are more motivated to complete surveys that are shorter in length due to reduced participant burden (Rolstad, PhLic, & Ryden, 2011). To increase or maximize response rates, the participants completed the SRLS-R2 survey, which takes an estimated time of 10 minutes or less to complete. The length of the survey was mentioned in the introductory e-mail notification as well as a statement assuring participants that no identifying information would be collected or stored in this study to protect participant anonymity.

Recruiting participants from my professional field created a power differential between myself and participants (see Akbulut, 2015; Ray, Huffman, Christian, & Wilson, 2016), which had the potential to affect participants (Ray, Huffman, Christian, & Wilson, 2016). To negate or minimize this limitation within the research process, I conducted this quantitative study without identifying individual participants. Using an online survey added physical and emotional protection for the participants' anonymity, which aligns with the ACA (2014) Code of Ethics statute G.1.e.-Precautions to Avoid Injury.

## Significance

Substantial research conducted over the last two decades continues to suggest that higher education influences leadership development among college students (Dugan, Bohle, Woekler, & Cooney, 2014). For instance, counseling students engaging in leadership initiatives during their educational experiences enhance leadership development earlier in their professional careers (Janson, Stone, & Clark, 2009). Exposure to leadership opportunities provides context in which counselors understand the roles and functions of leadership, which strengthens their professional identity (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Additionally, engaging in leadership initiatives reinforces ethical standards for client advocacy, community collaboration, and social change actions (APA, 2014). This study is significant, as it can better inform master's level counseling program leaders of the need to implement leadership education programming and predict the pursuance of higher educational goals such as obtaining a doctoral degree.

Further, leadership is often cited as essential to the continued success of the counseling professional (Jacob, Stoler, & Roth, 2017; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). The ACA, ACES, and Chi Sigma Iota International have identified the need to promote leadership development in counseling students and emerging professionals (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). Early development of leadership skills could enhance counselor professional identity development through a developed sense of social responsibility for the counseling profession, which includes individual, institutional, societal, and legislative levels (Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017).

The findings from this study may encourage the integration of leadership courses within the educational setting as well as therapeutic institutions. Leadership courses as part of the core curriculum could enrich emerging counselors' professional identity development, promote collaboration between community partnerships to increase social change projects, and increase positive client outcomes and success rates (Dugan, 2010; Kezar, Acuna, Avilez, Drivalas, & Wheaton, 2017). Additionally, the development of leadership curriculum could evolve into additional educational programs taught at various levels of client care such as residential treatment, outpatient services, and/or mental health community outreach programs such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The development of social change initiatives within counselor programs and the profession can be further influenced from this study's attempt to investigate factors that predict master's graduates pursuing a doctoral degree.

## Summary

Professional counselors are engaging in leadership roles more so than decades prior (Barbarà-i-Molinero, Cascón-Pereira, & Hernández-Lara, 2017). An increase in professional demands for leadership engagement in social change initiatives can better inform the counseling profession of a need to integrate leadership curriculum during master's level counseling programs to ethically prepare emerging counselors to demonstrate competency as leaders (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Thus, there is a need to investigate factors contributing toward student counselor leadership identity development to determine whether individual leadership attributes contribute toward future endeavors of professional advancement. Investigating whether master's level mental health

counseling students identify themselves as socially responsible leaders and their

leadership identity development can be valuable to the counseling profession.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

**Introduction**

The need for mental health counselors to develop a leadership identity is becoming increasingly apparent as counselors' responsibilities expand beyond counseling services. Further, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) predicted that employment rates of counselor professionals in the year 2026 will triple due to the increased needs for addiction and mental health services. To meet these predicted needs, investigating professional development of counselor identity is necessary, as it can increase career longevity (Hamann, 2016). For instance, leadership is an important facet of a developing a counselor identity and sustainability in the field (Barbarà-i-Molinero et al., 2017). The APA has been investigating leadership concepts since the organization's inception in 1982. However, research regarding leadership identity of mental health counselors needs further investigation. To best understand mental health counselor identity development, an investigation of counseling student leadership identity development and whether leadership identity informs decision-making for professional advancement is necessary (Protivnak & Yensel, 2017).

Higher education influences student leadership identity in that the collegiate experience increases leadership engagement (Boswell, Wilson, Stark, & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Buschlen & Johnson, 2014; Dugan & Komives, 2010). For example, interpersonal factors and environmental experiences can help to encourage undergraduate students to engage in leadership opportunities (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Colleges also focus on developing socially responsible leaders to increase student leadership engagement

(Keating, Rosch, & Burgoon, 2014; Dugan, 2015; Dugan & Komives, 2010). Universities that provide leadership programs produce students who display a mastery of leadership skills that transfer into the workplace (Trede, Macklin, & Birdges, 2012). Thus, developing a student leadership identity creates competent graduates who advocate for ethical practices in the professions. However, there is limited research regarding leadership identity development within master's programs like mental health counseling programs (Boswell et al., 2015). An exhaustive literature review also revealed a lack of research into whether leadership identity can serve as a catalyst for the pursuance of a doctoral degree (Dugan, 2011). This study, therefore, is intended to investigate SRL identity development of master's level counseling students and determine whether a SRL identity influences pursuance of a doctoral degree.

## Literature Search Strategy

A systematic approach to identifying literature was conducted through Google Scholar and through the Walden University library. An exhaustive scholarly literature review using Walden University's online library helped locate articles from PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest. Walden University's dissertations were also thoroughly reviewed to gain further knowledge about nationwide leadership programs in higher education and master's level and doctoral counseling programs. The following search terms were applied to locate scholarly articles: *higher education, teacher-student mentorship, counseling programs, leadership styles, socially responsible leadership, social change, American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, and counselor education and supervision.* Peer-reviewed articles selected for this study investigated

higher education, mentorship, gender, race, professional identity development, SRL, and social change.

## Theoretical Foundation

Albert Bandura is regarded as the father of human behavior development (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Burnett, Enyeart-Smith, & Wessel, 2016). Bandura's research into human behavior is referred to as the SCT, which is based from his study of how cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences shape human development. In 1977, Bandura hypothesized that human behavior is influenced through observation and imitation (Devi et al., 2017). Bandura theorized that social modeling influences an individual's thought process regarding personal efficacy, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, which in turn promoted new behaviors for the observer (Eslami et al., 2018). Additionally, SCT consists of four principles based from concepts of behaviorism and cognitivism: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Bandura hypothesized learning as a process in which an individual focuses on an interest, integrates new information, repeats observed behavior, and is inspired to continue the behavior if experience is deemed positive (cite).

The SCT was used as the foundation to study how students gain knowledge of leadership and leadership identity development. Because no formal leadership training in master's level counseling programs exists, counseling student opportunities for leadership development consist of what they witness between peers, faculty and staff. The ability for students to encompass leadership roles demonstrate the ability to form critical thinking skills and problem solve, which aligns with counselor professional standards.

Additionally, positive leadership modeling between student, peer, and staff can enhance

desire to create positive social change initiatives that contributes toward the counseling

profession on community, state, and national levels (Dugan, 2011; Read, Betancourt, &

Morrison, 2016; Weng & Yan, 2018).

## Literature Review

Students are seeking higher education degrees at higher rates than 10 years ago

(National Center for Statistics, 2019). Bachelor's degrees conferred in psychology/social

services increased by 30% over the last 10 years and totaled 118,000 graduates in 2016,

with 6,532 doctoral students graduating with a degree in psychology in comparison to

73,682 students who graduated with a health and related program degree (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Based on these data, there is a disparity between

bachelor's degrees and doctoral degrees in the field of psychology/social services.

Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics reported a gender disparity in

degree completions for master's degrees versus doctoral degrees; 80% of the counselor

professionals employed in the field are women (Protivnak & Yensel, 2017).

Factors increasing the likelihood of pursuing an advanced degree include

increased career knowledge and skill development, competitive employment

opportunities, higher earning potential, and personal growth. Statistics indicate that

students pursue master's degrees in professions such as business, engineering, and health

related professions more so than social service fields (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2018). However, by the year 2026, demand will grow for professionals trained

in the counseling field (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The rise in mental health

diagnoses and addiction services increase the need for trained master's and doctoral level counselor professionals.

To address increased needs to trained counselors, higher education initiatives to recruit counseling students have increased over the last few decades (Grapin & Dounia, 2015; Protivnak & Yensel, 2017). The recruitment process and initial contact with faculty members and staff can have positive or negative effects on student understanding for program expectations, providing context in which the student draws conclusions about their potential success in the program (Protivnak & Yensel, 2017). A review of recruitment practices for helping professions such as counselor education programs revealed that psychological and emotional needs are also a factor for student enrollment (cite). One factor contributing toward meeting the psychological and emotional needs of potential counselor students is relationship building. Relationship building consists of students engaging in mentorship programs, alumni meetings, and on-campus workshops. Developing relationships with faculty members, staff, mentors, and peers strengthen students' identity as future counseling professionals. Early engagement with on-campus activities provides students with a foundation of personal and professional connection that reinforces professional identity development and community commitment to services (Boswell, Stark, & Onwuegbuzie, 2015).

