

An Examination of Preservice Teachers' Attitudes, Attributions, and Level of Social Comfort with Poverty

By

Samantha Moore Booker

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Approved by

Jamie Carney, Chair, Professor of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counselor Education,
Humana-Germany-Sherman Distinguished Professor

Amanda Evans, Associate Professor of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counselor
Education

Jill Meyer, Associate Professor of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counselor Education
David Shannon, Professor of Educational Research and Evaluation,
Humana-Germany-Sherman Distinguished Professor

Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort with poverty. Undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs, at a regional institution, were assessed through paper surveys including: a researcher developed demographics questionnaire, Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale (Yun & Weaver, 2010), Attributions of Poverty Scale (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001), and a modified version of the Social Comfort with Persons with Disabilities Scale (Shannon & Carney, 1999). The study utilized T-tests, within-subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Correlation and Multiple Regression analyses, and open-ended questions in an attempt to explore the possible effects of demographic variables on preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort with poverty. Results indicated that race and sex had a significant impact on preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort towards poverty and are more likely to identify individualistic factors as the causes of poverty.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Twenty-two percent of the 42.6 million individuals living in poverty are children; thus, it is imperative that preservice teachers recognize bias and be properly trained to work with children living in poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The United States Census Bureau (2010) defined poverty as the amount of cash income a family brings in minus non-cash benefits such as: food stamps, subsidized housing, insurance or taxes. The federal government created the definition and standards for poverty because of the increase in the number of individuals living in poverty and their need for government assistance. The definition and standards provide the guidelines for the qualifications to receive government assistance. Due to the abundance of children and adolescents living in poverty, the definition is necessary for schools so they can provide assistance through school based programs, like the federally funded free and reduced lunch programs (Hopson & Lee, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Poverty is a systemic problem that contains no boundaries for whom it effects. Poverty is found in urban cities, the suburbs, and in rural communities. Historically, research has shown for those living in poverty there is higher representation of African Americans and Hispanics (Bradbury & Katz, 2008). Race and ethnicity are still factors reflected in poverty statistics; however, racial status a factor relating to higher rates of poverty have shown that there are increased gaps related to income segregation, educational level, and even health disparity (Quillian, 2012). This may be best reflected when considering the impact of poverty on schools. Current numbers indicate the number of children and adolescents living in poverty is increasing (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). There is an abundance of research indicating

education is one of the main predictors of income; thus, to begin to alleviate poverty, researchers must focus on enhancements in education and what is currently being done to help students living in economically deprived situations or circumstances (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson & Tagler, 2001; Katz-Fishman & Scott, 1994). Poverty in education, as it relates to school systems, is defined as a student being eligible to participate in Head Start, the National School Lunch Program, and qualification for Federal Pell Grants for college. Student's eligibility is based on the parent/guardian income and federal assistance eligibility (Agostino, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Walberg, 2000). One way to ensure success for students living in poverty is to train preservice teachers who will work with this population (Ewalt, 1994; Yun & Weaver, 2010).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 15.1% of the population in the United States was classified as living in poverty and this is the highest rate since 1993. The data also demonstrated the rates of poverty are significantly higher in households headed by single women and in households for Black and Hispanic ethnic/racial subgroups (U.S. Census Bureau, Income, poverty, and health insurance in the United States, 2010). As of 2010, the poverty rates for ethnic/racial subgroups were as follows: (a) Black-27.4%; (b) Hispanic-26.6%; (c) Asians-12.1%; and (d) non-Hispanic White-9.9% (Poverty in the United States, 2013; Suburban Poverty Growing, 2014). More disturbing, while children made up 36% of the general population, they represented 24% of the population classified as living in poverty (Kaminski, Perou, Visser, Scott, Beckwith, Howard, Smith, & Danielson, 2013; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). The 2013 Census Bureau showed in 1970 approximately 23 million Americans lived in poverty. This number increased to 45.3 million in 2013. If these numbers continue on their current

trajectory, the United States could expect an estimated 89 million people living in poverty by 2043 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2013).

Moreover, the growing number of children and adolescents living in poverty raises some significant social and educational implications (Hughes, 2010). The latest data put out by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), found that low-income students comprised at least half the public school population in seventeen states in 2011, a marked increase from 2000 when four states topped 50 percent. In the Southern United States this topic has been highlighted by the recent figures related to poverty representation among students in this region. The *Southern Education Foundation* (2014) reported that for the first time in history, all southern states (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, KY, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV) had 51 percent or more students live in poverty and received free or reduced lunch. Additionally, six other states (AZ, IL, IN, KS, NY, OR) are close to the 51% mark with 47-50% students living in poverty and received free or reduced lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; Southern Education Foundation, 2014).

The paucity of literature highlights if teachers possess negative attitudes and attributions toward groups impacted by poverty, then preservice teacher pedagogy should include poverty training and “multicultural education programs that prepare successful teachers of diverse learners” (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Lee & Herner-Patnode, 2010, p. 224). Moreover, preservice teachers may feel unprepared to address poverty and how it affects students and their success in school. Some challenges for students living in poverty are that they are more at risk for educational challenges, behavioral issues, and have higher grade retention rates than their peers not living in poverty (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015; Patrick, n.d.; Rose & Gallup, 2006; Uhlenberg, & Brown, 2002). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) hypothesized that

one's attitude is closely linked with their behavior. Individuals might engage in damaging behavior, such as prejudice toward students living in poverty, because of a potential negative attitude. If a preservice teacher is biased toward students living in poverty, then many interactions can have a negative impact on the student and the students learning. Preservice teachers readiness, level of social comfort, perceived ability to control students and cultural difference can severely impact the teachers ability to advocate for the students and to set high standards for achievement (Knoblauch & Chase, 2014; V. Smith, 2004, Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007).

Negative Attitude Studies of Teachers with Other Populations

According to Dessemontet, Moring and Crocker (2014), teachers who have not had contact with students possessing an intellectual disability (ID) or proper training working with this population were at an increased likelihood of reporting negative attitudes toward individuals with ID. In addition to ID, some teachers have been found to have negative attitudes toward other areas involving students including: multiculturalism (Akar & Ulu, 2016) and technology integration (Young, 2016). In the same study, it found teachers who possessed more positive attitudes toward students with ID had better teacher to student interactions, more willingness to interact with students and increased teaching effectiveness (Cook, 2001; Dessemontet, Moring and Crocker, 2014; Jordan, Glenn, & McGhie-Richmond, 2010). The paucity of literature has highlighted if teachers possess negative attitudes, it might impact their interactions and work with students. Therefore, preservice training should also include poverty training, if the outcomes of working with this population are to be more helpful, unbiased, less stigmatized and "favorable" for students living in poverty (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008, p. 453). V. Smith (2004) postulates for preservice teachers' attitudes toward individuals living in poverty to be

more positive, programs should focus on “strategies [that] are designed to increase self-esteem, mold positive attitudes and build confidence through classroom experiences” (p. 17). Moreover, Ndemanu posited that training preservice teachers to utilize strategies will make their efforts more beneficial for all students, not just those living in poverty (Ndemanu, 2014; V. Smith, 2004).

Children Living in Poverty

Looking at the overall number of people living in poverty within the United States, it is important to remember, more than a quarter of those people are children and adolescents. Poverty can affect children and adolescents far differently than poverty affects adults (Addy, Engelhardt & Skinner, 2013; Batana, Bussolo & Cockburn, 2013). For children and adolescents living in poverty, often poor school participation and low grades are common secondary problems (Hopson & Lee, 2011). These problems result from lack of food, illness, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate housing (Davison, Share, Hennessy, Bunting, Markovina, Stewart-Knox, 2015; Raphel, 2014). For example, several researchers including Raphel (2014) found one in every four children in the U.S. suffered from food insecurity (adults and children who have to reduce the size of meals, skip meals or go without eating due to lack of food in the home or money to buy food) (Cook, 2002; Davison, Share, Hennessy, Bunting, Markovina & Stewart-Knox, 2015; Raphel, 2014). Research has documented that more than 50 million Americans are living in food insecure homes and 16.7 million are children as well as adolescents (Gundersen, & Ziliak, 2014; McLaughlin, GreifGreen, Alegria, Costello, Gruber, Sampson, & Kessler, 2012). In addition, the number of children living in poverty and food insecure homes is expected to increase over the next several years (Bavier, 2011; Gundersen, & Ziliak, 2014; Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley & Pierce, 2012; McLaughlin, et al., 2012; Moore, Kochan, Kraska & Reames, 2011;

Raphel, 2014). Furthermore, food insecurity has been found to impact all areas of a child's physical, emotional and educational development (Huddleston-Casas, Charnigo, & Simmons, 2009; McLaughlin, et al., 2012). Overall, poverty presents significant challenges to children and adolescents. Many of the challenges this population will face often have a catastrophic impact on educational attainment. For students living in poverty, research has shown poverty is not only linked to poor school participation but also lower grades, higher drop-out risk, higher rates of teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence (Hopson & Lee, 2011).

Poverty within Schools

In addition to students living in poverty being at risk for lack of food, illness, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate housing, research showed that students living in poverty often attended schools with less resources and materials. Due to the large number of children living in poverty, schools are becoming increasingly affected in ways such as lack of proper educational resources and technology, high teacher matriculation, as well as unfavorable building conditions (Jackson, 2014; Swain, 2006). School is important for the educational development of all children and it builds the foundation for all future endeavors of students. Because of increasing rates of poverty, schools are facing more challenges to appropriately educate students and ultimately eliminate the pathway of poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) has estimated the recommended teacher to student ratio to be 1:16. Unfortunately, for schools serving 50 percent or more students living in poverty, the teacher to student ratio is much higher at 1:30 (Center for Public Education, 2015). For classrooms occupied with higher numbers of students, the literature shows the average amount of time the teacher spends teaching is reduced, overall classroom literacy declines and student attentiveness decreases, and poor behavior among students increases

(Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein, & Martin, 2003; Johnson, 2011; Slavin, 1989). For schools with high student to teacher ratios, other issues are more likely to occur within classrooms, such as inadequate funding, poor parental involvement, bullying, violence, school disengagement, special education referrals, absenteeism and an increase in dropout rates (Balazadeh, 2003; Children's Commission on Poverty, 2014; Morgan, 2012; Patton, 1998). Furthermore, research indicated schools with higher rates of students living in poverty are more likely to have other economic challenges, such as inadequate funding and poor parent participation (Debertin, Clouser, & Huie, 1986; Rothstein, 2002; Stacy, 2015). These issues provided significant challenges to both students and teachers, however these challenges may be even more complicated by stigmas attached to poverty and persons living in poverty (Children's Commission on Poverty, 2014; Morgan, 2012).

Attitudes, Attributes and Stigma

Research showed attitude, or feelings consistent with beliefs, is related to behavior (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013). Better understanding preservice teachers' attitude, attributes (specific idea attributed to why one lives in poverty), and level of social comfort (level of comfort working with individuals living in poverty) can potentially add to the body of research on educational issues and poverty. This includes consideration of how teachers can be aware of their own potential bias and how they can be more effective when addressing issues related to poverty in education (Wille, McFarland, & Archwamety, 2009). One of the critical challenges of addressing poverty within schools is the possibility teachers and other school personnel may hold personal deficiencies, structural or stigmatic attitudes toward persons living in poverty, including students; preliminary research by Hansen, Bourgois, & Drucker, (2014) provided evidence that this is a valid concern (Robinson,

2007). Specifically, their research indicated school personnel can and often do hold negative attitudes toward students living in poverty. These attitudes are often reflective of broader societal attitudes and beliefs about persons living in poverty (Bray & Balkin, 2013; Mickelson & Hazlett, 2014).

Robinson (2007) postulated attitudes and behavior toward individuals living in poverty are directly linked to ones beliefs surrounding the causes of poverty. Individuals who attributed poverty to more structural causes, such as decreased job markets or racism, were more likely to have a favorable attitude toward individuals living in poverty (Robinson, 2007). Overall, Robinson's study highlights when a person attributes structural beliefs to poverty, fault does not lie with the person, but with the circumstances outside the person's control. Individuals, who attributed the cause of poverty to more individualistic reasons such as poor financial planning or laziness, tended to have more negative attitudes toward people living in poverty and placed fault with the individual (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Yun & Weaver, 2010). The majority of Americans attributed the cause of poverty to these more individualistic factors like laziness or lack of intelligence (Cozzarelli, et. al. 2001; Dotts, 1978; Feagin, 1975; Robinson, 2007; Yun & Weaver, 2010). Research postulates the same people who believe in the individualistic reasons for poverty also have poor attitudes toward the programs created to help individuals living in poverty (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Robinson, 2007; Yun & Weaver, 2010). These same individuals with negative attitudes and bias toward the population living in poverty often are not supporters of welfare, nutritional and health programs, or "willingness to fund educational programs" (Robinson, p. 544).

It has been hypothesized that one's behavior is a direct reflection of what they believe (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Robinson, 2007). Thus, what one believes about poverty can be the

foundation for their attitude towards those living in poverty. As previously noted, teachers working in high poverty schools may experience multiple challenges, much like the challenges facing the students they work with. These challenges and teachers lack of preparation may impact their attitudes toward students living in poverty. (Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor, & Leander, 2010; Mason, 2014; Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008; Uhlenberg, & Brown, 2002). Furthermore, teachers may have adopted attitudes reflective of societal bias towards persons living in poverty. However, there is a paucity of research on teachers' attitudes toward students living in poverty and how to fully understand how these attitudes are demonstrated or reflected in practice.

While there is limited research on teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort dealing with students living in poverty, some variables can be hypothesized from research across general U.S. populations. This research has shown in our society overall attitudes and attributions toward poverty are primarily negative (Albrecht, et al., 2000; Atherton, Gemmel, Haagesntad, Holt, Jensen, O'Hara, Rehner, 1993; Cozzarelli, et al., 2001). These negative attitudes are more prominent among economically middle class and upper class, and European-American ethnic people (Flock, Karbach, 2015; Henry, Reyna & Weiner, 2004, Osborne & Weiner, 2015).