**Social Modeling**

The 20th century has provided increased opportunities for social modeling experiences due to accessibility to technology, which provides a broader baseline in which human behavior can be influenced. Since the late 1980s, students have had

opportunities to connect with individuals around the world via the computer (Computer History Museum, 2019). As technology evolved, students had even more opportunities for social interaction in 1991 through the introduction of webcams. Technology has provided a new venue in which students interact and learn through observation and imitation. Social modeling, whether presented in an online format or in the classroom, has had significant implications for student learning and professional development (Dev et al., 2017). Since the early 2000s, educational institutions have increased efforts to create positive social modeling experiences between student and learning environment. Examples include mentoring programs and student community projects (Dugan, 2006). Through the continued efforts of learning institutions to provide positive social modeling experiences, students have increased opportunities to develop skills aimed at establishing an identity as emerging career professionals (Dev et al., 2017; Wald, 2015).

**Professional Identity**

Higher education provides students with opportunities to evaluate practical problems through a professional lens (Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2019). Students' assessing their abilities to overcome challenges cultivates a professional self-concept and encourages skill development (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2019). Relational experiences also contribute toward students' abilities to form a professional identity (Crownie, 2019). Professional identity is characterized as the student's attitudes, beliefs, and values he or she holds regarding professionalism. Students' educational experiences influence professional identity development more so than the work environment due to the dynamic nature of learning (Barbarà-i-Molinero et

al., 2017). Hence, higher education provides critical opportunities for students to develop a professional identity throughout the various learning stages of their academic journey.

**Student Professional Identity Development**

Professional identity development is a continuous evolution of an individual's relationship with self, community, and profession (Kehm & Teichler, 2013; Moss et al., 2014). Higher education is a platform that informs professional identity development (Barbarà-i-Molinero et al., 2017). Various factors contribute to the development of a student's professional identity such as socialization during the first year (Kuo, Woo, & Washington, 2018; Sweitzer, 2009). Relationship-building activities such as civic engagement, university involvement, and professor–student mentoring also enhance student professional identity (Barbarà-i-Molinero et al., 2017; Moss et al., 2014). Engagement within the learning environment creates a personal investment for the student, which is reflected through contributions to his or her program (Sweitzer, 2009). Additionally, social engagement provides a context for the various roles that align with student academic achievement and career preparation (Kehm & Teichler, 2013). Hence, social engagement creates a construct in which students can develop a professional identity and achieve maximum effectiveness as emerging professionals (Kuo et al., 2018; Sweitzer, 2009).

**Master's Students**

For the 2016-2017 school year, 805,000 master's degrees were conferred, with women graduates comprising of 59% in comparison to 41% men (National Center for Statistics, 2019). Further examination of statistics shows that Caucasian students in

comparison to Hispanic American, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian American students have the highest graduation rates at 59% (National Center for Statistics, 2019). The number of students graduating with a master's degree since the year 2000 has doubled to 21 million graduates, which is a 70% increase from the year 2001 to 2016-2017 (Willyard, 2019). Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) reported that by the year 2022 18% of jobs would require a master's degree, and helping professions comprise the fastest growing career opportunities for graduates. Following reports for employment projections assists institutions on how to best educate students to meet career advancement opportunities based on national trends.

**Master's Counselor Students**

Counselor educators are an important factor for counseling student enrollment and retention rates of counseling programs (Boswell et al., 2015; Protivnak & Yensel, 2017). Positive relationship-building experiences can enhance students' involvement in counseling programs (Jensen et al., 2016). Employment trends indicate a need for highly trained licensed counselor professionals (Luke & Goodrich, 2010). Whether counselors receive their education online or on-campus, statistics indicate that counselors will be in high demand by the year 2026 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). With statistics reporting the need for counseling professionals and the ACA Code of Ethics guiding counselor ethical practices, attention to counselor identity development is essential, which includes the incorporation of leadership (ACA, 2014; Brat et al., 2016; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Counseling students view faculty members and staff, peers, and mentors as leaders and formulate their own leadership identity based on their relational

experiences (Boswell et al., 2015). Hence, relationships are influential in how students view leadership and their role as an emerging leader in the counseling profession (Boswell et al., 2015; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008).

For decades, the counseling profession has been called the helping profession in part because of the various roles in which counselors engage in such as advocate, teacher, and counselor (Thompson, Amatea, & Thompson, 2014). However, counseling students are also encouraged to engage in activities as leaders (Gibson, 2016; Luke & Goodrich, 2010). These two concepts of helping profession and leader could confuse counseling students' professional identity development because the counseling relationship is described as a professional responsibility to empower client change (Brat et al., 2016; Paradise et al., 2010). With adherence to ethical standards of conduct and following the CACREP curriculum, students are left to decipher what leadership entails from the social context of their program faculty members and staff, peers, and professional mentors because leadership is not a required course within counseling programs (Gibson, 2016; Paradise et al., 2010).

Further, although most counselors are self-taught leaders, the Code of Ethics mandates that counselors adhere to ethical standards for professional interaction, which does not include leadership (ACA, 2014). The practice of leadership within professional happenings violates C.2.b.-Boundaries of Competence; counselors are only to practice within their boundaries of training, education, and professional experiences (ACA, 2014). A review by CACREP of counseling program standards is necessary to incorporate leadership curriculum within counseling programs to support national statistics reporting

counseling as the fastest growing profession; statistics highlight counselors as leaders in the social services field and counselors view themselves as leaders (Paradise et al., 2010). Although counselors will likely be considered a helping profession due to what counseling entails, national trends indicate that counselors are leaders too, which requires the incorporation of formal education as to competently and ethically demonstrate adherence to standards of professional practice (Green et al., 2013; Paradise et al., 2010).

**Doctoral Students**

Almost 5 million adults hold a doctoral degree in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The Council of Graduate Schools (2018) reported that 12.9% social and behavioral science doctoral degrees were awarded in the year 2016-2017 following third behind engineering (first) and health science degrees (second). Statistics also indicated a 13.1% increase of advanced degree holders since 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

In the year 2016-2017, 84,650 male and 96,710 female students earned a doctoral degree in the United States. These statistics support a 1.7% increase from 2015-2016 (The Council of Graduate Schools, 2018). The Condition of Education (2017) reported that doctoral degrees for Caucasian students increased by 21% in the year 2015-2016; 67.5% doctoral degrees in 2017 were awarded to Caucasian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In 2017, 7.8% of the doctoral degrees conferred were awarded to Hispanic American students, 12.8% to Asian/Pacific Islander, .4% to American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 8.8% to African American students. Furthermore, approximately 13,278 African American students graduated with a doctoral degree between 2013-2015 (The Condition of Education, 2018) over the past 10 years, African

American doctoral degrees increased by 31% (National Science Foundation, 2016). The United States Census Bureau (2019) indicated age as a factor for the pursuance of a doctoral degree. 2.1% of students ranging from age 35 to 54 and 55 and up are enrolled in doctoral programs nationwide. Although statistics indicate increased percentages of minorities completing doctoral degrees, race, gender, and age disparities continue to exist in the United States for student graduates (The United States Census Bureau, 2019).

**Doctoral Counselor Students**

Research suggests counselors who engage in leadership roles often have doctoral degrees or 10 years or more of professional experience (Aarons, Ehrhert, Moullin, Torres, & Green, 2017; Willyard, 2011). This fact is in part due to the vast professional roles, in which, seasoned counselors engage during their careers that requires leadership capabilities such as developing new legislation or advocacy initiatives. The National Center for Statistics (2019) reports women hold counselor leadership roles more so than men because women enroll at higher rates than men in counseling programs; women outnumber men in counseling doctoral programs by three to one (Willyard, 2011).

Hinkle, Iarussi, Schermer, and Yensel (2014) investigated counselors' motives for pursuing a doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision programs and reported leadership development as a contributing factor. Doctoral students reported developing a sort of leadership identity within their master's programs however the doctoral counselor education and supervision program offered a higher level of understanding for leadership development and implementation that went beyond community initiatives. The increased demand for master's counselor professionals, by the year 2026, indicates the importance

for leadership trained and/or experienced doctoral counselor educators as to assist in the leadership identity development of emerging master's level counseling students (Brat, O'Hara, McGhee, & Chang, 2016).

**Counselor Identity Development**

Counseling has increased its presence amongst the helping professions over the last few decades (Gibson, 2016; Woo, Lu, Harris, & Cauley, 2017). Developing a counselor identity is one focus within the profession that contributes to counselor longevity (Burkholder, 2012; Cureton, Davis, & Giegerich, 2019). Limberg et al. (2014) asserted that a successful professional identity is being able to merge personal characteristics with professional training to positively impact the counseling profession (Limberg et al., 2014; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Woo et al. (2017) attributes ethical conduct to a counselor's ability to establish a strong professional identity. Also, professional identity development contributes to the counselor's ability to engage in the numerous roles that comprise the counselor position (Cureton et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2016). Leadership is a role in which counselors are expected to participate whether through creating local community initiatives, presenting at state conferences, or developing national awareness projects promoting social change initiatives. However, establishing a leadership identity entails education, mentorship, and practical application (Prosek & Hurt, 2014; Woo et al., 2016). The integration of leadership education within counseling programs could potentially strengthen emerging counselor leadership competencies (Gibson, 2016). However, counseling students do not currently receive formal leadership training within counseling programs, as CACREP does not require leadership training as

part of the required curriculum (2016). Hence, an investigation of leadership identity through educational instruction could reinforce professional commitment as well as encourage further career advancement opportunities that include pursuance of a doctoral degree.

**Student Leadership Development**

The development of leadership skills is an important task for educational institutions (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; Chesnut & Tran-Johnson, 2013; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015). Although leadership as a discipline is under-utilized in higher education, universities across the nation have implemented leadership programs as to increase student leadership identity for real-world applications (Jenkins, 2013; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2019). Drake University, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, conducted a longitudinal study from 2008 to 2013 regarding leadership identity development of pharmacy students (Chestnut, 2013). The Student Leadership Development Series, a year-long co-curricular program, was developed on the premise of five main objectives: teach students to discern between various leadership styles and identification of self-leadership style, discuss barriers to leadership engagement, build relationships within community leaders, evaluate individual skills toward organizational goals, and implement leadership skills to achieve desired outcome. Over the six-year time frame, a total of 159 pharmacy students participated in the Student Leadership Development Series. The series consisted of students engaging in monthly activities, attending guest speaker lectures, completing monthly evaluation forms, and presenting a leadership platform project; the co-curricular activity design permitted researchers to

collect qualitative and quantitative data. Conclusions drawn from student implementation forms and summative evaluations indicated Student Leadership Development Series was as impactful program, which helped students develop a strong leadership identity as well as increased desire to pursue leadership opportunities after graduation.

Navvaro and Malvaso (2015) investigated whether or not a relationship existed between college freshman student athletes' gender and pursuance of mentorship opportunities within the athletics department and outside of the athletic organization, peer mentorship programs, and desire to become a peer mentor. According to Navarro and Malvaso (2015), college student athletes experience role conflict and role tension during their freshman year of college. Results indicated student team motivation, communication, and interaction fostered the development of self-leadership skills. A multi-institutional study conducted by Dugan and Komives (2007) regarding student leadership development discovered leadership training enhanced socially responsible students. Additionally, student self-efficacy, community engagement, self-image, academic achievement, and relational experiences increased with the development of leadership capabilities. The Keys to Inclusive Leadership program (KILN) was applied to eight junior and senior nursing students who represented a racially diverse and socio-economically challenged student population (Reed, Pino, & Morrison, 2015). The students scored high on several constructs on the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS) and attributed their growing knowledge of leadership to the program; students increased in self-awareness for student leadership identity and as future practitioners. Research indicated educational institutions implementing leadership programs enhance

students' leadership identity development, which in turn positively influences personal and professional competencies as socially responsible citizens (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012).

**Socially Responsible Leadership**

Three decades of student leadership research indicates positive outcomes from the opportunity to engage in leadership education on college campuses (Cauthen, 2016; Dugan, 2015; Hevel et al., 2018). One leadership model is credited with providing a foundation in which students transfer student leadership skills into SRL in society. Socially responsible leadership (SRL), developed from the social change model of leadership development, is defined as a student's ability to utilize eight leadership values as the foundation for social change engagement. Traditional leadership styles focus on managing people where as social change model encourages collective wisdom in comparison to the management of people (Dugan, 2015). The guiding values (Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, Citizenship, and Change) operate within individual, group, or societal parameters as to provide a context for each value's application for self and collaborating with others.

The SRL instrument was developed in 1998 by a student named Tracy M. Tyree as part of his doctoral dissertation about college students and leadership identity (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008). The original SRL instrument contained 103-items using a Likert-type scale to measure responses (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree) (IIII). The SRL was later

modified to a 68-item instrument due to low response rates. The SRL-R2 used the same eight constructs with 6-11 questions and measurement scaling. It is important to note that the constructs have decreased slightly from the original SRLS, 103-item scale, to the SRLS-R2, 68-item scale, in the following ways: substantial decrease in reliability for Citizenship construct (0.92 to 0.77), increase in reliability for Collaboration, Controversy with Civility, and Change constructs, and the lowest reliability construct was Civility.

**Race and Leadership Identity**

*Race* is defined as identifiable characteristics of an individual such as skin tone or eye shape determined through heredity (Cohen, 2015). The term *ethnicity* is often confused with race, which is an individual's identification with cultural traditions of a specific group/s. In today's society, White or Caucasians comprise of 76.5% of the United States population whereas 13.4% of the population identify as Black or African American (United States Census Bureau, 2018). In 2045, the United States Census Bureau predicts the country will comprise of a race class titled majority minority (Perez & Hirschman, 2009). Perez and Hirschman (2009) described the racial composition of American people as a kaleidoscope; characteristics once distinct are varied through the blurring of racial make-up.

An extensive literature review regarding students in higher education and racial diversity highlighted the need to investigate student leadership development and meeting the needs of a racially diverse study population (Kodama & Dugan, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Currently, Asian Americans have the highest rate of college enrollment at 65% (Digest of Education Statistics, 2019). Caucasians

individuals as well as students who identify as two or more races comprise of 41%, African American and Hispanic American students 36%, and American Indian/Native American 20%. Although the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reports a 3% increase of enrollment for racially diverse populations by the year 2028, racial disparities continue to exist for post baccalaureate degree holders. The Condition on Education (2017) reported Caucasians held 68% of master's and 69% of doctoral enrollments in the year 2014-2015. Alarmingly, postbaccalaureate enrollment rates for students identifying as African American, Hispanic American, or American Indian/Native American are between 6 and 11%. Niu (2016) reported by the year 2020, employers will require employees to hold a postbaccalaureate degree to compete with job market demands. To address job market projections, universities must address racial disparity at the enrollment level as to develop strategies to promote academic success through student leadership engagement early in the educational process.

**Gender and Leadership Identity**

"Gender is a multidimensional construct that refers to different roles, responsibilities, limitations, and experiences of individuals based on their presenting sex and/or gender" (Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg, 2017, p. 130). Gender identity influences how individuals think and interact with others. According to this claim, gender would influence how an individual cultivates a professional identity, particularly leadership identity as a student (McKenzie, 2018).

Research regarding gender and student leadership development is limited and warrants further investigatory efforts (Haber-Curran, & Tillapaugh, 2017; McKenzie,

2018). Investigating gender and leadership identity development could provide insight into gender-specific needs, which maximizes overall professional leadership effectiveness. Additionally, investigating gender as a research variable could influence the development of educational programming and student leadership identity development.

Gender disparities exist between master's and doctoral degree completions in 2017 (Perry, 2018). Statistics report women receive master's degrees in social and behavioral sciences at a 30% higher rate than men. Additionally, women earned 41,717 doctoral degrees in comparison to 37,062 men (McCarthy, 2018). However, statistics report men hold more leadership positions than women after graduation. Contributing towards gender inequity is a lack of professional opportunities to develop leadership skills in the workforce due to gender-biased attitudes regarding leadership identity (Eklund et al., 2017; Elias, 2018). Current research reports gendered stereotypes perpetuate leadership inequality in regard to women leaders (Eddy & Khwaja, 2019; Mamadou, 2019). Hence, there is a need to investigate student leadership identity during higher education as to address gender influences, potential biases, and incite leadership development that enhances emerging professionals' attitudes towards leadership identity and roles within the workplace.

**Counselor Leadership Development**

According to Gibson (2016), the concept of counselor leadership identity is under-researched. Gibson (2016) claimed past leadership research focused on the development of characteristics, qualities, and beliefs of counselor identity. However,

today's leadership landscape requires researchers to investigate how cultivating a leadership identity influences continued involvement in professional opportunities for enrichment.

Luke and Goodrich (2010) conducted a qualitative study exploring emerging counselor views on student counselor leadership identity and professional development. Participants recruited from the Chi Sigma Iota answered questions regarding educational experiences that influenced leadership identity development and how they would describe their leadership identity to others. The research findings confirmed Luke and Goodrich's (2010) hypothesis for the importance of leadership involvement during students' educational experiences as to develop a leadership identity. Furthermore, participants contributed involvement in Chi Sigma Iota leadership roles as the catalyst for developing a professional leadership identity. Lastly, considerations for incorporating leadership curriculum within counselor educational programs were suggested as to increase student leadership identity as part of professional development.

**Mentorship**

Mentorship is a collaborative approach to student learning that is instrumental for student personal and professional success (Coles, 2011; Boswell et al.,, 2015). The purpose of the mentorship relationship is to recognize and nurture the student's potential. According to Chan, Yeh, and Krumboltz (2015), mentorship relationships highly correlate with student self-efficacy, program satisfaction, and retention rates. The mentor's responsibilities are dependent upon which mentorship approach he or she applies. The two mentoring approaches most commonly applied within the mentorship

relationship include psychosocial and career processes (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012). The outcomes for either approach align with the mentee's designated goals. For instance, the psychosocial mentorship approach encompasses the mentor fluctuating between various roles (leader, counselor, and/or advocate) as to manage the mentee's intra- and interpersonal development. A career mentorship relationship is guided by enhancing professional opportunities for career advancement. Each mentorship approach provides the mentee with the targeted goals designed through the collaborative efforts of the mentorship relationship (Boswell et al., 2015).