Challenges and Bias of Teachers

Marquis-Hobbs (2014) evaluated how the lives of students living in poverty can be enriched. Within her research, she promoted the key idea schools and teachers must develop programs and support students far beyond their academic needs. Additionally, administration must be keenly aware and willing to help this process for the students and the school to be successful. However, extensive teacher challenges such as overcrowded classes, top-down

bureaucracies, poor preparation, inadequate funding, and poor parent participation (Knoblauch & Chase, 2015) are hurdles, but so are the bias and stigma one might possess when trying to create the educational environment Marquis-Hobbs envisioned as necessary for educational success for all students. Williams (2009) explains that stigma related to poverty and social class can be found anywhere, even among teachers. Some of the ways in which teachers bias or stigmatize individuals living in poverty is through exclusion, belittling and ostracizing (Langhout, Rosselli, & Feinstein, 2007; Williams, 2009).

Need for Teachers to be Prepared

Current pedagogy and teacher education programs focused on psycho-educational ideas of the student learning style and developmental stages. In teacher training, skills and preparation such as classroom management and pedagogical techniques are the major focus (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013). However, these skills and preparation are extremely generic and should include consideration of working in different settings such as with students living in poverty (Irizarry, 2015; Izadinia, 2015; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Furthermore, this training seldom addressed the attitudes of preservice teachers and how this might influence teaching practice.

It is clear; a training focused on students living in poverty could help future teachers and their students. The training should include developing awareness and addressing attitudes toward students living in poverty to fully and effectively prepare teachers (Armstrong, 2010). Specific training to help teachers addresses societal inequalities could aid them in learning the skills to address their own biases, stereotyping and racism in the classroom (Armstrong, 2010; Gorski, 2013; Marguis-Hobbs, 2014).

Because of the significant increase in the number of students living in poverty, and the complexity of the challenges these students face in the educational system it is now critical to address the role of stigma, negative attitudes, attributions, and level of comfort associated with individuals living in poverty. In addition, it was imperative focus be on teacher training because of the potential impact teachers can have on the educational process. As stated previously in this chapter, the literature has found there is societal stigma surrounding poverty (Atherton, Gemmel, Haagesntad, Holt, Jensen, O'Hara & Rehner, 1993; Farenga, Ness, & Shah, 2014), and the possibility teachers may also possess these negative attitudes can have important consequences for training.

With schools increasingly addressing poverty, negative attitudes, attributions, stigma, and social comfort levels must also be tackled to better prepare preservice teachers to work with students living in poverty and to provide these students with the necessary, unbiased education they deserve. To begin with, training of preservice teachers can practice the importance of diversity and social issues surrounding education and poverty within a safe learning environment. More importantly, preservice teachers might graduate training with a better understanding of the negative effects related to stereotypes and negative attitudes towards all people, not just those living in poverty (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Hughes, 2010).

It was important that students, as well as teachers, practice multicultural sensitivity in the classroom. Teachers are tasked with providing a safe, prejudice free classroom for all students to learn (D'Angelo & Dixey, 2001). For teachers to provide proper educational services to students it is important that the preservice teacher know if they have a negative or biased view of poverty. It was extremely important the teacher manage to remain objective and create an inviting and

safe classroom. To be effective in teaching students, especially those living in poverty, it was necessary for the preservice teacher to understand their own shortcomings with relation to negative attitudes, attributions and level of comfort regarding poverty (Atherton et al., 1993; Cozzarelli, Wilkinson & Tagler, 2001; Crumley, 2013; Ricks, 2014).

Purpose

This study examined preservice teachers' attitudes and attributions toward persons living in poverty as well as their level of social comfort with poverty. This was considered in relation to the nature of their training in their teacher preparation programs.

Significance

According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), more than 22 percent of children live in poverty. Consequently, understanding how preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort impact their bias toward students living in poverty, is important due to the high percentage probability teachers will work with multiple, diverse students living in poverty (Atherton, et al., 1993). Moreover, it was important to understand what training is currently being provided to preservice teachers and how to improve this training so teachers are better prepared to work with students living in poverty (Bolland, McCallum, Lian, Bailey & Rowan, 2001; Marcus & Jamison, 2013; Rao, 2005; Vacha & McLaughlin, 2004).

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
2. What are the attributions of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
3. What do preservice teachers identify as their level of social comfort related to working with students living in poverty?

4. What is the relationship between attitudes and attributions of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
5. What is the relationship between attitudes, attributions, and social comfort related to working with students living in poverty as it relates to preservice teachers' family economic status and demographics?
6. What do preservice teachers identify as their level of preparation for working with students living in poverty?

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Poverty

According to the United States Census Bureau, of the more than 296 million people living in the United States, over 24% are children under the age of 18 (2010). With these statistics, it is inevitable teachers will work with individuals living in poverty (Kilty & Segal, 2003). But what are the attitudes, attributes, and level of comfort of preservice teachers with relation to working with children and adolescents living in poverty? In this chapter, a literature review regarding the effects of poverty on children and adolescents, information regarding how poverty impacts education and teachers, and the stigma related to individuals living in poverty were examined. Specifically, information about attitude, attributes, and stigma when working with individuals living in poverty and how proper training can positively affect preservice teacher's attitudes, attributes, bias and stigma was addressed.

To understand the impact poverty has on education, educators, and students, it is important to understand how the government defines what poverty is and how individuals or families are identified as living in poverty. The federal government set up the poverty threshold- or an amount of money a family should make to meet their basic needs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the threshold is computed using "money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits" (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps) ("How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty", 2013, p. 2). The formula used to calculate the threshold was created in the 1950's and few updates have been made to account for inflation; additionally, the formula does not take into account multiple variables such as differences in cost of living based on geographic location. Moreover, Hutto,

Waldfogel, Kaushal, & Garfinkel's (2011) research supported the need for an updated poverty threshold formula to meet the needs of a family living in 2015. Specifically, the authors emphasize the need to take in multiple economic indicators, including consideration of children and their stage of development because costs will vary depending on where they are in life. Overall, the system in place to identify those living in poverty does not accurately portray the actual number of individuals in poverty; the number is estimated much higher than federal guidelines indicate (Farrigan, Hertz & Parker, 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Currently, the federal poverty level for a family of four is \$23,550 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Research has demonstrated a family of four would need more than double this income to cover basic expenses (Farrigan, Hertz & Parker, 2014). These numbers are concerning when considering the short-term and long-term impacts of living in poverty.

Within society poverty is viewed differently by those who are affected by it. In addition to one's socioeconomic status (SES), one's race, age, and even profession provides differing lenses as to how poverty is viewed (Csikai & Rozensky, 1997; Flanagan, & Tucker, 1999; Sherraden, 1984). The challenges of living in poverty are only intensified if one is also dealing with social and cultural prejudice and discrimination related to economic status. If asked to describe terms associated with the "culture of poverty" in 2015, one might give examples including inability to delay gratification, low self-esteem, responsibility avoidance, behavioral and psychological issues, etc., (Sherraden, 1984, pp. 391-392). Unfortunately, society does not see when they choose to label an entire group of people they are choosing to dehumanize, and assign blame rather than address underlying social issues. Then society creates biased policy,

rather than providing proper training (Sherraden, 1984). One of the areas of growing concern is the increasing number of children and adolescents living in poverty (Kaminski et al., 2013; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014; Raphael, 2014).

Children and Adolescents Living in Poverty

According to the United States Census Bureau (2010) more than 24% of children and adolescents live in poverty; that is 16.7 million children living in poverty (Raphael, 2014). Wadsworth et al., (2008) highlighted children living in poverty are impacted by poverty in multiple areas of their lives and a life of poverty "creates a context of stress" (p. 157). These stress-inducing pressures (i.e. not having enough money to go to the doctor) create a cycle that creates more stress. Bronfenbrenner's (1994, 1995) systems model discusses how a stressful home life creates a stressful school life and vice versa. Eamon (2001) posited a life of deprivation for children can lead to an unsupportive environment and as a result, deficiencies in one area of life may cause deficiencies in another area as well. Moreover, children and adolescents living in poverty often grow up deprived of certain academically stimulating environments (Eamon, 2002).

Impacts of Living in Poverty

One of the biggest issues of individuals living in poverty is having their basic needs met. According to Maslow (1998), there are 5 basic needs of all humans that need to be met: (a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) belonging and love, (d) self-esteem, and (e) self-actualization. Unfortunately, poverty does present obstacles when trying to attain these basic needs; before any person living in poverty can perceive higher level needs then all lower level needs must be satisfied (Prince & Howard, 2002). When taking these basic needs into account, children living in poverty will do whatever is necessary to have these needs fulfilled. Thus, when children and

adolescents attend school, their agenda will focus more on “survival and the attainment of basic needs” (Hashima & Amato, 1994; Prince & Howard, 2002, p. 28).

Research has shown children who continually experience poverty are at a higher risk to struggle in school, have behavior problems, experience mental health issues, and the children’s overall well-being is often lower than their peers’ (Boothroyd, Gomez, Armstrong, Haynes, & Ort, 2005; Kaminski, et al., 2013; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014). For children and adolescents, meeting many of their basic needs are out of their control. Physiological needs, including: food, shelter and clothing, are needs that if not met will end in death. In addition to those needs, health care would also fall under physiological needs because everyday children suffer from preventable and treatable illnesses (Prince & Howard, 2002). The basic need of having ones physiological essentials met is a life or death issue. Food sustainability is a financial challenge for individuals living in poverty (Hutto et al., 2011). With regards to food sustainability, Armour, Pitts, and Chung-won (2007) report, “food insecurity rates exceed 40% in lower-income households with children and approach 45% for low-income single parent households with children” (p. 1). For families living in poverty and receiving welfare and food stamps, it is still difficult to meet their basic food needs creating food insecurity. This is important, especially for children, because “being poor is also associated with poor nutrition,” which can lead to more severe physical and mental disabilities, impacting educational performance (Prince & Howard, 2002, p. 27).

Safety needs, including: inadequate living conditions, overcrowded homes, and unsafe neighborhoods, present multiple obstacles for children and adolescents to feel safe and thrive (Prince & Howard, 2002). Hashima and Amato (1994) pointed out, belonging and love needs such as, secure relationships and reassurance of belonging become more difficult because

“economic hardships influence how parents interact with the children” (p. 398). As these issues increase, parents pull further away in the relationship and become more inconsistent in discipline and punishment.

Shah (2011) found 22,000 children die each day because of poverty. The development of children and adolescents is extremely important and ensuring the people who have day-to-day contact with them should be the best trained, most objective, and least biased, should be a high priority (Allen-Meares, & Montgomery, 2014). While the federal, local, and state governments are working to meet student’s basic needs in the school setting, there are still too many factors for children living in poverty to face to be educationally sufficient (Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006). In addition to food insecurity, children and adolescents living in poverty are at a much higher rate of school drop-out, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, special education referrals, access to healthcare, and homelessness (Allen-Meares, & Montgomery, 2014; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006). With the societal views held of individuals living in poverty, how are educators and schools going to meet the needs of these students while also successfully educating them? Adding to the challenges encountered by those living in poverty, including children and adolescents, is the prejudice and bias they may encounter due to their economic status.

Attitudes to Persons Living in Poverty

Individuals living in poverty are a very diverse group, many of whom face multiple challenges (Bishaw, 2010; Cozzarelli et al., 2001). Often times individuals who are most discriminated against are those living in poverty; whether it is through over representation, which intensifies race bias, or through overt discrimination due to prejudices, their current environment, or societal expectations often shackles individuals living in poverty (Webber, 2008).

Attitudes and beliefs toward individuals living in poverty are extremely important because some behaviors will impact how individuals living in poverty are educated, helped through public policy, and not be marginalized by society (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013). Over time one's attitude becomes a significant part of their overall behavior and because of this, bias exists in many forms. Financial need is one major way in which poverty is defined but it can be more globally defined as "a condition that extends beyond the lack of income and goes hand in hand with a lack of power, humiliation and a sense of exclusion" (Raphael, 2005, p. 36).

Eagly & Chaiken (1993, 2005, 2007) and Tagler & Cozzarelli (2013) attribute attitude to a humans' evaluative tendencies toward other people, often times a specific group of people. These researchers believed the tendencies are "residue" (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007, p. 751) from growing up in a specific socioeconomic group, race, ethnicity, or even religion. The positive or negative feelings towards a group is the attitude through which the person or group is seen; the beliefs about the group are more cognitive or inherited from one's past life experiences (Henry, Reyna & Weiner, 2004). Therefore, this is why one's attitude toward a group of people, in this case, those living in poverty, can range from negative attitudes and individualistic attributions (i.e., laziness, lack of intelligence, alcohol and drug abuse) to more positive attitudes and structuralistic attributions (i.e., recession, poor economy, employment discrimination). A combination of the two attributes which elicit both positive and negative feelings results in fatalistic attributions (i.e., bad luck, non-traditional family structure) (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013).

Three major terms from studying attributions toward individuals living in poverty are individualistic, structural, and fatalistic. Individualistic, means to moralize poverty or "attribute

moral failings of individuals” (Robinson, 2007, p 544); some examples are poor financial planning, laziness, lack of self-discipline, and hedonism. Social structure (structural) attributes poverty to racial attitudes or racism, job markets, economic institutions, educational preparation, low wages, inadequate schools and lack of jobs (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Feagin, 1975; Robinson, 2007). And finally, fatalistic attributes poverty to things such as “bad luck, sickness,” or physical disabilities (Cozzarelli, et al., 2001; Feagin, 1975; Yun & Weaver, 2010).