**Mentorship and Counselor Leadership Development**

Mentorship creates the foundation for counseling student leadership development (Boswell et al., 2015). According to Campbell, Smith, Dugan, and Komives (2012), early exposure to mentorship opportunities enhances leadership self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the foundation in which counseling students' leadership identities are developed and refined (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016; McKibben, Umstead, & Borders, 2017). Providing feedback, support, and encouragement assist mentees in navigating the process of developing a counselor leadership identity. Ultimately, the collaborative nature of a mentor-mentee relationship enhances student academic performance, identity development, and professional experiences (Boswell et al., 2015).

**Institutional Influences**

Student leadership identity development is a central focus for higher education (Boswell et al., 2015; Cauthen, 2016; Campbell et al., 2012). Higher education identified the importance of instituting mentorship opportunities for students. Mentor relationships

provide a context in which students understand leadership identity development (Boswell et al., 2015; Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018). Research indicated SRL as a powerful indicator of student leadership development citing mentorship relationships as the catalyst. According to Campbell et al. (2012), mentorship programs increase students' abilities to effectively cultivate and apply SRL skills during and after graduation.

**Leadership**

During the 19th century, theorists described leadership as innate characteristics specific to great men who when called upon rose as leaders (Allio, 2013; Dionne et al., 2014; Eddy & Khwaja, 2019). The theory of Great Man was later related to trait theory in the 30s and 40s, developed by Gordon Alport, which theorized leaders have innate characteristics that determine effective leadership. Ralph Stogdill, an expert in leadership research in the twentieth century, refuted prior concepts of trait theory and argued leaders can be effective in one situation yet ineffective in another. Researchers in the 60s speculated leadership is influenced by shared goals (Klingborg, Moore, & Varea-Hammond, 2006). In the 70s, leadership perspectives shifted from hierarchical to transformational, which led to valued based leadership born in the 80s. Differing views on leadership continue to be of interest for researchers in the twenty-first century as contemporary theorists view leadership as a function of motivating others for a common goal (Fischer et al., 2015).

Contemporary perspectives of leadership development, informed through behavioral science, describes leadership as learned behaviors influenced by characteristics of the individual (Dionne et al., 2014; Fischer et al., 2015). Day, Fleenor,

Atwater, Sturm, and McKee (2014) suggested leadership does not solely develop from workshops or instruction, but the crux of development lies within ongoing daily leadership practices. For instance, successful leadership skills require daily attention to developing interpersonal skills, setting goals, motivating and inspiring others, and applying feedback (Zheng & Muir, 2015). Engagement in daily leadership activities provides the experience in which the novice can transform into the expert.

**Leadership and Social Change**

For four decades, leadership research focused on leading as the management or directing of people, which is an authoritative approach to leadership (Elwell & Elikofer, 2015; Silva, 2016). The authoritative leadership approach is outdated and does apply to our society's modern outlook on leadership identity as creating change that benefits oneself and others (Nguyen, 2016; Rosch & Caza, 2012). Current investigations on the topic of leadership define the practice as a relational process that produces useful change for a collective goal (Summerfield, 2014). Furthermore, Summerfield (2014) quoted Todd Sorenson, "Leadership is successfully creating positive change for the common good." (p. 251) With the concept of leading being redefined as empowering and unifying, it would be logical to imply that cultivating a leadership identity would incite socially responsible actions of the leader (Lane & Chapman, 2011; Nguyen, 2016).

Student leadership development is one of the most critical challenges universities currently face as they prepare students for the professional world (Elwell & Elikofer, 2015). Universities recognize the need to prepare students to become effective leaders in their profession as to initiate social change as part of their professional identity

development (Lane & Chapman, 2011; Rosch & Caza, 2012). There is no one leadership style that directs students in developing effective leadership skills (Caza & Rosch, 2014). Additionally, employing leadership curriculum is complex in that each university institutes leadership programs to fit the mission and vision statement of a specific program (Rosch & Caza, 2012).

A quantitative study conducted by Rosch and Caza (2012) utilized the Socially Responsible Leadership scale (SRLS) to determine effects of a short-term leadership program on student leadership development using the social change model of leadership development competencies as a framework for assessment. Participants were comprised of bachelor's freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students. 65% of the participants were female. Reported race included: Caucasian (57%), African American (8%), Latino (6%), Asian-American (13%), and international students (15%). Results indicated that exposure to short-term leadership programs increased SRL of student participants even three months after exposure. Three important research considerations can be derived from Rosch and Caza's (2012) study. First, leadership programs influence the development of a leadership identity. Second, the results provide evidence-based information for potential leadership curriculum development of SRLs. Lastly, leadership programs can benefit the student's leadership application abilities beyond initial instruction.

Leadership is conventionally thought of as a management-oriented role (Elwell & Elikofer, 2015). More than half a century of research conducted in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe contributed towards this understanding (Dugan, Morosini, & Beazley, 2011). However, the concept of leading others has evolved into a relational

leadership style that derives from cultural influences, environmental factors, and innate qualities. Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, and White (2015) asserted leadership skills are effectively developed within a diverse environment as to foster culturally competent leadership roles. Leadership enhances one's ability for learning, cultural awareness, and civic responsibility, which is indicative of a relational approach to leading.

Examining student leadership identity on a global scale is gaining attention in the literature (Dugan et al., 2011; Shek, Yuen-Tsang, & Ng, 2017). As nations continue to establish interdependence, investigating student identity development in relation to influences of racial/cultural considerations is crucial to developing culturally competent leadership practices (Dugan et al., 2011). Additionally, international enrollment is on the rise, which creates a need to address racial/cultural factors affecting student leadership identity.

Dugan, Morosini and Beazley (2011) conducted a comparative quantitative study regarding leadership development of students attending a higher education institution in the United States and Mexico. Dugan et al. (2011) sought to gain knowledge on whether statistical differences existed in SRL capacity between students in Mexico and the U.S. and whether collegiate experiences contributed towards differences of SRL capacities. Results indicated students from Mexico scored significantly higher than U.S. students on the SRLS competencies. Dugan et al. (2011) asserted cultural values contribute towards the development of leadership attitudes and practices, which differs from one culture to the next. Hence, cultural considerations are critical when developing leadership programs

as research indicates individual factors contribute toward leadership capabilities and engagement protocols.

## Conclusion

The ACA *Code of Ethics* provides statutes that govern the manner in which counselors interact with clients (2014). Leadership skills are currently not taught to master's level counseling students as a formal part of assigned curriculum for professional development, but research suggests that counselors are using leadership as a counseling technique (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). Green et al. (2013) asserted that there are numerous benefits for the integration of leadership development within counseling programs. The benefits for leadership development include the following: increased motivation and autonomous client behaviors, increased positive closures, and increased positive client-client interactions (Barbuto, 2005; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2019). Recently, professional counseling organizations have spoken about the importance of master's level counselors developing a leadership identity because of its application across professional roles (Paradise et al., 2010). With support from counseling organizations and current research indicating benefits of counselor leadership development, the focus on developing emerging master's level counseling students' leadership identity is becoming a central focus of educational institutions (Gibson, 2016; Paradise et al., 2010). However, without approval from the CACREP, master's level counseling students will continue to depend on leadership identity development from informal exposure rather than formal training, which is a violation of the ACA *Code of Ethics* for professional standards of conduct (2016).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Developing socially responsible student leaders is becoming a focus of higher education institutions (Shek, Yuen-Tsang, & Ng, 2017). With a 20% increase in advanced degree enrollment 2009-2019, researching SRL of master's level students may be beneficial, as a leadership identity may increase self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and commitment to social change (Barbarà-i-Molinero, Cascón-Pereira, & Hernández-Lara, 2017; National Center for Statistics, 2019). Further, investigating gender, race, and SRL can help inform educational institutions as to how better develop student leadership identity to prepare students for leadership roles within professional settings (National Center for Statistics, 2019). Therefore, this quantitative study addressed whether SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence (as measured by the SRLS-R2), gender, and/or race predicted intention to a pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

**Research Design and Rationale**

Descriptive relational survey methods were used to investigate SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, Congruence, gender, and race of master's level mental health counseling students attending CACREP-accredited counseling programs to determine whether leadership aptitude influenced pursuing a doctoral degree. Statistical associations can inform causal relationships between predictor variables and outcome variable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2018). In this study, I identified the strength of

effect of predictor variables in relation to the outcome variable as well as direction of association using correlational research methods.

## Methodology

The predictor variables in this study were three constructs of the social change model of leadership development: Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence (see Table 1). These three variables were measured using the SRLS-R2 instrument, which consists of six to 11 questions per construct. The SRLS-R2 instrument measures responses using a Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* (1) to *Strongly Disagree* (5). The reliability levels for the scales are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1

*Critical Values of the Social Change Model*

| Individual values | |
| --- | --- |
| Consciousness of self | Being self-aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate you to take action. Being mindful, or aware of your current emotional state, behavior, and perceptual lenses. |
| Congruence | Acting in ways that are consistent with your values and beliefs. Thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others. |
| Group values | |
| Change | Believing in the importance of making a better world and a better society for oneself and others. Believing that individuals, groups and communities have the ability to work together to make that change. |

Table 2

*Reliability Levels for Scales*

|  | SRLS Original 104 Questions | SRLS-R2 68 Questions |
|---|---|---|
| Consciousness of Self | 0.82 | 0.78 |
| Congruence | 0.82 | 0.79 |
| Change | 0.78 | 0.82 |

## Population

Gender was measured categorically with options of male, female, and other. Race was measured categorically with options of White/Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino American, Asian American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Island, and From Multiple Races or Some Other Race.

## Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Prior to data collection and analysis, approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) is warranted through submission of a completed IRB form. Student participant recruitment was tracked and organized in an Excel spreadsheet stored in a password-protected laptop, which will be kept in a file cabinet in a locked office when not in use. I was the only person with access to the office and to the locked file cabinet.

Participants were contacted through the Florida Counseling Association membership list, Counselor Education and Supervision Network Listserv, Facebook groups, and counsgrads@lists.osu.edu. A G-Power analysis revealed that a sampling size of 153 master's level counseling students would be needed to minimize data errors.

Participant participation was strictly voluntary. No identifying information was collected or kept. No incentives were provided for participation in this study. Recruiting participants from geographically varied areas within the United States helped to expand or increase generalizability and transferability of the research findings (Kukull & Ganguli, 2012; Tipton et al., 2016).

**Instrumentation**

This quantitative study aimed to collect data using two survey instruments. The demographic form, which was developed using SurveyMonkey, was designed to collect participant information including gender (predictor variable), race (predictor variable) and intent to pursue professional advancement opportunities following graduation from a CACREP-accredited master's program in counseling (outcome variable). No identifying information was collected or stored. SRL served as the predictor variable and was measured by the SRLS-R2, a 68-item instrument containing six-11 questions per construct (Hevel et al., 2018). The Likert-type scale measures participant information regarding three constructs (Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence) of the social change model of leadership development. SRLS-R2 responses range between 1 (*strongly agree)* to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Constructs have decreased slightly from the original SRLS, 103-item scale to the SRLS-R2, 68-item scale, providing an equally reliable instrument while cutting participant time to complete the instrument. Reliability scores also increased for the construct change in the newly normed version of the assessment. The instrument was sent out following IRB and participant institution approval.

Permission to use the SRLS-R2 instrument from the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs at the University of Maryland was granted prior to use.

**Data Collection**

To comply with IRB guidelines, participants were to click the button *yes* after reading the consent form before proceeding to the survey, which was conveniently linked in the introductory email. Participant data was collected using SurveyMonkey.com. No outside funding was used to purchase a SurveyMonkey.com subscription. No monetary incentives were provided for participation in this study. Once each survey was completed, the data was stored in SurveyMonkey.com. The data was exported from SurveyMonkey.com to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software on a password protected laptop computer. Prior to data input into SPSS, data was meticulously entered into Excel and verified for accuracy. No outside funding was used for this study or to purchase the SPSS software. Participants will have access to research study results once the data is analyzed. Eraser, an advanced security tool for Windows, was employed to delete data once it was analyzed. Raw data, however, was backed up without identifying information and stored on a password protected backup drive, which remains locked in a cabinet for safe keeping for a period of time following analysis of the data. The security measures taken during the transfer and deletion of confidential information was to ensure the participant privacy as regulated by the IRB (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). No outside funding was used to purchase Eraser software.

**Procedural Protocols**

Participants had four weeks to complete the survey documents once initial introductory emails were sent before a second email attempt was initiated. Three attempts were made to meet data collection requirements through email contact of Listservers. Participant data submitted without a signed consent form was excluded from the research study, but endured the same secure storage and deletion procedures as data that was analyzed for the research project (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). The stated purpose of the research study was provided in the introductory email as well as encouragement to contact the principle investigator with any concerns or questions regarding the research process through Protonmail.com, which is an encrypted email provider.

If research safety measures approved by the IRB were violated this protocol would be followed as directed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016):

1. As the primary researcher, I will notify Walden's IRB within 48 hours if an unanticipated risk, life threatening event, confidentiality breach, or death of participant(s) pertaining to the parameters of the study takes place.

2. As the primary researcher, I will notify Walden's IRB within 48 hours if and unanticipated problem that does not cause harm to any participants or is not directly related to the proposed study takes place.

3.  In the event of risk/harm/death to participants resulting from the proposed study, I will suspend activity until I have been given permission to continue by the IRB.

4.  In the event of risk/harm/death to participants resulting from the proposed study, I will prepare to re-assess the parameters of the study including but not limited to sample group, research design, and informed consent.

5.  In the event of any problem, anticipated or unanticipated, resulting from the study or not, I will notify participants of the events without breaching confidentiality or causing additional harm and provide appropriate resources.

6.  In the event of internal adverse events that are expected and related and are consistent with the frequency and severity listed in the informed consent document, the primary researcher will keep a summary of the events that have occurred within the last approval period and submits the summary at the time of continuing review.

7.  In the event of accidental or unintentional deviations to the IRB-approved protocol that do not involve risks to participants, a Protocol Deviation/Violation Report Form may be submitted to the IRB.

8.  In the event that an external adverse event occurs that does not require prompt reporting to the IRB, the primary researcher may complete a regulatory document, which is initialed and dated by the researcher. This record is to be made available to the IRB upon request.

**Research Questions**

Do SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs?

Hypotheses

$H_a$: Socially responsible leadership scale scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race does predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs.

$Ho$: Socially responsible leadership scale scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race does not predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs.

**Data Analysis**

Linear multiple regression was used in SPSS software to investigate the outcome variable in relation to the predictor variables. In addition to descriptive statistics and correlations, the regression coefficients table was analyzed as to provide a summary of the statistical data collected from the research study.

**Limits of Generalizability**

The targeted population for this research study included master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in a clinical mental health counseling program

accredited by The CACREP in the state of Florida. The findings may not be generalizable to other counselor programs that are not CACREP accredited institutions nor to other states due to differences in educational requirements or other confounding factors. Additionally, mental health counseling programs deliver educational information concentrated on mental health whereas other counselor programs may have different educational instructions depending upon professional focus such as substance abuse, art therapy, or marriage and family therapy. For instance, marriage and family therapy programs focus on family systems and evaluating dysfunctional environments that erode family connection and communication abilities whereas master's level mental health counseling students are specifically instructed on advocacy and social change agency. The differences between various types of master's level counseling programs can affect professor instruction regarding leadership identity due to specifics of the program's educational requirements (Crisp & Alvardo-Young, 2018). This quantitative study examined master's level mental health counseling student aptitude of SRL competencies and is designed to help determine whether or not aptitude of leadership has an influence upon pursuance of further education specifically a doctoral degree.

## Participants' Rights and Permission

The IRB standards for research conduct were followed by the principle investigator. IRB approval was granted before the researcher contacted the targeted *sampling population*. The introductory email included the study's purpose and the link to complete the survey at SurveyMonkey.com. Additional information listed in the introductory email included: confidentiality, timeframe of survey completion, potential

benefits of the study, contact email for survey inquiries, and Walden University's

approval number for the study (11-2119-0587642). The electronic consent request dually

formatted student participants of strictly voluntary participation in the study. No

identifying information was collected or stored, and no incentives were provided to

participants.

**Summary**

Statistical data, collected from the participants, was calculated using a multiple

regression analysis. Data was displayed in table form as well as in written form. Results

derived from investigating whether SRLS for Change, Consciousness of Self, and

Congruence, gender, and race of master's level mental health counseling students

attending a CACREP accredited program could further inform educational institutions of

the importance of integrating leadership curriculum within master's level counseling

programs either at the course or program level as to encourage student leadership identity

development. Research conducted by Wiewiora and Kowalkiewicz (2019), confirmed

students increase self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment to social change initiatives

when provided leadership programming in college. Investigating student leadership

aptitude could help determine whether or not master's level counseling students choose to

pursue a doctoral degree based on a leadership identity; current research indicates

students who pursue doctoral degrees enroll with the intention to engage in professional

opportunities that are leadership focused after graduation. Hence, results derived from

investigating whether SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence,

as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral

degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP

accredited counseling programs.

Chapter 4: Results

## Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative findings of this exploratory study on factors that can predict intent to a pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. The following research objective guided the research study: Do SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence (as measured by the SRLS-R2), gender, and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited counseling programs?

## Population and Sample

The target population was master's level counseling students attending CACREP-accredited mental health counseling programs in the United States from the fall of 2019 until winter of 2020 ($N = 61$). Master's level counseling students were chosen for this study because of a lack of research regarding counseling student professional development as leaders in the counseling field (Paradise et al., 2010). The participants were drawn using a random sampling method. Randomization provides the ability to generalize to a specific population (Eslami, 2018). Participants were recruited through IRB-approved e-mail server lists and social media postings. Participants were contacted through the following listservers and Facebook groups: Walden University Student Portal, Florida Counseling Association membership list, Counselor Education and Supervision Network Listserv, counsgrads@lists.osu.edu, and Facebook groups. Specific Facebook groups were contacted with approval from each Facebook administrator. Each

posting on social media included the IRB approved e-mail, which stated that no identifying information would be collected or stored, as well as the SurveyMonkey link for participants to complete the survey. The posting was put on each server list and social media site three times over a 5-month period to provide potential participants access to the study. Further requests to submit surveys on social media sites due to the nationwide pandemic COVID-19 were denied. Potential survey submission sites deemed study submissions as non-important, which further restricted access to potential participants and affected data collection.