Though an enormous number of individuals live in poverty, the beliefs of many people including educators, regarding why individuals are “poor” are appalling. Because of these beliefs, often times individuals living in poverty are treated poorly and educational expectations for children living in poverty are low (Murnane, 2007; Thomas-Presswood & Presswood, 2008).

Mickelson and Williams (2008) suggested that all individuals convey a social status through attribution and often individuals devalue those not of equal or higher social status; Assuming that with social status one’s socioeconomic status is equally relevant. Thus, at some point all people will experience stigmatization based upon perceived socioeconomic status (Jacobs & Flanagan, 2013; Williams, 2009). Economic inequality has grown and with it the stigma placed on entire populations of people. One’s attitude can show how one feels or treats a stigmatized group and often the attributes, or reasons, given as to why people live in poverty can be extremely distorted based on these attitudes. (Williams, 2009). Because of the decrease in social mobility, most individuals have learned behaviors based upon their social class or socioeconomic status (Jacobs & Flanagan, 2013). These learned behaviors are generational and can cycle through endlessly. However, with the increased number of individuals living in poverty and the estimated number of people expected to experience situational poverty at some point in their lives, now is the best time to educate populaces who will interact with people in

poverty. Emphasizing main ideas such as stigma and poor attitudes can better help people understand what individuals living in poverty experience daily (Atherton et. al., 1993; Bradbury & Katz, 2008; Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Williams, 2009).

It seems as though society, or individuals with higher socioeconomic status, maintain their status by participation within the community and having access to external resources (Shah & Beinecke, 2009; Thomas-Presswood & Presswood, 2008). Unfortunately, added pressure and even prejudice enhance the stigmatization placed on those individuals living in poverty because they are perceived to lack community support, maintain low levels of engagement with external support, often have poor coping skills in stressed situations, are marginalized, and stereotyped (McNamara, Stevenson, & Muldoon, 2013; Shah, & Beinecke, 2009). All of these things are attributed to higher socioeconomic individuals believing these factors are what sets them apart from individuals living in poverty (Smith, Li, Dykema, Hamlet, & Shellman, 2013; Williams, 2009).

Crocker, et al., (1998) stated with regard to stigmatized individuals they “possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (p. 505). Unfortunately, since 1998 several groups were being stigmatized in the United States based on: ethnicity, gender, poverty, sexuality, disability, weight, age, and diseases such as AIDS (Carney & Cobia, 2011; Crocker et al., 1998; Williams, 2009). With no end in sight to the devalued social identities that can be added to the list, it is important to build upon the current research with adding preservice teachers’ attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort with children and adolescents in poverty.

Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler (2001) found in their original use of the *Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale* that attitudes of people tended to be highly related to what they attributed

the cause of poverty to be; and what one chose to believe about the poor is influenced by how they feel toward them and their situation. Overall, studies have shown most people believe internal factors (individualistic and fatalistic beliefs) are more important in poverty than external (environment and economy) factors (Cozzarelli, et al., 2001; Yun & Weaver, 2010).

Yun and Weaver (2010) furthered Cozzarelli et al., research and found the lack of a proper definition of poverty and more than a single dimension in the original measure might change the outcome of what they had found; unfortunately, though Yun and Weaver do believe the original study to be true in its findings. Yun and Weaver created a shortened version of the measure for greater reliability and validity for use with a larger population, and to examine whether other people had similar attitudes and attributions toward individuals living in poverty (2010).

Overall, Cozzarelli et al., (2001) found in their study "the stereotype items that received the highest mean endorsements from our participants were predominately negative and included beliefs that the poor are uneducated, unmotivated or lazy, or in some way socially irresponsible" (p. 214). They highlighted that although respondents felt "moderately positive" they thought rather negatively about the poor and they thought more positively about the middle class.

The profession of social work has been around for decades (Csikai and Rozensky, 1997). The original purpose was to provide advocacy and programs for individuals living in poverty. Over time this has changed and social workers have multiple job functions and the level of SES among their clients varies widely. However, Csikai and Rozensky (1997) found social workers had changing attitudes toward their clients and their profession. More specifically, social workers with more altruistic beliefs had more humanistic attitudes and found much satisfaction in social justice, social responsibility, and "advocacy to help others meet their basic needs" (p. 530).

However, the biggest concern Csikai and Rozensky (1997) found were social workers who did not maintain a more humanistic view of their profession tended to burn out quickly and were using the social worker position as a stepping stone to advance in their career or academically. When considering the growing number of children and adolescents living in poverty and the potential presence of negative attitude toward poverty it becomes imperative to understand how these dynamics may influence the education of these children and adolescents.

Education and Poverty

The U.S. Department of Commerce conducted the American Community Survey (ACS) to provide “reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These demographics are used to highlight poverty is prevalent in the United States and all professions, especially helping professions like teaching, will encounter working with people living in poverty. Additionally, six categories of demographic data were collected related to poverty to have a better understanding of which factors impact individuals living in poverty the most. Those six categories were: national number of people living in poverty, educational attainment, and family income, percentage of individuals receiving Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits (SNAP), geographic distribution, and work experience (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The National Center for Education Statistics (2013), most recent data collected found over twenty-six states in 2011, had public schools where more than half the population was made up of low-income students. The same survey provided data in 2000 indicating only four states had public schools with more than half the population made up by low-income students; nearly a 21% increase in eleven years. The Southern Education Foundation’s most recent data in 2014

highlights the extreme issue of poverty in education because for the first time ever, fourteen southern states (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, KY, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, WV) and six other states (CA, DE, HI, NV, NM, UT) have school populations with more than 51% of students living in poverty. Directly behind those twenty schools with more than 51% low-income student populations are six states (AZ, IL, IN, KS, NY, OR) with at least 47-50% students living in poverty; a 16% increase from the 2011 survey (Southern Education Foundation, 2014).

Research showed education was one area that usually predicted poverty. Poverty has also been shown to have a relationship with the educational level of parents; therefore, parents' education level is the "single best predictor of family income" (Wood, 2003, p. 707; Lennon, Blome & English, 2001). Research highlighted, one-parent homes with a woman as the head of the household, are at a higher risk of having children who live in poverty than households with two parents (Barnes, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013; Walker, Crawford & Taylor, 2008; Wood, 2003). According to Hauser-Cram, Durand and Warfield (2007), students living in poverty had many risk factors that played a large role in disengagement from school. Poor academic outcomes led to a higher need for special education services due to potential learning disabilities. These risk factors and learning disabilities have been found to lead to poor school performance in the classroom and on high stakes tests (Wager et al., 2010). Lastly, self-esteem and self-actualization needs can be non-existent if the child or adolescent does not feel motivated, a need to persevere, and is unable to see the potential within themselves (Hashima & Amato, 1994; Prince & Howard, 2002, p. 28).

Flanagan & Tucker (1999) highlighted childhood *through adolescence is a time for growth*, especially with what they attribute to the causes of poverty. As Flanagan and Tucker's study concluded, adolescents from more affluent homes and schools were found to attribute both

individual and societal explanations as to why people live in poverty. This was in contrast to their underprivileged peers who live in poverty and attend inadequate school systems; these students attributed poverty to more individualistic issues such as personal choices, drug and gambling addictions, and lack of motivation (1999). Additionally, they found adolescents viewed poverty through their experiences within their family unit, personal aspirations and the school districts level of SES for which the student attends (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999).

Hoffman (1989) formulated the idea regarding adolescents and their empathy toward individuals in disadvantaged groups. Though Hoffman believed empathy “is biased toward others who are similar to the self,” proper training can help adolescents look beyond their own needs and use their actions to positively affect others (1989, p. 1200). Finally, arguments suggest that schools promote beliefs, values and attitudes toward attributions of poverty are present within the school (Ogbu, 1986). These factors are of great importance if a school or school personnel maintain bias toward a specific group of disadvantaged individuals.

Impacts of Poverty and Education on Children

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), low-income students made up at least half the public school population in twenty states in 2011, most states are in the south, a marked increase from 2000 when only four states topped 50% (Southern Education Foundation, 2014). These numbers are staggering considering of the overall number of people living in poverty, 24% are children under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

In 2011, NCES utilized a national test of math and science for eighth grade students called National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to measure eighth grade students’ math and science knowledge, both intra-nationally and internationally, to gain insight as to how the United States might rank in regards to “international competitiveness;” unfortunately, almost

all below average scores on the NAEP were held by states with at least 50 percent or more of its students living in poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013, p. 460). However, the study also found two of the states, Oregon (science) and North Carolina (math) actually defied the findings because although the majority of schools have 50 percent or more low-income student populations, these two states' low-income students scored above the national average in one of the two tested areas. Those statistics only furthered the notion that low-income students' achievement gaps were growing further from high-income students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). The Southern Education Foundation's (SEF) October report was published as an updated summarization to the findings of the NAEP. In 2014, the SEF reported the "nation's future educational capacity is at stake" due to the amount of low-income students scoring below average on the NAEP assessment (p. 13). The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) found current students taking these assessments are not adequately prepared academically prepared if education is not improved upon, especially with regards to students living in poverty, the future is bleak "for a nation not at risk, but a nation in decline" (Southern Education Foundation, 2014, p. 13).

Children and adolescents living in poverty must learn to navigate challenges such as health care, availability of food, proper adult supervision and support, and unsafe neighborhoods before they can truly focus on learning to read or completing an algebraic equation. Children living in poverty face a number of hardships on a daily basis, because poverty has been shown to have an effect on school performance and academic achievement. Students who experience economic hardship have been shown to score lower on math and standardized reading tests (Bennett, 2008; Rose, 2015). Because of the challenges facing these students, it is important that educators be trained to work specifically with this population.

Students living in poverty have poor attitudes toward school and often have behavioral issues because of poor self-concept related to school in relation to their peers. Unfortunately, living in poverty and not having basic needs met only exacerbates potential educational struggles any student could face (Allen-Meares, & Montgomery, 2014; Bear, 1998; Day-Vines, Patton, & Baytops, 2003; Gorski, 2012; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006).

Moreover, students who do not completed high school were more likely to live in poverty, receive and stay on public assistance, showed higher rates of involvement in crime, and had higher rates of unemployment than students who complete high school (Thomas-Presswood & Presswood, 2008). Research has also shown children and adolescents living in poverty were at higher rates for discipline issues (suspension or expulsions), grade retention, special education referral and placement, and dropouts. Students living in perpetuated poverty were at higher risk of continuing to live in poverty and having children that will continue the cycle. Regrettably, because of disproportionality of school resources, schools with high poverty rates were less likely to have highly qualified and experienced teachers, above standard instruction, similar expectations for all students, and quality technology in their schools (Cozzareli et al., 2001; Feagin, 1975; Thomas-Presswood & Presswood, 2008).

Children living in poverty were affected psychologically by a life of poverty. It adversely impacted their behavior and outlook on school, as well as their future (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergrast, Slavens, & Linder, 1994; Linder, Zaslow, Coiro, Miller & Magenheim, 1995). According to Wadsworth et al., (2008), poverty has been proven to have a significant physical and psychological impact on children who live in a continuous state of poverty. Because of these stressors and pressures, children are at a greater risk of "deviant behaviors" (Wadsworth et al., 2008, p. 177) such as teen pregnancy and dropping out of school. As they grow older, teens will

likely assume more responsibility in the family, less priority on school and more of a priority on contributing to the family finances (Boothroyd et al., 2005).

Research suggested children's academic performance is impacted by a life of poverty. As one may expect, a child's level of poverty can and often does have consequences for future educational impact and often these students' score lower on IQ tests (Wood, 2003). The lower IQ score is more likely attributed to not having an educated family rather than a learning disability (Eamon, 2002). The behavior problems children living in poverty experience contributed to the negative academic affects in school (Hand et al., 2014; Hopson & Lee, 2011). Statistically significant negative effects on math and reading achievement scores were found for students living in poverty. One probable cause for lower scores in students living in poverty is the amount of education help received in financially secure homes that students living in poverty were not receiving (Hashima & Amato, 1994).

Furthermore, students living in poverty often lack academically stimulating environments, and in some cases they do not have the materials needed to complete homework such as: calculators or books with required readings, or a computer with internet access at home (Kaminski et al., 2013). Wadsworth et al., (2008) point out doctor visits may add to the stress level of children in poverty, forcing them to miss school and further damaging academic achievement. This is similar to Boland's (2001) study where female respondents remarked that having a job would sometimes take priority over school, which further contributed to academic struggles. While the students living in poverty struggle to remain in school, those who do remain, often have major achievement gaps compared to their non-impooverished peers (Balfanz, 2009; Bennett, 2008).

Impacts of Poverty and Education on Educators

Across the United States, one major challenge for educators was closing the achievement gap and helping to raise overall test scores for a school. The achievement gap is growing wider every year as schools push students for higher national test scores without understanding the depth of disproportion of scores in schools because of poverty (Emmett & McGee, 2012). The American School Board Journal (2009) published the study 'From the achievement gap to uninsured children and poverty,' and posited that through testing "Hispanic" students who were found to be below the achievement gap in kindergarten, tended to have wider gaps by third grade (p. 53). The same study also added in the United States, as educational inequality grows, social mobility tends to lessen.

Furthermore, the increased number of students living in poverty caused added challenges for teachers. Challenges include the amount of time teachers are expected to be in the classroom merged with disproportionality (or the classroom distribution of impoverished students to non-impoverished students) and the amount of extra duties combined with the stress children and adolescents living in poverty face (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Some of the biggest challenges facing teachers was the seemingly non-existent parent participation, inadequate funding, low test scores, increased student to teacher ratios, poor administration participation, and insignificant classroom management skills. This has led to poor student behavior, and negative teacher attitudes, attributes, bias and racism (Boothroyd et al., 2005; DuRant et al., 1994; Hand et al., 2014; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Thoams-Presswood & Presswood, 2008).

Because of the increase in poverty among students, teachers were finding many challenges as well as huge impacts on their schools, the students they teach, the families they work with, and amplified stigma attached to working with this population (Shernoff et al., 2011). Furthermore, teacher attrition rates have continued to rise, especially in schools with high poverty rates; across the United States teacher attrition rates account for billions of dollars in the overall education budget (Santoro & Morehouse, 2011; Wells, 2008; White, Mistry, & Chow, 2013). The question is, why is the attrition rate so high, especially in high poverty schools? Across the nation there were skewed paid distributions in areas of high poverty (Archer, 2005; Friel, 2004; Keller, 2003). Research has demonstrated educators tend to favor schools with higher pay, better resources, supportive faculty and administration, and students who are more likely to behave and want to learn (Curtis, 2012; D'Angelo & Dixey, 2001).

In fact, according to research, teachers gave multiple reasons why they leave schools with high rates of poverty: inadequate funding, poor faculty support, lack of school consistency and collaboration, and poor student discipline (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Howard, 2001; Morgan, 2012; Mouza, 2011). First, poor working conditions such as inadequate lighting, leaky roofs, bug and rat infestations and old buildings from decades past were a major concern to teachers. Second, poor staffing was believed to be a problem because a majority of staff and teachers took positions in high poverty schools as a last resort, not a first option (Howard, 2001). Third, despite efforts of even the most seasoned teacher, poor classroom consistency and stability were inevitable. This is because the classroom often reflected the teachers socioeconomic status and morals, and often the students might not comprehend a world that resembles what the teacher was creating in the classroom (Morgan, 2012). Fourth, lack of collaboration within the school setting amongst the faculty and staff and poor school discipline were noted as two of the highest

challenges faced by teachers (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Donaldson and Johnson (2011) suggested the arduous process of maintaining one's classroom becomes so overwhelming that teachers lack the energy to collaborate with other teachers and deal with the behavior problems and educational gaps in their classrooms. Also, teachers found the chain of discipline was extremely skewed and support from administration was often absent (Mouza, 2011). Finally, lack of resources was also an area of concern for teachers and administrators working in high poverty schools. Schools high in poverty definitely lacked money, but they also lacked resources such as books, technology, printers, including both the ink and paper, and even in some cases, toilet paper (Fierros, 2009).

It was clear students in high need schools, with high rates of poverty, faced multiple challenges linked to their social, personal and family well-being. These issues were only intensified when considering the challenges of educating students in high need areas, this included limited resources, educational support and economic support. What may be more disconcerting was these challenges are furthered by the presence of negative attitudes and beliefs among the educational professionals assigned to work with these students.

Educational Professionals and Attitudes toward Poverty

Since the population of individuals living in poverty is continuing to increase and 24% of those people are children, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) it was important to understand how educators attitudes can affect an entire generation. Societal expectations, beliefs, and stigmatization are horrendous. Social status tends to play a major role in how society views individuals living in poverty and their social identity only helps to solidify individualistic and fatalistic attributes. The lack of a proper definition for poverty does not help in the attempts to alleviate educational inequalities and stigmatism but there was hope because some teachers who

have the ability to maintain classroom management tended to have more persistence when working with individuals living in poverty. Unfortunately, their educator counterparts who struggle with classroom management have a more difficult time remaining objective, not being biased, and these teachers often associated more individualistic attributes with students living in poverty (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Feagin, 1975; Robinson, 2007; Smith et al., 2013; Williams, 2009; Yun & Weaver, 2010)

Classroom management was found to be a high predictor of teacher persistence in the classroom. If a teacher was able to properly manage their classroom then their persistence for other issues was higher compared to teachers who could not manage their classrooms and lacked persistence (Robinson, 2007). Research indicated teachers who had more of a structuralistic attitude toward individuals living in poverty tended to be more persistent when working with students living in poverty in the classroom. These teachers often had a higher sense of confidence because of their structural orientation and were less likely to leave inner city-schools (Robinson, 2007). Robinson found this to be quite the opposite of their individualistic oriented peers.

Gibson et al., found in their 2014 study of teacher attitudes and anxiety toward students computer usage in the class, that those teachers with more favorable attitudes toward technology had less anxiety working with technology in the classroom. The teacher's attitudes toward technology then became a good foundation for the study of the teacher's beliefs toward technology and predicating which teachers were more likely to integrate computers into the classroom (Celik and Yesilyurt, 2012; Gibson, et al., 2014.) Disappointingly, the teachers with more negative attitudes believed students would become more reliant on the technology, had

lower perceived computer self-efficacy, and student ability to discern quality information was not present (Celik & Yesilyurt, 2012; Cuban, 2009; Glasman & Albarracin, 2006; Li, 2007).

Much like the study of attitudes and beliefs toward technology, other studies have shown similar findings. Bullock (1995) highlighted that much more research was needed on attitudes towards the “poor” (p. 118) and the behavioral consequences related to those attitudes, mainly because “attitudes are presumed to be important predictors of real-world behaviors and decisions” (Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013, p. 518). Folostina, Duta and Pracalici found similar findings to that of teachers integrating technology into the classroom in a Romanian 2014 study of attitudes of teachers toward classroom inclusion of students with disabilities. The majority of the study highlighted that while “regular classroom teachers” would allow their own children to be friends and even attend activities with individuals with disabilities, more than 70% of those same teachers did not want an integrated classroom (Folostina et al., 2014, p. 508).

Teachers and other professionals such as school counselors, social workers and school staff work with children and adolescents from many socioeconomic backgrounds. Because of this these fields have to advocate for their students through multiple avenues including, but not limited to: education, food, medical care, short/long term mental health stability, emotional stability, and everyday stressors (Miller, Pavlakis, Lac, & Hoffman, 2014). This became important particularly if the teacher had a bias or poor attitude toward students living in poverty. These teachers might not understand the excessive needs students living in poverty might have especially in relation to their peers not living in poverty. If teachers could be properly trained to understand prejudice and stigma and are made aware of the disadvantages already stacked against students living in poverty then negative attitudes, stereotypes and bias could possibly be set aside in the classroom. Properly trained teachers might not lack compassion, see students

living in poverty as unfortunate, or further add to the stigmatization of the population, but increase awareness and advocate for their students.

Additionally, statistics show the average teacher is European American, middle class, middle-aged, female (Lapan, 2012; Ndemanu, 2014; Southern Education Foundation, 2014; Waterman, 2014). Because of these specific demographics in the average teacher population, research indicated that similar negative attitudes, attributions and stigma could be found in the preservice teacher population. Thus, this study examined preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort of poverty to add to the body of research needed to help the increasing number of individuals living in poverty avoid being stigmatized while in school.

This research begins to set a foundation for considering whether teachers possessed negative attitudes toward students living in poverty. Currently there is paucity of research addressing this issue and the possible implications of these attitudes. This includes considering whether these attitudes have potentially influenced behaviors and social interactions with students and their parents.

Educator Training

When considering the challenges of living in poverty and the educational implications, it was imperative to understand whether teachers were prepared to work effectively with children and adolescents living in poverty (Wadsworth et al., 2008). This was extremely important for preservice teachers because they may be unaware of their own bias, unaware of how to effectively address issues related to poverty, and have limited personal experience with addressing the issues related to dealing with poverty. (Akiba et al., 2010; Books & Polakow, 2001; Hughes, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Preservice teachers are trained to work with K-12 students. Sometimes programs might include a general multicultural component or a single

course to address what could be expected if a specific population of student is in their classroom; for example, a student with a disability. Most programs have been mandated to include a course for preservice teachers on working with students with disabilities (Arthaud, Aram, Breck, Doelling, & Bushrow, 2007; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). This way, teachers might have better strategies on how to include these students and adjust the work to meet their individual needs found in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Keaton, 2012; Mason-Williams, 2014).

The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (2012) has indicated the average number of students in the 2010-2011 school year with a disability “being served in a public school through special education services is 13%” (p. 1). However, the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) has found twenty states have schools with populations of 50% or more students living in poverty attending public schools. That is a difference of 37% of students needing specific and individualized help and yet there is no requirement for preservice teachers to have an individualized class for working with students living in poverty. Not only is there not a requirement for an individualized class there appears to be a lack of addressing poverty bias and negative attitudes of future teachers (Mason-Williams, 2014; White, Mistry & Chow, 2013).

According to Kang and Hyatt (2010), to help a preservice teacher in the ability to understand students racial and/or ethnic background, cultural differences, and learning styles, teacher preparation programs have used courses in ‘diversity education’ as a framework and tool for training. One of the models used to train preservice teachers is “multicultural narratives” (p. 44). Multicultural narratives helped preservice teachers by providing scenarios for the new teachers to work through using educational theory and practice (Reddick, Welton, Alsandor,

Denyszyn, & Platt, 2011). The multicultural narratives helped preservice teachers identify stereotypes and racism and stressed ways in which preservice teachers could learn to be accepting, understanding and even compassionate towards others (Kang & Hyatt, 2010). Unfortunately, Kang and Hyatt also pointed out there is no common multicultural pedagogy by which to prepare preservice teachers so diversity education looks very different in each teacher education institution (2010). Thus, because of inadequate preparation, preservice teachers could start their careers at a disadvantage when working with children and adolescents living in poverty (who make-up more than 50% of a public schools population in over half of the United States as of 2014) (Southern Education Foundation, 2014). Consequently, adding to the negative stigma of poverty inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom.

Furthermore, the new Common Core initiative made the teaching transition for high poverty schools very difficult because they could not afford the necessary books to teach the required curriculum (Morgan, 2012). This was not to say schools with low poverty rates do not make teachers questions their career choice; however, the literature proved these challenges are mostly associated with teachers in high poverty schools (Curtis, 2012; Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Shernoff et al., 2011).

The challenges for teachers are all too real when they enter a classroom with a majority of students living in poverty. The students too, face challenges and issues: instead of attending school and focusing on learning, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds focus on basic need issues such as food insecurity and/or homelessness (Hanson, 1997; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Harper & Jones, 2011; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006). These, along with many other factors related to students living in poverty, had a significant impact on

teachers responsible for ensuring each student in their classroom met local, state and federal academic standards (Forte, 2010; Marcus & Jamison, 2013; No Child Left Behind, 2001).

In Hughes' 2010 work on better preparation for future teachers, she suggested teachers will face many challenges because of the major poverty crisis within the United States (Vaughn, 2005). Teachers who worked with children and adolescents living in poverty spent a large amount of time working with students on classroom behaviors, inadequate social skills, and decreasing anxiety related to mental health issues and home stressors (Mason et al., 2010). Because of this, many students considered "at-risk" fell behind on academic achievement standards and the job of the educator became more and more difficult causing stress, stigma, and often times bias toward the students (Williams, 2009.) The difficulties for the teacher, especially if the teacher has not received specific training working with students living in poverty, led to inadequate testing scores, burn-out, high teacher attrition rates, and even bias and stigma toward the students they taught (Farenga, Ness & Shah, 2014; Keengwe, 2010; Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006).

Chenoweht and Theokas (2013) agreed the majority of schools with predominate populations of students of color and are from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, tended to score much lower on standardized achievement tests when compared with their middle-class counterparts. Yet, Chenoweht and Theokas (2013) discovered a few schools in the country were outliers. These schools had higher levels of students receiving free and reduced lunch and were comprised of a majority of one race. When assessing what separated these schools from the rest, it was found the administration was the difference. The administrative staff were all former teachers who were principals and assistant principals at these schools. Chenoweht and Theokas (2013) found four major components of the administrators that caused their schools to succeed. The four

factors were: “beliefs about student potential drive their work,” “they put instruction at the center of the managerial duties,” “they focus on building the capacity of all the adults in the building,” and “they monitor and evaluate what leads to success and what can be learned from failure” (pp. 57-59). The key to this success and what can be applied to preservice teacher training was more time should be spent on finding solutions and less on placing blame (Chenoweht & Theokas, 2013). Challenges must be addressed but the only way to sufficiently prepare preservice teachers for what they will possibly encounter is through proper and adequate training.

Gorski (2013) theorized the best way to prepare teachers for success in the classroom was to create a generalized pedagogy focusing on students living in poverty. Within this pedagogy, teachers bias, attitudes toward individuals living in poverty and even racism could be addressed. It was important teachers address any bias they might have prior to entering the classroom (Gorski, 2013). Existing literature showed multicultural competence and knowledge of bias were extremely important in any profession; however, for education it was imperative teachers were aware of their attitudes, bias and lack in multicultural competence prior to teaching in the classroom (Lidz & Pena, 1996; Rist, 2000). Keengwe (2010) suggested there was no greater importance than educating preservice teachers for work with diverse students so the preservice teachers “various misconceptions, false beliefs, stereotypes and erroneous attitudes about minorities” could be changed (p. 197; Vaughn, 2005).

Multicultural competence was necessary for success in multiple fields and this has been seen in 2015 more than ever; the counseling field and Sue and Sue (2008) have been major contributors to the topic for many years and these concepts could easily be applied to preservice teacher training. Consequently, utilizing Sue and Sue’s (2008) standards, teacher training programs and preservice teachers found attitudes, attributes, and level of comfort were extremely

important and necessary to face the persistent challenging circumstances surrounding poverty in education (Campinha-Bacote, 2009; Pederson, 2004; Ponterotto, & Casas, 2011). No matter which profession, Sue and Sue (2008) stated for one to become culturally competent it begins by: “developing ones perspectives, communication effectiveness, interpersonal relations, and a willingness to succeed, motivate, learn from experience and play the role of change agent” (p. 203).

Brown (2014) suggested teachers would change the expectations for their students based on their socioeconomic background. Not only did teachers believe students living in poverty could not perform at the same academic level as their peers, teachers also had expectations the behavior of students living in poverty would be poor as well (Brown, 2014; Dotts, 1978; Gorski, 2013; Robinson, 2007). Many teachers had negative attitudes or bias toward students living in poverty, so creating a classroom with high expectations of all students was almost overlooked. Dotts (1978) suggested for teachers to have positive attitudes and create an environment where all students were expected to achieve the high expectations set by the teacher, then preservice teachers must be trained to avoid their negative attitudes and bias. Dotts also found the teachers race does not imply that the negative attitudes they had toward individuals living in poverty would vary based on the students race (1978).