With a total participant population ($N = 93$), the sample size was calculated to be 153 with a 95% confidence level and a ±5 confidence interval. Out of 93 opened surveys, 61 participants completed the online survey (65.5%). An additional 32 participants (52.4%) attempted to complete the surveys but were removed due to not completing the survey questions.

Participants from 22 states (all four regions of the United States)—West-Mountain and Pacific Northwest, Northeast-New England Division and Mid-Atlantic Division, Midwest-East North Central Division and West North Central Division, South-South Atlantic, East, and West South Central Atlantic regions—completed the online survey, which increased generalizability of this study. A majority of participant participation originated from Florida. South Carolina encompassed the next highest percentage of participants with Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia following third and Illinois, Maryland, and Oklahoma following in fourth. All state participation is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

*Participation Displayed by State (N = 61)*

| State | % of Participants | # of Participants |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 1.6 | 1 |
| Arkansas | 1.6 | 1 |
| California | 1.6 | 1 |
| Colorado | 1.6 | 1 |
| Florida | 42.6 | 26 |
| Georgia | 3.2 | 2 |
| Idaho | 1.6 | 1 |
| Illinois | 3.2 | 2 |
| Massachusetts | 1.6 | 1 |
| Maryland | 3.2 | 2 |
| Michigan | 1.6 | 1 |
| Missouri | 1.6 | 1 |
| Nevada | 1.6 | 1 |
| New York | 1.6 | 1 |
| North Carolina | 1.6 | 1 |
| Ohio | 1.6 | 1 |
| Oklahoma | 3.2 | 2 |
| Pennsylvania | 4.9 | 3 |
| South Carolina | 8.2 | 5 |
| Texas | 4.9 | 3 |
| Virginia | 4.9 | 3 |
| West Virginia | 1.6 | 1 |

Table 4 displays the students' gender, age range, and race. Eighteen participants

identified as male, and 40 identified as female. Most were 18-29 years old (27.9%) and

40-49 (34.4%). Most students identified as Caucasian/White (70.5%).

Table 4

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 61)*

|  |  | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender |  |  |  |
|  | Male | 18 | 29.5 |
|  | Female | 40 | 65.6 |
|  | Other | 3 | 4.9 |
| Age Range |  |  |  |
|  | 18-29 | 17 | 27.9 |
|  | 30-39 | 11 | 18. |
|  | 40-49 | 21 | 34.4 |
|  | 50-59 | 8 | 13.1 |
|  | 60-69 | 4 | 6.6 |
| Race |  |  |  |
|  | Caucasian | 43 | 70.5 |
|  | Black/African American | 4 | 6.6 |
|  | American Indian | 0 | 0 |
|  | Asian American | 0 | 0 |
|  | Native-Hawaiian | 0 | 0 |
|  | Hispanic/Latino | 12 | 19.7 |
|  | Multiple Races | 2 | 3.3 |

Of the 52 master's level counseling students, 85.2% viewed themselves as

socially responsible leaders. Only three master's level counseling students (4.9%) did not

view themselves as socially responsible leaders. Of the participants, six master's level

counseling students (9.8%) responded *maybe* to viewing themselves as socially

responsible leaders.

Table 5 displays the master's level counseling students' responses for pursuance

of a doctoral degree and doctoral professional career aspirations. Of the 61 participants,

32 selected to pursue a doctoral degree post-graduate school completion (52.4%), and 19

responded *maybe*. There were two participants who did not complete the survey question.

Out of 61 participants, most selected teaching as their professional aspiration (26.2%),

which was almost the same amount as those undecided (27.8%). There was a total of

seven participants who did not answer which career aspiration aligned with their doctoral

goals. The survey was designed for selection of one doctoral career aspiration per

participant.

Table 5

*Pursuant of Doctoral Degree Post Master's Graduation and Career Aspiration*

|  |  | *f* | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pursue Doctoral Degree |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 32 | 52.4 |
|  | No | 8 | 13.1 |
|  | Maybe | 19 | 31.1 |
| Pursue Doctoral Career |  |  |  |
|  | Research | 7 | 11.4 |
|  | Teaching | 16 | 26.2 |
|  | Professional Development | 3 | 4.91 |
|  | Supervision | 3 | 4.91 |
|  | Leadership | 8 | 13.1 |
|  | Undecided | 17 | 27.8 |

Table 6 displays master's level counseling students' gender and responses for

pursuant of a doctoral degree. Out of 18 male participants, most (13) responded yes to

pursuant of a doctoral degree. Out of 40 female participants, 18 responded yes to

pursuant of a doctoral degree, 14 responded maybe, and eight responded no. Out of the

three participants who identified as other, one responded yes to pursuant of a doctoral

degree and two responded maybe. A total of 72.2% of the male participant population

responded yes to pursuant of a doctoral degree in comparison to 45% of the female

participant population and 33.3% of other participant population. For leadership career

aspiration, only two male (11.1%) and two female (5%) participants answered *yes*.

Table 6

*Gender and Pursuant of a Doctoral Degree Post Master's Graduation*

|  |  | *f* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 13 | 72.2 |
|  | No | 2 | 11.1 |
|  | Maybe | 3 | 16.6 |
| Female |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 18 | 45 |
|  | No | 8 | 20 |
|  | Maybe | 14 | 35 |
| Other |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 1 | 33.3 |
|  | No |  |  |
|  | Maybe | 2 | 66.6 |

**Results**

The research objective was to investigate whether or not SRLS scores for Change,

Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender, and/or

race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health

counseling students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs. A Pearson

product moment correlation analysis was performed and revealed a statistical correlation

between SRLS-R2 predictor variables Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence

and gender. Table 7 displays the Pearson correlation outcomes. Table 8 displays the mean

(*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) for the SRLS-R2 constructs Change, Consciousness of

Self, and Congruence.

Table 7

*Pearson Correlation Outcomes*

|  | P | G | A | R | C | COS | Con. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P | 1.00 | .268 | -.024 | -.040 | -.064 | -.057 | -.098 |
| G | .268 | 1.000 | -.219 | -.019 | .166 | .067 | .141 |
| A | -.024 | -.219 | 1.000 | -.220 | .383 | .417 | .034 |
| R | -.040 | -.019 | -.220 | 1.000 | -.077 | -.168 | -.141 |
| C | -.064 | .166 | .383 | -.077 | 1.000 | .582 | .327 |
| COS | -.057 | .067 | .417 | -.168 | .582 | 1.000 | .397 |
| Con. | -.098 | .141 | .034 | -.141 | .327 | .397 | 1.000 |

*Note.* P = Pursue, G = Gender, A = Age, R = Race/Ethnicity, C = Change, COS = Consciousness of self, Con. = congruence

Table 8

*Means and Outcomes for Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (N = 61)*

| Socially Responsible Construct | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| Change | 39.0508 | 4.52740 |
| Consciousness of Self | 36.5254 | 4.69540 |
| Congruence | 29.9492 | 3.20788 |

*Note.* 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

A multiple regression model was chosen to assess whether or not SRLS scores for

Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, as measured by the SRLS-R2, gender,

and/or race predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree among master's level mental health

counseling students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs. According to

Fang (2013), a multiple regression analysis provides a more accurate and precise

understanding of each individual factor association with the predictor variable. No

statistically significant relationship was found between intent to pursue a doctoral degree

(outcome variable) and the SRLS scores for Change, Consciousness of Self, and

Congruence (SRLS-R2) and/or race (predictor variables). A non-significant regression equation was found $F(7, 51) = .895, p > 0.517$), with an $R2=.109$. Further statistical analysis revealed gender accounts for a significant percentage of variance between the variables ($p < .027$) and pursuant of a doctoral degree. Table 9 displays the statistical significance of gender.

Table 9

*Model of Gender Significance*

|  | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. | Zero-order | Partial |
| Constant | 3.329 | 1.431 |  | 2.326 | .024 |  |  |
| Gender | .541 | .237 | .323 | 2.283 | .027 | .268 | .305 |
| Age | .057 | .124 | .076 | .463 | .645 | -.024 | .065 |
| Race | -.019 | .060 | -.043 | -.310 | .758 | -.040 | -.043 |
| Change | -.017 | .036 | -.086 | -.481 | .633 | -.064 | -.067 |
| Consciousness of Self | -.007 | .035 | -.034 | -.186 | .853 | -.057 | -.026 |
| Congruence | -.034 | .043 | .119 | -.794 | .431 | -.098 | -.110 |

**Summary**

The findings represented in this chapter include participant participation by state, demographic information, master's level counselor students' SRL comprehension, and pursuance of a doctoral degree post-master's graduation and career aspirations. Data revealed 85.2% of master's level counseling students agreed they possessed SRL constructs of Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, yet further analysis revealed leadership constructs did not predict students' pursuant of higher education. Finally, a statistical description of the significant impact of gender in regard to master's

level counseling students pursuant of a doctoral degree was discussed to further

investigate previous research stating gender dictates pursuant of a doctoral degree.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Leadership can be conceptualized in various ways for master's level students (Balwant, 2016; Cauthen, 2016). But students who lack exposure to leadership curriculum during their master's educational experience are unable to recognize and apply core leadership concepts in their professions post graduation (Cauthen, 2016). Current research provides evidence of the importance for integrating leadership curriculum within master's level programs, particularly counseling programs (Crisp & Alvardo-Young, 2018). Furthermore, research suggests that master's level students who engage in leadership curriculum are more likely to pursue a doctoral degree as well as seek leadership positions in their career fields (Cauthen, 2016; Hinkle, 2014).