Summary

The Department of Education, federal government and state governments were aware of the issues facing the United States and the number of individuals, including children and adolescents living in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Teachers were a vital part of educating the future, helping to eradicate educational inequality, and helping to close the achievement gap. Preservice teachers attitudes, attributes, and level of

social comfort contributed to the implementation of future programs for children and adolescents living in poverty (Shernoff et al., 2011; Southern Education Foundation, 2014; Vaughn, 2005).

Preservice teachers must be trained to work with students from all walks of life. Once preservice teachers are properly trained then teachers might be better aware of their bias, attitudes, attributes and level of social comfort when working with students living in poverty. While there is no guarantee decreasing negative beliefs will increase positive attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort, training would educate teachers on the diverse populations they work with (Fierros, 2009; Friel, 2004; Han & Thomas, 2010; Wille, McFarland, & Archwamety, 2009). The more proper training was provided to preservice teachers the better outcomes could be anticipated for the students. Only with proper teacher training can students living in poverty overcome educational inequality and disproportionality, as well as fight to close the achievement gap (Akiba et al., 2010). Also, the schools could eliminate the abundance of student behavioral issues, violence, and over-representation of students living in poverty in special education classes (Vacha & McLaughlin, 2004; Waterman, 2014; Zamora, 2003).

Although many accrediting bodies in several professional fields expect multicultural/diversity issues to be addressed during training, there was no formal multicultural pedagogy that exists for poverty training (Gorski, 2013; Lidz & Pena, 1996; Rist, 2000). Additionally, important was previous research indicated that there were societal stigmas related to individuals living in poverty. Thus, any professor who had a negative attitude toward individuals living in poverty received training to work with this population or they might have chosen to completely skip over this population in the course materials (Akiba et al., 2010).

Poverty surrounds education and the number of students living in poverty is only going to increase (Southern Education Foundation, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The attitudes,

attributes, and level of comfort with poverty are important in creating a safe and healthy learning environment for all students (NCATE, 2008). Teachers face many challenges in their profession but proper training to overcome bias, subjectivity, and stereotyping should not be a challenge but an advantage to the teacher, the students, the school, the community, and the state (Kang & Hyatt, 2010).

CHAPTER III. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes, attributes, and social comfort of preservice teachers toward working with students living in poverty. Additionally, the levels of training of preservice teachers working with children and adolescent students living in poverty was surveyed to find relationships between preservice teacher levels of training as it is related to attitudes, attributions, and social comfort level toward children and adolescents living in poverty. Also, demographic data related to participants' ages, race/ethnicity gender, and year in school, multicultural/diversity training courses taken, and personal experience with poverty, primary family economic status of preservice teachers living at home, and current socioeconomic status (SES) of preservice teachers who live independently of parents was collected. In this chapter a review of the research questions, description of the participants, survey instruments used, data collection procedures, and review of the methods for data analysis is provided.

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
2. What are the attributions of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
3. What do preservice teachers identify as their level of social comfort related to working with students living in poverty?
4. What is the relationship between attitudes and attributions of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty?
5. What is the relationship between attitudes, attributions, and social comfort related to working with students living in poverty as it relates to preservice teachers' family economic status and demographics?

6. What do preservice teachers identify as their level of preparation for working with students living in poverty?

Participants

Cohen's estimated number of participants is 10-15 per independent variable in a study. Based on the three dependent variables in this study, .05 criterion of statistical significance, and a power of 80% for a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992; Morrison, Manion, & Cohen, 2008), a low of 30 participants to a high of 135 should be surveyed. Participants (N=108) for this study included undergraduate students enrolled in a teacher education program at a regional university in Alabama.

Approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the IRB at the regional university surveyed, and College of Education faculty permission at the university surveyed were given. Appendix A is the Auburn University IRB approval letter. The recruitment process focused on undergraduate preservice teachers. In addition to these criteria, participants were 19 or older. Appendix B contains the informational letter given to students recruited for the survey. Participants from a regional university were given the opportunity to participate in the survey. The courses from which the students were recruited had the criterion of being preservice teacher training classes for undergraduate students. These courses were chosen because they are required of all preservice education majors pursuing a degree and license in education in the state of Alabama.

All surveys were completed in person using a paper survey. Students were informed of their rights and if they chose to participate in the survey, it would take 20-30 minutes. Students participating in the survey were asked to return them in the provided envelope at the front of the

room. Students choosing not to participate could return the incomplete surveys in the provided envelope. The professor for the class was not present and after instructions the researcher left the room so there was no coercion or negative consequence for choosing not to participate in the survey.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire focused on collecting data related to the participants' age, gender, race/ethnicity, and year in school, family of origin socioeconomic status, multicultural/diversity training courses taken, and personal experience with poverty. Appendix C contains the demographic questionnaire.

Attitudes toward Poverty Scale

This study used *The Attitudes toward Poverty Scale* (Yun & Weaver, 2010) to assess preservice teacher's attitudes toward poverty. The original measure created by Atherton et al., (1993) contained 50 items. A further assessment regarding the measure's validity adjusted the original 50-item assessment to a 37-item measure using factor analysis to measure one's attitude toward specific statements about poverty (Yun & Weaver, 2010). Atherton et al., utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree. This likert scale will be used in the Yun and Weaver 2010 adjusted version of *The Attitudes toward Poverty Scale* used for this study. Some items are reversed scored to prevent presentation bias and total scores on the measure indicate overall attitudes. Specifically, higher scores on the measure demonstrate more favorable attitudes toward the poor. Yun and Weaver reported the 21 item measure has a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's coefficient of reliability ($\alpha=.87$).

Through further examination of the measure by Yun and Weaver (2010), it was determined the measure assessed three specific factors related to attitudes toward poverty. The three factors were identified as personal deficiency, stigma, and structural perspective. Examples given by Yun and Weaver (2010) for these three factors are as follows: personal deficiency- “poor people are dishonest,” stigma- “welfare mothers have babies to get more money,” and structural perspective- “I would support a program that resulted in higher taxes to support social programs for poor people” (p. 174). Appendix D contains *The Attitudes toward Poverty Scale*.

Attributions of Poverty Scale

The Attributions of Poverty Scale was used in this study to measure attributions toward poverty. Bullock, Williams, and Limbert (2001) developed this 45-item measure to assess attributions toward poverty; the development of this measure was based on research on previous attribution measures (Feagin, 1972; Smith & Stone, 1989). For this study the shortened, 36-item version of *The Attributions of Poverty Scale* will be used (Strum, 2008). *The Attributions of Poverty Scale* (shortened version) consists of three dimensions focused on specific attributions of poverty; individualistic ($\alpha=.91$), structuralistic ($\alpha=.91$), and fatalistic ($\alpha=.71$) (Bullock et al., 2001; Strum, 2008).

The three dimensions categorize the primary attributions an individual recognizes to be the causes of poverty. The first dimension, *individualistic*, places responsibility on the individual and improvement being solely up to them (e.g., laziness) (Bullock et al., 2001; Strum 2008). The second dimension, *structuralistic*, places responsibility on society (e.g., exploitation of lower classes, low wages) (Bullock et al., 2001; Strum, 2008). The third dimension, *fatalistic*, places blame on things such as “bad luck,” or the “will of God” (Bullock et al., 2001; Crumley, 2013, p. 28; Ricks, 2014; Strum, 2008).

The measure requires individuals to rate statements pertaining to perceived causes of poverty (Strum, 2008). The statements are to be rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- “not at all important as a cause of poverty to 5-“extremely important as the cause of poverty” (Bullock et al., 2001; Strum, 2008). Scores are assessed related to the higher mean scores in one of the three attribution categories, specifically a higher mean score for the individualistic, structuralistic, and/or fatalistic attribution category indicates the tendency to attribute those factors toward the reason individuals live in poverty (Bullock et al., 2001; Strum, 2008).

Appendix E contains *The Attributions of Poverty Scale*.

Social Comfort Scale

Measurement of social comfort in this study focused on a revision of the *Social Comfort with Persons with Disabilities Scale* (Shannon & Carney, 1999). Appendix 6 contains the original measurement. The measure contained two components, a belief scale and a social comfort scale. The social component focuses on close to moderately distant personal interactions (Shannon & Carney, 1999). For the purposes of this study only the social comfort scale portion of the measure will be revised for use to focus on social comfort in interactions with students and families living in poverty. The original measure contained social comfort situations relating to working, socializing and having personal relationships. The scale was designed to measure social comfort across categories of physical disabilities, mental health, physical health and social stigmas. The scores ranged from 15-120 and the higher the score the higher the level of social comfort of the participant in the presented scenario (by category). Authors report a high degree of internal consistency ($\alpha=.95$) (Shannon & Carney, 1999). In the current study the measure will be modified to focus on social comfort in school related working situations, appropriate socializing, and working relationship scenarios. The categories of interaction will include

poverty. A reliability analysis was completed to measure internal consistency and reliability; the current study had an overall Cronbach alpha of $\alpha=.92$. Appendix F is the revised measure.

Procedures

Upon approval of university IRB and course faculty, recruitment of students enrolled in the approved courses were provided survey information and a survey packet including: informational letter, demographics information sheet, *The Attitudes toward Poverty Scale* (Yun & Weaver, 2010), *The Attributions of Poverty Scale* (Bullock, Williams, and Limbert (2001), adapted *Social Comfort Scale* (Shannon & Carney, 1999), direction on completion and submission of surveys, and Institutional Review Board approval letter. Students were provided this information and documentation during the final thirty minutes of a class meeting while requesting volunteers to complete the study aimed at assessing preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort toward working with children and adolescents living in poverty. In order to eliminate the potential for coercion to participate, the faculty of record did not participate in any aspect of data collection.

Students were informed if they chose to participate they were asked to complete the provided surveys and return them in the provided envelope at the front of the room. Students choosing not to participate returned the incomplete surveys in the provided envelope.

Data Analyses

Survey data was collected to assess preservice teachers' attitude, attribution, and level of social comfort with poverty. After data was collected through paper surveys the researcher checked for any incomplete surveys to exclude from the analyses. Data were hand entered into SPSS by two individuals and compared to ensure that all data were entered correctly.

In addition to assessing preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort, data were used to support the need for more specified training specific to individuals living in poverty and the sub-culture of poverty. A correlational analysis was used to assess preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort toward children and adolescents living in poverty; this was completed utilizing statistical analysis system Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

For research questions 1 and 2 are descriptive and comparative using within subjects analysis. Research question 4, is correlational, correlating the three attitude scales with the 3 attribution scales. The attitude subscales are: Personal Deficiency, Stigma, and Structural and attribution subscales are: Individualistic, Structural, and Fatalistic.

Social comfort of preservice teachers was compared to the three subscales of both attitudes and attributions through the use of regression analysis. The regression analysis determined the correlation of the subscales of attitudes and attributes to the preservice teachers' level of social comfort or personal bias toward poverty. Due to the changes made to the *Social Comfort Scale*, a cronbach's alpha was completed in order to ensure reliability of the measure.

Finally, research question 5 utilized multiple regression analysis to assess the relationship among counselor's attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort (dependent variables) toward students living in poverty and the descriptive statistics attained through the demographic survey. The information contained in the demographic survey included the independent variables; race, ethnicity, gender, age, year in school, current SES, multicultural/diversity courses completed, personal experience with poverty and an open-ended question regarding concerns with working with students living in poverty. Research questions 3 is a descriptive summary and research question 6 are quantitative findings that were addressed in written explanation and tables for

visual points to quickly highlight the findings. As for training, this was addressed as needed to highlight the need for poverty training where statistical data proved significant.

Summary

For this chapter an overview of the research questions, participant recruitment, measure identification, procedures, and data analysis were provided. New data were collected for this study to assess and analyze how preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort toward students living in poverty affect their bias and stigma of the population and to better help teacher educators understand these attitudes, attributes, and levels of social comfort as they are relevant to future teacher training with regards to working with students living in poverty.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses for this study. The purpose of this study was to assess the attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort of preservice teachers with poverty. The study includes an assessment of the participants' demographic information and results of the statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics for the scales utilized. For the purpose of this study, preservice teachers (students in teacher preparation programs) were targeted.

Demographic Information

Participants

Data were gathered from 108 (90 female, 18 male) preservice teachers; 83% of participants were female making the sample disproportionately female. Eighty-three percent of the participants identified as White/Caucasian, 15.7% as Black/African-American, and 1% as American-Indian/Alaskan Native. Due to the majority of participants identified race/ethnicity being white/Caucasian, this category was collapsed to two main identifiers: white and non-white. The overall sample was comprised of a higher percentage of white than the overall population. The majority of participants (76.9%) were aged 18-24, with 17.6% ages 25-34, and 5.6% ages 35-44; age was also collapsed into two categories: 18-24 and 25-older. Almost half (49.1%) of participants majored in Early Childhood Education or Elementary Education, followed by 25% majoring in Special Education/Collaborative Education; 5.6% majored in Physical Education; 4.6% in Secondary Education History, 2.8% in Family and Consumer Sciences; 2.8% in Secondary Education English; 2.8% in Secondary Education Math; and 2.8% in Secondary Education Science. Participants family of origin socioeconomic status varied widely when asked to identify with one of eleven categories: under-\$14,999, \$15,000- \$24,999, \$25,000-\$34,999,

\$35,000-\$44,999, \$45,000-\$54,999, \$55,000-\$64,999, \$65,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$84,999, \$85,000-\$94,999, \$95,000-\$104,999, and \$105,000+. Because there were so many categories, these were collapsed into three main categories: Under \$14,999-\$44,999, \$45,000-\$74,999, and \$75,000- higher for ease of coding and explanation of data found. See Table 1 below for frequencies and percentages for all categorical demographic data.

Table 1
Demographic Descriptive Statistics

Characteristic		Preservice Teachers (<i>n</i> =108)	Percentage of Preservice Teachers	Overall Population (<i>n</i> =8,514)	Overall Percentage
Gender	Male	18	16.7	3,601	42.3
	Female	90	83.3	4,913	57.7
Race/Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	90	83.3	6,213	72.9
	Black/African-	17	15.7	1,662	19.5
	American	1	.9	62	.72
	American-Indian/Alaskan Native				
Age	18-24	83	76.9	5,684	66.7
	25-34	19	17.6	1,255	14.7
	35-44	6	5.6	525	6.16
Education Major*	Early Childhood or Elementary	53	49.1	365	4.28
	Special/Collaborative	27	25	115	1.35
	Physical Education	6	5.6	114	1.33
	Secondary History	5	4.6	(NR)*	(NR)*
	Family/Consumer Sciences	3	2.8	194	2.27
	Secondary English	3	2.8	(NR)*	

	Secondary Math	3	2.8	(NR)*	(NR)*
	Secondary Science	3	2.8	(NR)*	(NR)*
Family of Origin SES*	under-\$14,999	2	1.9	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$15,000- \$24,999	10	9.3	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$25,000-\$34,999	13	12.0	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$35,000-\$44,999	14	13.0	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$45,000-\$54,999	13	12.0	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$55,000-\$64,999	13	12.0	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$65,000-\$74,999	13	12.0	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$75,000-\$84,999	8	7.4	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$85,000-\$94,999	10	9.3	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$95,000-\$104,999	8	7.4	(NR*)	(NR*)
	\$105,000+	4	3.7	(NR*)	(NR*)

Note: Five participants reported other or no response to education major

**NR= Not reported by college in 2016 report*

Assessment of Measure of Reliability

Reliability was analyzed using Cronbach's index of internal consistency for the sample (N = 108) to validate the Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale ($\alpha = 0.74$, M= 20.18), Attributions Toward Poverty Scale ($\alpha = 0.81$, M= 40.51), and Social Comfort with Poverty Scale ($\alpha = 0.92$, M= 3.01). See Table 2 for all information on scales and subscales.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Scales

Scale	# of items	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α Original estimates	Mean	SD	F
Attitudes About Poverty		.74				$F=138.954^*$
<i>Personal Deficiency/Individualistic</i>	7	.61	.82	2.19	.48	PD > Sg, S
<i>Stigma/Fatalistic</i>	8	.73	.75	3.15	.56	
<i>Structural</i>	6	.55	.67	3.34	.51	
Attributions of Poverty		.81				$F=32.358^*$
<i>Individualistic</i>	15	.65	.91	3.31	.44	F > I, S
<i>Fatalistic</i>	8	.75	.72	3.73	.67	
<i>Structural</i>	13	.65	.91	3.23	.44	
Social Comfort Scale of Poverty	15	0.92	.95	3.01	1.17	

*<.001

Sg-Stigma

S-Structural

For research questions 1 and 2 a within-subjects ANOVA was used to compare the subscale means for attitudes and attributions. Research question 3 utilized a descriptive correlation analysis to compare the demographics to the level of social comfort of preservice teachers.

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of preservice teachers towards persons living in poverty?

Yun and Weaver (2010), reported an overall internal consistency reliability of .87 and a Cronbach alpha for each subscale: $\alpha=.82$ personal deficiency, $\alpha=.75$ stigma, and $\alpha=.67$ structural perspective (Atherton et al., 1993). The current study had an overall Cronbach alpha of .74 with subscales of $\alpha=.61$ personal deficiency, $\alpha=.73$ stigma, and $\alpha=.55$ structural perspective. The structural perspective subscale was reverse scored because it “reflected structural explanations for poverty” (Yun & Weaver, 2010, p. 180) while the other two subscales are individual explanations of poverty and discriminatory explanations of poverty. A within subject’s one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the three subscales of

attitudes toward poverty. The three subscales used to measure preservice teachers' attitudes included three levels: personal deficiency, stigma, and structural perspective. The overall means for attitude subscales: $M = 2.19$ ($SD = .48$)- personal deficiency, $M = 3.15$ ($SD = .56$)- stigma, and $M = 3.34$ ($SD = .51$)- structural perspective. The within subjects analysis of variance was significant at the .001 level, $F(2,107) = 138.954$, $p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval for the attitudes of preservice teachers with poverty mean ranged from 2.19 to 3.34. Significance was found between all three subscales with personal deficiency subscale greater than stigma and structural subscales. See Table 2 for information on attitude subscales.

Research Question 2: What are the attributions of preservice teachers towards persons living in poverty?

Bullock, Williams, and Limbert (2001), reported an overall internal consistency reliability and Cronbach alpha for each subscale: $\alpha = .91$ - individualistic, $\alpha = .72$ - fatalistic, and $\alpha = .91$ - structural. A within subject's one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the three subscales of attributions toward poverty. The three subscales used to measure preservice teachers' attributions included three levels: individualistic, fatalistic, and structural perspective. The current study had an overall Cronbach alpha of .81 with subscales of $\alpha = .65$ - individualistic, $\alpha = .75$ - fatalistic, and $\alpha = .65$ - structural. The overall mean for attribution subscales: $M = 3.31$ ($SD = .44$)- individualistic, $M = 3.73$ ($SD = .67$)- fatalistic, and $M = 3.23$ ($SD = .51$)- structural. The within subjects analysis of variance was significant at the .05 level, $F(2,107) = 32.358$, $p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval for the attributions of preservice teachers with poverty mean ranged from 3.31 to 3.73. Significance was found between two subscales with the fatalistic subscale greater than the structural subscale. See Table 2 for information on attribution subscales.

Research Question 3: What do preservice teachers identify as their level of social comfort related to working with students living in poverty?

Shannon and Carney (1999), reported an overall internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alpha of $\alpha=.95$ in the original Social Comfort Scale used to measure individuals level of comfort with persons who have HIV. After the measure was revised for this study to reflect an individual’s level of comfort with persons living in poverty, a reliability analysis was completed to measure internal consistency and reliability. The current study had an overall Cronbach alpha of $\alpha=.92$. The overall mean for participants was $M = 3.01$ ($SD = 1.17$). A descriptive correlation analysis to compare the demographics to the level of social comfort of preservice teachers. The 95% confidence interval for the level of social comfort of preservice teachers with persons living in poverty ranged from 2.18 to 4.89. See table 3 for means and standard deviations of social comfort among preservice teachers.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Social Comfort Scale

Scale	# of items	Cronbach’s α	Cronbach’s α Original estimates	Mean	SD
Social Comfort Scale of Poverty	15	0.92	.95	3.01	1.17
1. Teaching an elementary aged student living in poverty				2.18	1.53
2. Working in a high poverty neighborhood				2.98	1.50
3. Providing individual tutoring to a student living in poverty				2.30	1.60
4. Marrying a person who lives in poverty				4.13	1.92
5. Holding a conference with parents of a student who lives in poverty				2.57	1.65
6. Living in a high poverty neighborhood				4.61	1.94
7. Running an after school program in a high poverty school				2.81	1.45
8. Being friends with a person living in poverty				2.18	1.53
9. Working in a high poverty school				2.71	1.69
10. Dating a person living in poverty				3.83	2.03

11. Mentoring a student living in poverty	2.18	1.52
12. Having a roommate who is from a high poverty family	2.54	1.54
13. Teaching a high school aged student living in poverty	2.54	1.81
14. Maintaining classroom management in a high poverty school	2.77	1.72
15. Attending parties in high poverty neighborhoods	4.89	2.25

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between attitudes and attributions of preservice teachers towards persons living in poverty?

A correlational analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between preservice teacher’s attitudes and attributions towards students living in poverty. The results of the analysis show the correlation between subscales in which attitudinal belief might best predict attributions of poverty. Significance was found between multiple attitude and attribution subscales; First, attitudes toward poverty (stigma subscale) and attributions of poverty (individualistic subscale) were significant, $r(106) = .56, p < .001$. A strong positive correlation between the two scales signifies that preservice teachers that held attitudes of stigma, misfortune or bad luck, toward students living in poverty were also likely to hold more individualistic attributions such as, lack of effort or lack of intelligence toward students living in poverty. Significance was also found between attitudes toward poverty (structural subscale) and attributions of poverty (fatalistic subscale), $r(106) = .30, p < .001$, signifying that preservice teachers that held structural attitudes, for example society has a responsibility to help the poor, also held more fatalistic attributions, poor people are discriminated against, as reasons that students live in poverty. Significance between attitudes toward poverty (structural subscale) and attributions of poverty (structural subscale), $r(106) = .34, p < .001$, highlight that preservice teachers that hold structural attitudes like high taxes and low wages, also held high structural attributions, circumstances beyond individuals control, were reasons why students live in poverty. Lastly, correlation between attitudes toward poverty (structural subscale) and attributions of poverty (individualistic

subscale) was significant, $r(106) = -.21, p < .05$. Preservice teachers with structural attitudes were found to hold individualistic attributions as explanations why some students live in poverty.

Table 4 shows the correlations between Attitudes and Attributions Subscales.

The results of the correlational analysis presented in Table 4 show that 4 out of the 9 correlations were statistically significant, and with a moderate to large effect size, were greater than or equal to $-.21$. The correlations of attitudes/personal deficiency and the two other attribution subscales (fatalistic and structural) tended to be lower and not significant. In general, the results suggest that preservice teachers more often attribute students living in poverty to these factors: fatalistic-prejudice and discrimination against poor people, bad luck, and lack of good schools; structural-high taxes and low wages; and individual-lack of effort, lack of intelligence, and lack of ability and talent. Preservice teachers' attitudes suggest that students live in poverty due to reasons such as stigma/fatalistic- misfortune, had a bad break and structural-circumstances beyond their control and society has a responsibility to help the poor.

Table 4
Correlations Between Attitudes and Attributions

	<u>Attributions of Poverty</u>		
<u>Attitudes Toward Poverty</u>	Individualistic Pearson Correlation (<i>r</i>)	Fatalistic	Structural
Personal Deficiency/Individualistic	.167	.009	-.022
Stigma/Fatalistic	.562**	-.017	-.187
Structural	-.214*	.296**	.337**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 5: What are the relationships between attitudes, attributions, and social comfort related to working with persons living in poverty as it relates to preservice teacher's family economic status and demographics?

A multiple regression analysis with backward elimination was conducted to examine the relationship among preservice teacher demographics (gender, age, SES of family of origin, and race/ethnicity) and each of the three subscales for both attitudes and attributions towards poverty and social comfort. Race/ethnicity was dummy coded 0 = White/Caucasian and 1 = Non-White/Caucasian (17 Black/African-American and 1 American Indian identified participant). Additionally, age was collapsed into 2 categories: 18-24 and 25-older because the majority of participants (76.9%) were aged 18-24, with 17.6% ages 25-34, and 5.6% ages 35-44. SES was collapsed into 3 ordinal categories: Under \$14,999-\$44,999, \$45,000-\$74,999, and \$75,000.

Six linear regressions, with backward elimination, were used to analyze preservice teachers' total score on each of the three Attitudes Toward Poverty and Attributions of Poverty subscales from four demographic variables: SES of family of origin, age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Attitudes Toward Poverty and Personal Deficiency Subscale

For the Attitudes Toward Poverty personal deficiency subscale, using the four predictors, an overall R^2 of .073 was reached. A simpler model retaining one predictor emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the race/ethnicity predictor and achieved a R^2 of .038 ($F= 4.214, p=.043$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 2.014, p<.05$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model.

Pearson's R correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between variables and how the strongest correlation exists in the race/ethnicity predictor, $r = .038$. The race/ethnicity predictor accounted for 3.8% of the variance of preservice teachers' attitudes and whether personal deficiencies of students living in poverty are believed to why the students live in poverty.

Attitudes Toward Poverty and Stigma Subscale

The Attitudes Toward Poverty stigma subscale had an overall R^2 of .135 reached. A simpler model retaining two predictors emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the gender predictor R^2 of .135 ($F= 6.896, p=.002$) and race/ethnicity predictors and achieved a R^2 of .116 ($F= 6.896, p=.002$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 4.012, p<.01$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model. The gender predictor accounted for 5.7% of the variance and the race ethnicity predictor accounted for 5.3% of the variance of preservice teachers' stigma attitudes toward students living in poverty.

Attitudes Toward Poverty and Structural Subscale

The Attitudes Toward Poverty structural subscale had an overall R^2 of .100 reached. A simpler model retaining one predictor emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the race/ethnicity predictor and achieved a R^2 of .067 ($F= 7.581, p=.007$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 2.856, p<.05$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model. The race/ethnicity factor accounted for 6.7% of the variance of preservice teachers' structural attitudes of students living in poverty. See Table 5 for summary of attitudes multiple regression analyses.

Attributions of Poverty and Individualistic Subscale

The Attributions of Poverty individualistic subscale had an overall R^2 of .089 reached. A simpler model retaining one predictor emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the race/ethnicity predictor and achieved a R^2 of .073 ($F= 8.329$, $p=.000$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 2.524$, $p=.045$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model. The race/ethnicity factor accounted for 7.3% of the variance of preservice teachers' individual attributions of students living in poverty but was not significant to prove there is a relationship between preservice teachers' race and individual attributions toward students living in poverty.

Attributions of Poverty and Fatalistic Subscale

The Attributions of Poverty fatalistic subscale had an overall R^2 of .076 reached. A simpler model retaining one predictor emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the gender predictor and achieved a R^2 of .059 ($F= 6.695$, $p=.011$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 2.07$, $p=.085$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model. The gender predictor accounted for 7.2% of the variance of preservice teachers' fatalistic attributions of students living in poverty.