The need for counselors to engage in leadership positions within the profession is greater than it has been in previous decades (Paradise et al., 2013). For example, counselor responsibilities for advocacy require higher levels of engagement due to legislation negatively impacting counselor/client care. The nationwide pandemic of COVID-19 is an example of how counselors forged into leadership roles through advocating and writing ethical statutes to ensure counselor interns were able to provide continuance of care to clients through telehealth services. Through quick leadership action, a positive outcome was produced. However, engaging in leadership roles without formal education provides various ethical challenges for counselors that include ethical violations for practicing outside of the APA statutes. As counselor roles evolve beyond typical counseling duties, the integration of leadership curriculum within counseling programs is important for emerging counselors' professional identity development as

well as compliance to ethical standards of conduct (APA, 2014; Paradise et al., 2014).

Therefore, the purpose of the quantitative study was to investigate factors that influence

whether master's level counseling students' attending a CACREP-accredited counseling

program pursue a doctoral degree. Data were collected from an online survey instrument.

The SRLS-R2 scores were analyzed in addition to gender and race in relation to intent to

pursue a doctoral degree.

## Key Findings

Findings from this quantitative study support current literature reporting gender as

a significant factor for pursuing a doctoral degree. SRLS variables Change,

Consciousness of Self, and Congruence showed significant correlations between gender

and ethnicity. However, analysis showed that gender predicted whether master's level

counseling students attending a CACREP-accredited counseling program pursued a

doctoral degree post graduation. A multiple regression analysis indicated gender as a

significant factor predicting intent to pursue a doctoral degree. Upon further statistical

analysis, males chose to pursue a doctoral degree at a higher percentage in comparison to

females and participants who identified as other. This finding contradicts previous

research reporting that males pursue doctoral degrees at lower percentages than females

(McCarthy, 2018; Perry, 2018). However, male participants also aspired to pursue

doctoral degrees in the field of leadership at a higher percentage than females or

participants who identified as other, which current research supports. Thus, findings of

this study both contradict and support previous research findings for students pursuing a

doctoral degree post graduation and professional leadership aspirations post graduation.

**Interpretation of the Findings**

In this study, the SRL variables Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence as well as gender and race were significantly correlated between and/or among one another. Gender and Consciousness of Self displayed a significant correlation as well as gender and Congruence. Race and Consciousness of Self as well as race and Congruence displayed a significant correlation. The variable change had no significant correlation to gender or race.

Upon further regression analysis, gender significantly predicted whether master's level counseling students attending a CACREP-accredited counseling program pursued a doctoral degree post graduation, which aligns with current findings (Fassinger & Shullman, 2017; Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017). Results of the regression analysis provided partial confirmation for the research hypothesis. In previous findings, females pursued doctoral degrees at higher rates than males, and males sought leadership positions more often than females post graduation (Eklund, 2017; Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2017; McKenzie, 2018). In this study, males reported more intent to pursue a doctoral degree though they only comprised less than one-third of this study's participant population, which does not support previous research indicating a higher percentage of females pursuing higher education. However, males are more likely to pursue leadership positions within their chosen career fields (McCarthy, 2018), which the study findings supported.

The research findings also yielded unusual statistics that warranted further examination. Statistical significance was produced during the correlation analysis, yet the

multiple regression analysis produced non-significant results except for the variable gender. Further statistical analysis revealed high intercorrelations or inter-associations among the independent variables for SRL score scales Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, which explains the statistical significance produced between various independent variables of SRL and gender and race, but lack of statistical significance within the multiple regression analysis was found. Statistical examination of the SRL variables revealed high correlations to each other, which represents a phenomenon called multicollinearity. Multicollinearity affects the coefficients and p-values, but it does not influence the predictions, precision of the predictions, and the goodness-of-fit statistics. Additionally, the primary goal of this study was to predict whether Change, Consciousness of Self, Congruence, gender and/or race influence pursuance of higher education. Hence, neither an understanding of the role of each independent variable nor a reduction of severe multicollinearity is needed to report the statistical results produced in the regression model (Astivia & Kroc, 2019).

Further, in previous studies, SRLS scale scores for variables Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence indicated positive effects for student leadership identity development, whereas this study reported correlations between the independent variables. However, the results from the SRL scale scores did not influence leadership identity post graduation. Previous study findings reported leadership curriculum integrated into university majors does influence professional leadership identity development of students as well as enhances competence as a leader post graduation in their chosen profession (Crisp & Alvardo-Young, 2018).

**Limitations of the Study**

Various limitations were present in this study. The most prominent limitation is the sampling population and the method in which data were collected from the participants. Master's level counseling students attending a CACREP university were chosen as the participant population. Narrowing the student sampling in this manner has the potential to decrease potential data collection. Second, master's level counseling students typically lack formal education on leadership topics because CACREP does not require counseling programs to incorporate leadership curriculum. Surveying students who lack formal education on the topic of leadership could have skewed students' reporting on the survey questions related to SRLS constructs Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence, which comprised 38% of the SRLS-R2 survey questions (more than 50% of the leadership questions within the survey). Third, access to survey master's level counseling students was prohibited at brick and mortar and online universities. A total of 15 brick and mortar universities denied my request for access to master's level counseling students' participation in the study, which limited data collection to online sources.

Online surveys pose various limitations for data collection such as perceived lack of importance to complete online surveys, length of time to complete survey, various abilities that inhibit comprehension of survey questions, and privacy. Generally, master's level counseling students are unaware of the importance for completing doctoral surveys (Sackett et al., 2015). The main objective of master's level counseling students is to learn about counseling and how to ethically apply therapeutic services from counselor to client.

Without the counselor educator's encouragement to participate in research, master's level students would continue to focus on program studies. Thus, a limitation for master's level counseling students' participation in online research studies is due in part to their lack of knowledge regarding its importance for the counseling profession as a whole. This can negatively affects online response rates for survey completions (Evans & Mathur, 2018).

Of the 91 master's level counseling students who opened the survey and clicked *yes* to consent, 32 did not complete the survey questionnaire. Although each question of the SRLS-R2 was abbreviated in length, time to complete survey could have contributed toward this decrease in survey completion. Additionally, survey content, sentence construction, and question display could have influenced continuance of survey completion (Evans & Mathur, 2018).

Further limitations presented during the time IRB approval was granted for data collection. I was granted permission for data collection the week of the first national holiday, Thanksgiving. Typically, students are on scheduled holiday break from their program during this time. The data collection process continued through Christmas and New Year's, which could have limited the number of completed surveys. Universities are generally closed during winter break for 4 weeks. A comparison between the first holiday Thanksgiving and New Year's yielded a significant drop of 65% between the combined seven weeks of holiday break; four surveys were completed weekly during this time in comparison to two each day once permission was granted on November 21, 2019. More severe data collection limitations arose due to the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19. Limited survey completions were experienced during active data collection period

between January, February, and March 2020, likely due to the physical, socioeconomical, and psychological ramifications of COVID-19. My request for re-posting survey to IRB approved social media sites after January 14, 2020 was repeatedly denied due to the importance of posting on the topic of national public health and safety rather than doctoral student surveys.

Lastly, no offer of an incentive for participant participation was provided. Participants are more likely to engage in survey completions when monetary incentives are provided. Providing an incentive could have increased response rates by up to 30% but may not be the main contributing factor for low response rates (Shengchao, 2017).

## Recommendations

This study could have benefited from expanding its participant population to students attending non-CACREP universities, which can be done in a future study. There was an awareness of CACREP program requirements, which currently does not include leadership education. However, non-CACREP counseling programs have freedoms to incorporate educational programs based on professional need.

Leadership constructs were a variable explored in this study. Widening the student participants to include non-CACREP students could have benefited this study in two ways. First, widening the participant pool could have increased response rates. Second, including non-CACREP counseling students as participants could have provided valuable data regarding CACREP and non-CACREP students' concepts of SRLS constructs of Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence. Hence, the inclusion of non-CACREP master's level counseling students attending mental health counseling

programs could have provided further exploration of concepts of leadership knowledge, which was investigated to predict intent to pursue a doctoral degree post-master's graduation.

The results of this study confirmed some findings that current research supports. For instance, research reports gender as a factor for pursuant of a doctoral degree post master's graduation. Although a higher percentage of females participated in the study, males reported leadership as a career aspiration for a doctoral degree more so than females or participants identified as other. Previous research supports males as pursuing leadership career aspirations at higher rates than females (Perry, 2018). In direct contradiction to current research, higher percentages of males reported pursuant of a doctoral degree than females or participants who identified as other (McCarthy, 2018; Perry, 2018). For the past decade, 53% of doctoral degrees earned are awarded to females (McCarthy, 2018). Future researchers may want to expand the participant pool to CACREP and non-CACREP master's level counseling students in an effort to increase data collection and further investigate current and previous findings stating gender predicts pursuant of doctoral degrees and genders influence for seeking leadership positions post graduation.