Attributions of Poverty and Structural Subscale

The Attributions of Poverty structural subscale had an overall R^2 of .131 reached. A simpler model retaining one predictor emerged after the backward elimination was used. The final restricted model contained the gender and race/ethnicity predictor which achieved a R^2 of .130 ($F= 7.837$, $p=.001$). The R^2 difference between these two models was not significant ($F= 3.889$, $p=.006$); therefore, the restricted model was preferred over the full model. The gender predictor

accounted for 5.6% of the variance and the race/ethnicity predictor accounted for 8.1% of the variance of preservice teachers' structural attributions of students living in poverty. See Table 6 for summary of attributions multiple regression analyses.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analyses for Preservice Teachers' Demographics Predicting Attitudes Towards Students in Poverty (N=108)

Attitude Subscale	Personal Deficiency				Stigma				Structural			
	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}
Full Model	.073 ^a				.135 ^a				.100 ^a			
Restricted Model	.038 ^b				.116 ^b				.067 ^b			
SES	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Age	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Gender	.	.	.	.	.	-.239**	-.251	-.239	.	.	.	.
Race		.196*	.196	.196		.230**	.243	.230		-.258	-.258	-.258

*. Correlation significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

***. Correlation significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

+. Beta weights are from the restricted model.

Attitude-PD	Attitude-Stigma	Attitude-Structural
^a F(4,103)= 2.014, p=.098 ^b F(1,106)= 4.214, p=.043	^a F(4,103)= 4.012, p=.005 ^b F(2,105)= 6.896, p=.002	^a F(4,103)= 2.856, p=.027 ^b F(1,106)= 7.581, p=.007

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analyses for Preservice Teachers' Demographics Predicting Attributions of Students in Poverty (N=108)

Attribution Subscale	Individualistic				Fatalistic				Structural			
	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}	R ²	β	r	r _{sp}
Full Model	.089 ^a				.076 ^a				.131 ^a			
Restricted Model	.073 ^b				.059 ^b				.130 ^b			
SES	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Age	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Gender	.	-.270	.	.	.	-.269**	.269	-.269	.	-.236**	-.222	-.236
Race	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	-.272***	-.360	-.284

*. Correlation significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

***. Correlation significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

+. Beta weights are from the restricted model.

Attribution-Individualistic	Attribution-Fatalistic	Attribution-Structural
^a F(4,103)= 2.524, p=.045 ^b F(1,106)= 8.329, p<.001	^a F(4,103)= 2.07, p=.085 ^b F(1,106)= 6.695, p=.011	^a F(4,103)= 3.889, p=.006 ^b F(2,105)= 7.837, p=.001

Lastly, a backward elimination multiple regression analysis was conducted on the Social Comfort Scale and demographic variables to analyze preservice teachers' total score. Overall, all variables together proved statically significant in predicting preservice teachers' level of social comfort with poverty, $r=.076$, $F(4,103) = 3.209$, $p=.016$. Each particular demographic variable was statistically significant in predicting total score; therefore, the full model was used because all variables were retained. See Table 7 for summary of multiple regression analyses.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Analyses for Preservice Teachers' Demographics Predicting Social Comfort around Students in Poverty (N = 108)

Variable	R^2	β	r	Semi-partial
Social Comfort Scale				
Full model	.111			
SES Family of Origin		.127**	.154	.132
Age		-.070*	-.129	-.072
Gender		-.104*	.094	-.107
Race/Ethnicity		.283**	.283	.283

*. Correlation significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 6: What do preservice teachers identify as their level of preparation for working with students living in poverty?

Two open-ended questions were included in the survey to allow for a richer view and deeper understanding of preservice teachers' beliefs regarding working with students living in poverty. The two questions were: 1. How well prepared do you feel you are for working with students living in poverty? and 2. What concerns do you have about working with students living in poverty? To assist in identification of themes, a second researcher was recruited and together with the researcher, themes were identified and agreed upon. Qualitative findings were summarized. Of the N=108 participants, 106 answered both questions. Fifty-five participants, (50.9%) answered that they were "well prepared" for working with students who live in poverty. Thirty-two participants, (29.6%) answered that they were "somewhat prepared" for working with students living in poverty, and 19 participants, (17.6%) answered they were "underprepared" for working with students living in poverty.

Of the 106 participants who answered the open-ended questions, the main concerns were grouped into categories based on the themes found in narrative analysis. Twenty-one participants answered that they had "no concerns" with working with students in poverty while the remaining participants answered with a word or small phrase. 21 participants are concerned with "overstepping their boundaries because they want to help." The word "help" for these 21 participants included key words such as "how to influence them," "I've never been around poor people and I'll just want to help them," and "It'll be hard not to spend all my money on them." Seventeen participants are concerned with "relating" to students living in poverty. For these participants "relating" included statements like "I don't know that I can related to them," "I'll have a hard time relating to their family," and "I'm concerned about relating to their situations." Twelve

participants were concerned with family and included statements such as “I’m concerned about the level of parental involvement,” “knowing how to deal with the student’s home atmosphere,” and “I want to know how to best care for my students because they’re from bad homes.” Ten participants were concerned with student’s motivation and educational abilities adding statements like “I’m concerned about motivating students who are below average,” and “their perspectives and motivations because they live in poverty will be different.” Eight participants were concerned with student’s basic needs including “basic needs such as food and housing.” Seven participants were concerned with resources including “the lack of resources in the school,” and the “lack of school support.” The remaining 12 participants varied in their concerns ranging from one who was concerned about “blaming them” to “their behavior in the classroom.”

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore and research preservice teachers’ attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort with poverty. The study utilized the Attitude Toward Poverty Scale (Yun & Weaver, 2010), Attributions of Poverty Scale (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001), and a modified Social Comfort Scale (Shannon & Carney, 1999). The results indicated that preservice teacher’s attitudes were most likely to identify stigma (welfare makes people lazy, unemployed people could find a job if they tried harder) and structural (people are poor due to circumstance outside of their control, poor people are discriminated against) reasons as the cause of poverty. Race of the preservice teacher was the only demographic that was significant in predicting total score of attitude toward students living in poverty. Preservice teacher’s attributed fatalistic (fate, bad luck), structural (poor economy), and individualistic (laziness) attributions as causes of poverty with race and gender, being the main demographics that were significant in predicting total score of attributions toward students living in poverty.

Preservice teacher's level of social comfort was believed to be higher than the average population because 106 of the 108 participants (98%) have had some exposure and/or training with poverty. All demographic variables, race, gender, age, and SES of family of origin were significant in predicting preservice teachers' level of social comfort with students living in poverty.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine preservice teachers' attitudes, attributes, and level of social comfort with poverty. Additionally, open-ended questions were used to gather information regarding preservice teachers' level of training and personal concerns when working with students living in poverty. To gather this information, preservice teachers completed paper survey packets including: an informational letter, demographics information sheet, *The Attitudes toward Poverty Scale* (Yun & Weaver, 2010), *The Attributions of Poverty Scale* (Bullock, Williams, and Limbert (2001), and an adapted *Social Comfort Scale* (Shannon & Carney, 1999). To examine relationships among these groups and variables, multiple regression analyses with backward elimination and an ANOVA were conducted and calculated for total scores on scales and subscales. In this chapter, the results will be discussed including limitations of the current study and recommendations for future studies.

Overview

The number of children and adolescents living in poverty will continue to increase as the level of poverty increases nationwide. Although preservice teachers are trained to work with varying academic topics and with all ages of children and adolescents, little has been done to prepare preservice teachers for the enormous number of students living in poverty. Many of these preservice teachers will encounter student's troubles related to poverty when in the classroom. Unfortunately, preservice teachers will realize that their educational training did not adequately prepare them for student issues outside of academics; thus, making preservice teachers job to ensure student success even more difficult. More than 22 percent of children live in poverty creating a need for preservice teachers to receive training. Until a proper pedagogy

can be formed, helping preservice teachers better identify their own personal attitudes, attributions and level of social comfort working with this population could be a start (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Williams (2009) explained stigma related to poverty and social class can be found anywhere, even among teachers. Though the government has created legislature to ensure teachers are trained to work amid individuals with disabilities there is nothing mandating teacher training for working with students living in poverty (United States Department of Education, 2012). This becomes significant because the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) has found twenty states have public schools with populations of 50% or more students living in poverty. This is important since this adds to the already complicated challenges facing students living in poverty because they are more at risk for educational challenges, behavioral issues, and have higher grade retention rates than their peers not living in poverty (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015; Patrick, n.d.; Rose & Gallup, 2006; Uhlenberg, & Brown, 2002). Failures to appropriately train and examine personal bias toward poverty can lead to even larger problems in education (Kaminski et al., 2013; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2014; Raphel, 2014).

Kang and Hyatt pointed out there is no common multicultural pedagogy by which to prepare preservice teachers, so diversity education looks different at each teacher education institution (2010). Gorski (2013) theorized the best way to prepare teachers for success in the classroom was to create a generalized pedagogy that includes a focus on students living in poverty. Within this pedagogy, teachers bias, attitudes toward individuals living in poverty and even racism can be addressed. It is important teachers address any bias they might have prior to entering the classroom (Gorski, 2013; Mason-Williams, 2014; White, Mistry & Chow, 2013).

The current study focused on addressing these issues in relation to preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort with poverty.

Discussion of Results

The first research question in this study sought to identify the attitudes of preservice teachers towards students living in poverty based on responses to the Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale (Yun & Weaver, 2010). After reviewing these data, it appears that white, female, preservice teachers tended to hold attitudes that focused on individual or personal deficits such as "individuals on welfare are lazy" and "poor people could do better if they tried" as being the cause of poverty while non-white, female preservice teachers held more structural attitudes "circumstances beyond an individual's control" (Yun & Weaver, p 174, 2010). Yun & Weaver (2010) also asserted individuals that have more personally deficient attitudes believe that individuals live in poverty due to being dishonest, laziness or having poor character traits. This is very similar to the second research question and questions related to the relationships between attitudes and attributions of preservice teachers.

When looking at the attributions of poverty and how preservice teachers understood the factors that are taken into account as to the main influences attributing to poverty, white, female preservice teachers in this study indicated that more fatalistic, or uncontrollable causes such as: it is bad luck being born into families that were poor or it is hard to understand how to spend money if you have not had role models that could do so. The second research question sought to identify the attributions of preservice teachers towards persons living in poverty. Non-white, female preservice teachers attributed structural attributions such as fate or bad luck as causes of poverty. Yun & Weaver (2010) explain fatalistic attributions "generally attribute poverty to uncontrollable factors such as personal misfortune and disability" (p 174). These findings

parallel those from preservice teachers' attitudinal beliefs regarding the causes of poverty.

Golding and Middleton (1982) created a dimension "prodigality... [which] represents a negative perspective toward impoverished persons" (p 175) no matter a specific identified attitude or attribution.

Findings regarding preservice teachers attitudes and attributions toward poverty are alarming because the majority of participants, white, female preservice teachers in this study are attributing the causes of a person living in poverty to being solely the individual's own personal defects as being the main cause of their own circumstance. More disturbing is that the preservice teachers in this study could be biased in working with the children and adolescents they will teach if they believe that the adults in these children's lives are the cause of the children living in poverty.

The third research question sought to identify preservice teachers level of social comfort related to working with students living in poverty. In this study, preservice teacher's level of social comfort was believed to be higher than the average population according to a recent study by Marris & Rein, (2009) because most participants noted they have had some exposure and/or training with poverty. To allow study participants the opportunity to explain if and why they believe they are prepared to work with students working in poverty, open-ended questions were created asking 1. How well prepared the felt they were to work with students living in poverty and 2. What concerns they had working with students living in poverty? Preservice teachers (more than 80.5% of participants) identified their level of preparation for working with students living in poverty as "well prepared" or at least "somewhat prepared". However, the 'concerns' noted in the open-ended questions that the participants had related to working with students living in poverty were alarming. A majority of the concerns the participants listed were

individualistic in nature. This would suggest that the open-ended questions were answered with more exaggeration than the self-report surveys, or the self-report surveys were answered with socially desirable responses, due to the contradictory nature of the relationship of the three surveys versus open-ended questions.

Lastly, the relationships between attitudes, attributions, and social comfort related to working with persons living in poverty as it relates to preservice teachers family economic status and demographics found the only significant correlations were between race and personal deficiency and structural subscales of attitudes, and race and gender regarding stigma and attitudes. Race was the most significant factor for both the structural and fatalistic subscales for attribution but both gender and age were the most significant factors for individual attributions of poverty. All four demographic factors, race, gender, age and SES of family of origin were significant with regards to preservice teachers' level of social comfort with poverty. Analyses from the self-report surveys showed only significant correlations with participants race and the three main areas of the study: attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort. Meaning that non-white participants had significantly higher scores than non-white participants in believing that individuals live in poverty due to more structural causes (bad economy or lack of public assistance programs) rather than personal or individual deficiencies (poor people are lazy or poor people lack ability and talent).

Limitations

Limitations to this study include a sample of convenience at one regional university in the state of Alabama. Results cannot be generalized to all teacher preparation programs or across all situations. Furthermore, because this study focused on preservice teachers, there might be a difference in a study utilizing teachers already employed in schools.

Because the university utilized in the study was a regional institution, geographical location as well as demographic breakdown must be considered. This sample was largely white/Caucasian (83%) and female (83%). Also, the small sample size must be noted (N=108).

Limitations due to the use self-report measures should be considered. Answers to survey questions could be under reported or exaggerated with additional issues related to understanding the instructions or confusion with completing the scaled answers (Sallis & Saelens, 2000).

Recommendations

The current study reviewing preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions, and level of social comfort with poverty warrants several recommendations for future research related to preservice teacher training with regards to students living in poverty. While there is an abundance of research on teacher preparation and poverty, there is a paucity of research regarding teacher training and working with students living in poverty.