In direct correlation to variables gender and pursuant of a degree, future researchers could incorporate defined gender selections rather than the researchers survey selection of *other* for those who do not identify as male or female. Although, space was provided to incorporate what gender the participant identifies as, to date, there is no reliable and validated psychometric measure for participants who identify their gender as

other (Frohand-Dourlent et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2019). Of the 61 participants for this study, 3 identified as other and further specified their gender as non-binary; a total of 5% of the survey participants did not identify as male or female. Findings from this study further confirm the need to include specific sub-categories, which supports inclusion of the master's level counseling student population as to accurately report data collected. To date, gender is often included as a default demographic written to identify male, female, and other (Johnson, Auerswald, LeBlanc, & Bockting, 2019). A growing body of research suggests investigating gender fluidity as to further analysis specifics of gender identification as a predictor variable in research studies (Frohand-Dourlent et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2019). The need for future researchers to progress beyond traditional demographic labels aligns with the increased need for research to accurately report, which gender identities influence research findings pertaining to students and higher education (Frohland-Dourlant et al., 2016).

**Implications**

Implications from this study provide insight into master's level counseling student's professional development and pursuance of higher education post-master's graduation. Counseling students are able to identify personal SRLS attributes yet do not pursue doctoral degrees to enhance leadership identity within the counseling field. Counselor responsibilities have evolved past clinical applications to include leadership dynamics that enhance counselor involvement in advocacy and activism. Often, those counselor professionals whom engage in leadership roles hold a doctoral degree or specialized leadership training post-master's education. The lack of leadership instruction

for master's level counselor programs further confirms the need for counselor educators to engage in leadership discussions at the master's level as to assist student leadership identity development. As Sackett et al (2015) reported, counselor educators are highly influential to master's level students emerging counselor identity. However, counselor educators are required to strictly instruct on educational programs approved by CACREP. There is a need for formal leadership education within master's level counseling programs as to prepare emerging counselors for the various leadership roles the profession requires at the master's level and beyond.

Two interesting findings were noted. Even though more females participated in the study, data analysis determined males pursued doctoral degrees at higher rates than female participants or participants who identified as other. The findings are in direct contradiction to current research stating females earn 52% of doctoral degrees awarded (Digest of Education Statistics, 2019; Protivnak & Yensel, 2017). Secondly, fewer males participated in the study, yet the study's findings align with research reporting males seek leadership positions at higher rates than females (Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg, 2017; Elias, 2018). Additionally, 5% of the study's participants identified as other. One participant identified as other responded *yes* to pursuant of a doctoral degree and leadership as the career aspiration. Due to the increase in student's self-reporting as gender fluid, the need for researchers to create surveys that accurately represent student gender identity is evident as to ensure the viability of gender and accurately report participants gender identity.

**Implications for Positive Social Change**

This study has the capacity to affect professional identity development of master's level counseling students and how they serve in leadership roles within the counseling profession post graduation. For decades, the concept of leadership has been defined by males in the workforce as well as confined to responsibilities within the business world (Eklund et al., 2017; Elias, 2018). In the last ten years, research regarding leadership training for master's programs across the nation has reported positive benefits for student identity development (Chesnut & Tran-Johnson, 2013). Master's level health science programs, such as pharmacy, have begun to implement leadership courses as to enrich the students' professional identity development as leaders in their field. The need for counselors to be formally trained in leadership is evident as current research states counselors responsibilities extend beyond clinical applications (Cureton, Davis, & Giegerich, 2019; Fassinger & Shullman, 2017). This research incites further evidence regarding master's level counseling students' identification as socially responsible leaders.

The counseling profession promotes counselors to engage in SRL opportunities, yet formal leadership training is still needed at the master's level to ensure counselors adhere to ethical guidelines set forth by the A.C.A. *Code of Ethics* from the start of their careers (2014). Professional organizations such as the A.C.A. and A.P.A. encourage counselor leadership identity development and foresee the great need for student leadership education as to increase knowledge of leadership prior to graduation (Fassinger & Shullman, 2017). The potential for positive social change includes

counselors' increased knowledge, motivation, and dedication to engage in leadership opportunities throughout their professional career (Kois, King, LaDuke, & Cook, 2016). The incorporation of leadership education within master's level programs increase a counselor's ability as social change agents as well as decrease potential counselor burnout. Currently, 21 to 61 percent of counselors experience severe signs of counselor burnout and lack the emotional support needed to increase professional confidence (APA, 2018). One contributing factor for counselor burn-out is lack of knowledge in an area and being held to standards of performance in which does not support prior educational training. Currently, counselor competence accounts for 17 percent of ethical violations (Ahia & Boccone, 2017). Providing students with educational components that support professional expectations for leadership within the counseling field could create positive sustainable social change for counselors that enhance career longevity (Kois, King, LaDuke, & Cook, 2016). The ever-changing landscape for counselor roles requires the addition of leadership curriculum within master's counseling programs, so emerging counselors can thrive as leaders in the counseling field and adhere to ethical standards of conduct.

A benefit of master's level leadership training is the early introduction of additional treatment practices to assist client care. Personal and professional empowerment is the byproduct of applying leadership practices. Counselors could advance traditional counseling practices through applying empowerment principles with clients. With formal training, counselors teach clients to empower change through leadership concepts, which strengthen efficacious behaviors (Shrogen et al., 2015).

Leadership increases clients' understanding of self-worth and increases determination towards preserving positive changes. Thus, the client evolves into a social change agent through the application of leadership as a core focus for personal progress and professional aspirations (Friedman, Beckwith, & Conroy, 2016).

**Methodological, Theoretical, and Empirical Implications**

This study revealed one of the numerous methodological difficulties of counseling students' leadership identity development. There are professional expectations for counselors to engage in leadership roles post graduation, which may compromise ethical standards of conduct. Professional organizations such as the APA, ACA, and Chi Sigma Iota recognize the importance of counseling students receiving leadership training before graduation due to the expectations of leadership involvement post graduation in roles such as advocacy (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). However, course curriculum is governed by CACREP who has not deemed leadership a necessary component of master's level counseling training although support from our national counseling institutions assert leadership training as crucial to counselor leadership identity development. This study investigated SRLS constructs to identity whether counseling students identified themselves as socially responsible leaders pre-graduation and would pursue a doctorate based on leadership identity. The investigations revealed numerous parallels between previous research studies. Particularly, gender was identified as a factor for the variable, pursuant of leadership in higher education. However, the findings reported counseling students who identified personal SRLS traits did not pursue higher education based on leadership.

**Recommendations for Practice**

Findings of this study confirm professional organizations' plea for counseling students to receive formal training in master's programs as to enhance professional identity development as leaders in the counseling field. Organizations such as Chi Sigma Iota recognize leadership as a core competency for counselors and provide trainings post master's graduation (Meany-Walen et al., 2013). Southern ACES organization provides leadership training on a doctoral level as to encourage advocacy involvement in such areas as government policy (2018). Professional organizations, local, state, and nationwide, have taken on the educational responsibility of teaching leadership to counselors through educational symposiums, conferences, and training courses, which in actuality is the responsibility of master's level counseling programs designed by CACREP (Southern ACES, 2018).

CACREP curriculum standards need further investigatory measures as to consider leadership as a significant component for counselor identity development and professional aspirations. The integration of leadership curriculum could help to ensure emerging counselor engagement in roles in which they are formally trained and ethically competent. CACREP standards for counselor competency exclude leadership training although information from this study confirms master's level counseling students identify themselves as socially responsible leaders prior to graduation. Furthermore, CACREP needs to recognize although students can identify SRL, the instruction on applying leadership concepts is missing. Knowledge without instruction does not produce follow through or sustainable application of skills.

Information from this study could assist master's level counseling students to further evaluate SRL and how SRL applies to a social change agent mindset as a counselor. Master's level counseling students could gain awareness for the positive implications of applying SRL concepts in their profession and the potential influence for pursuant of leadership as a career aspiration through higher education. The study provides counseling students opportunities to embrace a SRL leadership identity, which comprises of concepts of Change, Consciousness of Self, and Congruence. Students' knowledge of SRL concepts assists emerging counselors' alignment of learning with professional expectations for involvement in social change opportunities. Educational training pre-graduation encourages professional self-efficacy of counselor competencies post graduation and adherence to ethical standards of conduct.

## Conclusion

The emergence of leadership as a core counselor practice alerts the counseling profession of its educational importance for students at the master's level. Professional organizations support the need for formal training of counseling students as to engage in leadership roles with knowledge and competency post graduation. Master's level counseling students identify possessing SRL concepts, however students' knowledge on how leadership applies to future career aspirations could not be determined as a factor for higher education. Aligning with previous statistics, males at higher rates tend to seek leadership positions within their careers in comparison to females or participants identified as other. The lack of leadership training at the master's level could contribute towards perpetuating statistics reporting males pursue leadership roles more so than

females at the doctorate level. Therefore, implementing courses at the master's level could provide emerging counselors opportunities to develop leadership identity development early in their careers.

Master's level counseling students could use their knowledge of SRLS concepts as to expand upon professional application post graduation with formal training. Without formal training of leadership, students are susceptible to ethical violations due to lack of professional competency. Understanding leadership is a professional expectation post graduation, master's level counseling students could advocate for leadership education prior to real-world application as to ensure ethical standards of conduct are followed. However, master's students are typically unaware of the importance of leadership and its relevance to social change agency. There is continued risk for master's level counseling students who enter into the counseling profession without proper training on areas in which they are expected to perform and excel.

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