First, further research with a broader population of varying race/ethnicity and from other parts of the country would help to gain a better insight into whether preservice teacher bias toward individuals exists outside of the limited population surveyed for this study. As race/ethnicity was the only correlation between preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions and level of social comfort, a more expansive pool of applicants with these varied races would help to verify findings from this study.

Second, inclusion of poverty training within a course, or having a course related to working with students living in poverty, could help alleviate stereotypes of working with this population, as well as better prepare future teachers for the realities of the world of teaching and the expansiveness of poverty within the United States. Additionally, any training with regards to

poverty could help teachers to better understand their own personal bias toward people different from themselves with regards to race, gender, and level of SES.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine preservice teachers' attitudes, attributions and level of social comfort with poverty. One hundred and eight, undergraduate, preservice teachers were surveyed using three measures and two open-ended questions related to their own attitudes, attributions and level of social comfort with students who live in poverty. Results indicated most participants, especially white/Caucasian, females, attribute individualistic factors such as laziness and dishonesty as major reasons why individuals live in poverty. However, non-white participants had opposite results and held more structuralistic reasons, such as a bad economy and failed government programs were reasons individuals live in poverty. While most participants responded more favorably to the self-report surveys, their answers to open-ended questions highlighted personal bias and less comfort with poverty. The results of this study can be used to further research the topic and help better-prepare teachers.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Office of Research Compliance
115 Ramsey Hall, Inverness
Auburn University, AL 36849



Telephone: 334-844-5966
Fax: 334-844-4391
IRBadmin@auburn.edu
IRBadmin@auburn.edu

August 26, 2016

MEMORANDUM TO: Samantha Booker
Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling

PROTOCOL TITLE: "An Examination of Preservice Teachers' Attitudes, Attributes, and Level of Social Comfort with Poverty"

IRB FILE NO.: 16-193 EX 1608

APPROVAL: August 24, 2016

EXPIRATION: August 23, 2019

The referenced protocol was approved "Exempt" by the IRB under 45 CFR 46.101 (b) (2):

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

- (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
- (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Note the following:

1. CONSENTS AND/OR INFORMATION LETTERS: Only use documents that have been approved by the IRB with an approval stamp or approval information added.
2. RECORDS: Keep this and all protocol approval documents in your files. Please reference the complete protocol number in any correspondence.
3. MODIFICATIONS: You must request approval of any changes to your protocol before implementation. Some changes may affect the assigned review category.
4. RENEWAL: Your protocol will expire in three (3) years. Submit a renewal a month before expiration. If your protocol expires and is administratively closed, you will have to submit a new protocol.
5. FINAL REPORT: When your study is complete, please notify the Office of Research Compliance, Human Subjects.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Research Compliance.

Bernie R. Olin, Pharm.D.
Chair of the Institutional Review Board #2
for the Use of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix B

Participant Informational Letter

Dear Students:

You are invited to participate in a research study to understand your attitudes, attributes and level of social comfort with poverty. The study is being conducted by Samantha Booker, Counselor Education & Supervision Doctoral Student at Auburn University. You are invited to participate because you are a Preservice Teacher student at a regional institution in the state of Alabama.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete a demographics questionnaire and three paper surveys. Your total time commitment will be approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

There is minimum risk or discomfort associated with participating in this study and your information will remain completely anonymous. Your participation will contribute to the understanding of the differences in preservice teacher's attitudes, attributes and level of social comfort with poverty.

If you change your mind about participation, you can withdraw at any time during the survey by turning in your survey at the front of the room and leaving the room. If you have questions about this study, please contact Samantha Booker at smb0058@auburn.edu or my chair, Dr. Jamie Carney at carnejs@auburn.edu.

By taking the survey you understand and consent to this agreement. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Samantha Booker, Ed.S, LPC, NCC
Counselor Education & Supervision Doctoral Candidate
Auburn University

Appendix C

Demographics Questionnaire

Directions: Please circle the appropriate option for the following questions-

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
2. What is your age?
 - a. 18-24
 - b. 25-34
 - c. 35-44
 - d. 45-54
 - e. 55-64
 - f. 65-older
3. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)
 - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic
 - e. White/Caucasian
 - f. Multiple ethnicity/Other (Please specify)
 - i. _____
4. What is your education major?
 - a. _____
5. What is the socioeconomic status of your family of origin? In other words, in which of the following SES do you consider yourself to have been raised?
 - a. Under \$14,999
 - b. \$15,000- \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000- \$34,999
 - d. \$35,000- \$44,999
 - e. \$45,000- \$54,999
 - f. \$55,000- \$64,999
 - g. \$65,000- \$74,999
 - h. \$75,000- \$84,999
 - i. \$85,000- \$94,999
 - j. \$95,000- \$104,999
 - k. \$105,000+
6. How well prepared do you feel you are for working with students living in poverty? _____

7. What concerns do you have about working with students living in poverty? _____

Appendix D
Attitude Toward Poverty Scale
(Yun & Weaver, 2010)

Please select your level of agreement to the following statements using the following scale:

If you strongly agree, please circle SA.

If you agree, please circle A.

If you are neutral on the item, please circle N.

If you disagree, please circle D.

If you strongly disagree, please circle SD.

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1. Welfare makes people lazy. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 2. An able-bodied person using food stamps is ripping off the system. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 3. Poor people are dishonest. | | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 4. People are poor due to circumstances beyond their control. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 5. Society has the responsibility to help poor people. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 6. Unemployed poor people could find jobs if they tried harder. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 7. Poor people are different from the rest of society. | | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 8. Poor people think they deserve to be supported. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 9. Welfare mothers have babies to get more money. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 10. Children raised on welfare will never amount to anything. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 11. Poor people act differently. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 12. Poor people are discriminated against. | | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 13. Most poor people are dirty. | | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 14. People who are poor should not be blamed for their misfortune. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 15. If I were poor, I would accept welfare benefits. | | | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 16. Some "poor" people live better than I do, considering all their benefits. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 17. There is a lot of fraud among welfare recipients. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 18. Benefits for poor people consume a major part of the federal budget. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 19. Poor people generally have lower intelligence than non-poor people. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 20. I believe poor people have a different set of values than do other people. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |
| 21. I would support a program that resulted in higher taxes to support social programs for poor people. | SA | A | N | D | SD | | |

Appendix E
Attributions of Poverty Scale
 (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001)

Please rate how important each of these reasons are for explaining why some people are poor in the United States and others are not. Please use the following scale:

1 Not at all important important as a cause of poverty.	2	3	4	5 Extremely as a cause of poverty.
1. Structuralistic inequalities that don't give all people equal choices.....	1	2	3	4 5
2. Negative attitudes and anti-work mentality among the poor.	1	2	3	4 5
3. Unfortunate circumstances.	1	2	3	4 5
4. A capitalistic society in which the wealth of some is contingent upon the poverty of others.....	1	2	3	4 5
5. An unwillingness to work at a competitive level that is necessary to make it in the world.	1	2	3	4 5
6. Sickness and disability.....	1	2	3	4 5
7. Discrimination against minorities and the poor.....	1	2	3	4 5
8. A lack of motivation that results from being on public assistance.....	1	2	3	4 5
9. Not having the right contacts to find jobs.....	1	2	3	4 5
10. An economic system that fosters competition over cooperation.....	1	2	3	4 5
11. Loose morals.....	1	2	3	4 5
12. Not inheriting money or property from relatives.....	1	2	3	4 5
13. Being taken advantage of by the rich.....	1	2	3	4 5
14. Lack of drive and perseverance.....	1	2	3	4 5
15. Being born into poverty.....	1	2	3	4 5

Attributions of Poverty Scale (continued, pg.2)
(Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001)

Please rate how important each of these reasons are for explaining why some people are poor in the United States and others are not. Please use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important important as a cause of poverty.				Extremely as a cause of poverty.	
16. Corporate downsizing and U.S. companies relocating to foreign countries that can pay lower wages.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Lack of motivation and laziness.....	1	2	3	4	5
18. Lack of money.....	1	2	3	4	5
19. The failure of society to provide good schools.....	1	2	3	4	5
20. Being too picky and refusing to take lower paying jobs.....	1	2	3	4	5
21. Just plain bad luck.....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Low paying jobs with no benefits.....	1	2	3	4	5
23. Lack of intelligence.....	1	2	3	4	5
24. Lack of transportation.....	1	2	3	4	5
25. A federal government which is insensitive to the plight of the poor.....	1	2	3	4	5
26. Lack of effort among the poor to improve themselves.....	1	2	3	4	5
27. Being from a family without the resources to financially help at critical points in one's life.....	1	2	3	4	5
28. A vicious cycle that perpetuates poor work habits, welfare dependency, laziness, and low self-esteem.....	1	2	3	4	5
29. High taxes that take money away from the poor.....	1	2	3	4	5
30. Not having positive role models to teach children about adult drive and ambition.....	1	2	3	4	5
31. Prejudice and discrimination in the hiring process.....	1	2	3	4	5

Attributions of Poverty Scale (continued, pg.3)
 (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2001)

Please rate how important each of these reasons are for explaining why some people are poor in the United States and others are not. Please use the following scale:

	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important important as a cause of poverty.					Extremely
					as a cause of poverty.
32. A weak safety net that doesn't help people get back on their feet financially (i.e. low welfare benefits).....	1	2	3	4	5
33. Lack of childcare.....	1	2	3	4	5
34. The ability to save, spend, and manage money wisely.....	1	2	3	4	5
35. The break-up with families (e.g. increased divorce rate).....	1	2	3	4	5
36. Not receiving a high school diploma.....	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F

Original Comfort with Persons with Disabilities Scale Version

<p>Comfort with Persons with Disabilities Scale* (Shannon & Carney, 1999)</p>
<p><u>Directions-</u> Please respond to the following statements by selecting the number that best matches your feelings about the following situations:</p>
<p><u>Scale-</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Comfortable 2. Moderately Comfortable 3. Comfortable 4. Neutral 5. Uncomfortable 6. Moderately Uncomfortable 7. Very Uncomfortable 8. This situation is unacceptable
<p><u>Questions-</u></p>
1. Dating someone who has AIDS _____
2. Standing next to a person who has AIDS in an elevator _____
3. Teaching a student who has AIDS in your classroom _____
4. Being friends with a person who has AIDS _____
5. Sitting next to a person who has AIDS in a restaurant _____
6. Providing individual tutoring to a student who has AIDS _____
7. Working on a college project with a person who has AIDS _____
8. Living next door to a person who has AIDS _____
9. Having a supervisor/boss who has AIDS _____
10. Marrying a person who has AIDS _____
11. Having a co-worker who has AIDS _____
12. Sharing a public restroom with a person who has AIDS _____
13. Holding a conference with parents of a student who has AIDS _____
14. Going to a party where there will be a person who has AIDS _____
15. Having a roommate who has AIDS _____

*Note: The measure originally compared across 3 categories, provided is one example for one category.

Appendix G

Original Comfort with Persons with Disabilities Scale Modified Version

<p>Social Comfort Scale (revised, 2016) (Shannon & Carney, 1999)</p>
<p><u>Directions-</u> Please respond to the following statements by selecting the number, on the scale of 1-8, that best matches your feelings about the following situations:</p>
<p><u>Scale-</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Comfortable 2. Moderately Comfortable 3. Comfortable 4. Neutral 5. Uncomfortable 6. Moderately Uncomfortable 7. Very Uncomfortable 8. This situation is unacceptable
<p><u>Questions-</u></p>
1. Teaching an elementary aged student living in poverty _____
2. Working in a high poverty neighborhood _____
3. Providing individual tutoring to a student living in poverty _____
4. Marrying a person who lives in poverty _____
5. Holding a conference with parents of a student who lives in poverty _____
6. Living in a high poverty neighborhood _____
7. Running an after school program in a high poverty school _____
8. Being friends with a person living in poverty _____
9. Working in a high poverty school _____
10. Dating a person living in poverty _____
11. Mentoring a student living in poverty _____
12. Having a roommate who is from a high poverty family _____
13. Teaching a high school aged student living in poverty _____
14. Maintaining classroom management in a high poverty school _____
15. Attending parties in high poverty neighborhoods _____

Appendix H

Operational Definitions

Attitudes: “Relatively able and enduring predisposition to respond positively or negatively to a person, event, and so forth...” (Gladding, 2006, p. 15). The degree to which the preservice teacher views the student living in poverty in a positive or negative conclusion utilizing the measure *Attitudes Toward Poverty Scale* (Atherton et al., 1993)

Attributes: What one believes is the cause of poverty (Bullock et al., 2001). The *Attributions of Poverty Scale* will be used to measure preservice teacher’s attributions of poverty (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003).

Poverty: Calculation created by the United States Census Bureau (2012) which creates a threshold for meeting basic needs for families. If a family does not meet the threshold then they live in poverty. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2013) the guideline for annual income starts with \$11,490 for a single person to \$39,630 for a family of eight. Ralston, Newman, Clauson, Guthrie and Buzby (2008) identify students with families with incomes at or below 130 percent poverty level with qualify for federal free or reduced school lunch program (US Census Bureau, 2010).

Preservice teacher: Persons enrolled in teacher education programs with the intention of earning a degree as an educator and become a teacher in the K-12 field (Ndemanu, 2014)

Level of social comfort: Adapted version of Carney & Shannon (1999) Social Comfort with Person with Disabilities Scale will be used to measure preservice teacher’s level of comfort working with students living in poverty (Carney & Cobia, 2003).

Socioeconomic status: For the purpose of this study, socioeconomic status (SES) refers to people living below the U.S. government’s definition of the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). For the participant’s completing the demographic page, the SES will be determined by

their dependent/independent status according to FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). *Dependent students* will report both their and their parents' information while independent students will report only their information (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).