

Using a Consultation Assignment to Enhance Trainees' Understanding and Implementation of Consultation and Social Justice in Career Counseling

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Abstract

Social justice advocacy and career counseling are foundational competencies for counseling professionals. However, training in advocacy and consultation outside of the classroom (i.e., in the community) is infrequent and career counseling courses, despite conceptualizing systemic issues, often focus on individual-level interventions. There is an opportunity to merge these competencies into a single experience for graduate trainees. Graduate students in a clinical psychology master's program completed a pilot, semester-long assignment in their career counseling class, which required them to work as consultants to organizations on a social justice oriented, career counseling focused project. We used a multi-method qualitative approach to analyze students' career theory knowledge and application and social justice advocacy. Data were generated through students' written assignments. Using coding reliability thematic analysis, data indicated most students were able to describe consultant and individual difficulties from an advocate and social justice framework, but about half the students struggled to integrate these social justice frames into career counseling theories and interventions. Five themes relating to student development emerged (e.g., recognizing privilege, self-efficacy), alongside three themes related to the logistics of the assignment design and implementation. Results are discussed alongside how to improve the assignment.

Keywords: Social justice; advocacy; consultation; career counseling; student development

Ethics codes expect counseling and clinical psychology scholars and practitioners (hereafter: counselors) to be culturally responsive and social justice oriented (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014; American Psychological Association [APA], 2017). Focusing on social justice requires counselors think beyond the traditional therapist-client dyad to understand how systems-level factors (e.g., public policy, legislation, and community resources) affect clients and client groups within a multicultural framework (e.g., Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). Counseling paradigms centering on social justice and multiculturalism, such as feminist or liberation psychology approaches emphasize that counselors develop self-awareness of how their identities manifest within a community and subsequently act to address systemic inequalities in their communities. Training programs need to integrate skills for taking systemic action – such as advocacy and consultation – into the curricula in order to increase trainees’ competency in social justice (Ratts et al., 2016). Historically, career counseling paradigms have emerged from advocacy-based work and seek to conceptualize work experiences as influenced by systemic factors (Toporek & Daniels, 2018). This study explored how merging social justice, consultation, and career counseling knowledge and skills into one assignment for graduate counseling trainees can increase student development across all three competency areas.

The APA’s 2017 Multicultural Guidelines encourage a systemic, ecological approach to multicultural understanding and responsiveness and indicate that social justice, including multicultural competency and advocacy, are the umbrella under which all components of counseling, including consultation, exist. Beyond this, social justice advocacy and consultation, which are both foundational competencies for counselors, share conceptual overlap (Lusky & Hayes, 2001; Moe et al., 2010). Both social justice advocacy and consultation take into consideration the systemic influences of oppression and change and seek to empower the clients within the consultee’s organization by working directly with the organization (i.e., systems-level). Some have suggested that social justice principles are exemplified by the combination of consultation and advocacy (Lusky & Hayes, 2001; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018), which requires a recognition of the practitioner’s privilege and a collaboration with client group.

Ratts and Greenleaf (2018) assert that counseling’s difficulty in becoming more social justice-oriented is its focus on intrapsychic theories to explain suffering, which fails to account for environmental and systemic causes. Their Counselor-Advocate-Scholar (CAS) model advocates for “non-conventional” interventions in counseling that move beyond the “four walls” of a therapy office in order to tackle these problems (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; p. 81).

In their preamble to the ACA Advocacy Competencies, Toporek and Daniels (2018) note that counseling’s advocacy emphasis can be traced to Frank Parsons, widely regarded as the father of vocational psychology. Attending to these conceptual overlaps in advocacy, consultation, and social justice, the ACA and National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2009) published the Minimum Competencies for Multicultural Career Counseling and Development. According to these competencies, a career practitioner must understand career theory and consultation practice from a multicultural and social justice perspective, with a recognition of how established career theories apply to various populations. While career theorists are perhaps slightly ahead in their emphasis on systems-level influences on individuals’ struggles (McMahon et al., 2008), career interventions are still taught and implemented at the individual level.

To reconcile this, scholars have recommended career counselors should work with local community groups to identify and deliver career services and engage in socio-political advocacy (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; McMahon et al., 2008). This is consistent with ACA’s calls to use advocacy work as a form of social justice and for counselors to grow in their knowledge of how systemic barriers affect client groups (ACA, 2015; Ratts et al., 2016; Toporek & Daniels, 2018) and the CAS model (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018).

Advocacy, consultation, and career counseling are all considered foundational counseling competencies, but there is often a disconnect in counseling training. Career counseling typically focuses on individual-level

interventions (Cook et al., 2005; McMahon et al., 2008; Sampson et al., 2011), and advocacy and consultation training are rarely conducted outside of a classroom setting. These practices contradict research showing that trainees' develop multiculturally when they engage with local community groups (Decker et al., 2016) and that exposure to social justice needs through community-based experiences leads to gains in social justice and advocacy competencies (Field et al., 2019). Such opportunities also increase student self-efficacy to engage in social justice work. For example, Sanabria and DeLorenzi (2019) found that a pre-practicum assignment on social justice advocacy for counselor education students led to student empowerment to engagement meaningfully in advocacy work. Thus, there is a clear opportunity for educators to merge these competencies into a single assignment for students to develop these skills sets and merge these competencies into their emerging counselor identities.

Arthur and McMahon (2005) recommend competencies for career counseling and social justice, including consultation with community organizations to develop effective career development interventions that are responsive to the communities involved. Consistent with these recommendations, graduate students in a Clinical Psychology masters' program were given a course assignment focusing on consultation to emphasize the systemic issues arising in career development and to model the importance of social justice and advocacy for practitioners.

The Career Counseling & Consultation Assignment

Before the semester, I (Stephanie Winkeljohn Black; S.W.B.) asked students to identify potential organizations and their leaders ('consultees') for this project based on their population interests. The final list of consultees included community groups (e.g., local LGBTQ, Latinx, and youth community centers) and on-campus groups (e.g., international students, student veterans, student disability services, etc.). At the beginning of the semester I (S.W.B.) formally taught the class various consultation models to orient students to the consultation assignment. I then taught traditional career counseling frameworks,² with an emphasis on how and/or whether each framework could be integrated with social justice and consultation principles. Students were assigned readings from Jackson and associates' (2013) text, "Career Development Interventions for Social Justice," an excellent example of how to merge social justice, consultation, and career theory across various populations (e.g., career decision-making workshop for first-generation college students; effective handling of racial microaggressions in the workplace) to showcase how these frameworks could be integrated. Chapters from Jackson et al. (2013) were assigned bi-weekly; whole-class discussions about each case example gave students the opportunity to process how career theory and social justice intertwine and reflect on how to apply such concepts to their own consultation project.

Students began their consultation projects in the beginning of the semester. Working in pairs, students were instructed to meet with their consultee organization to identify their needs related to career counseling. Students then proposed various interventions, which had to be grounded in career counseling theory, to the consultee and edited their interventions based on consultee feedback. Students maintained open communication with their consultee organization throughout this process. At the end of the semester, students presented the final intervention to the consultee. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final step happened over email for almost all student-consultee groups, as this class occurred during the spring 2020 semester.

The full narrative report assignment prompt, along with identified learning objectives, is available in Appendix A; an example of the final narrative report is in Appendix B. Each student pairing completed one final narrative report. The narrative reports were designed to encourage students to conceptualize their consultee

2 Career counseling theories covered in the class included Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), Holland (Holland, 1959), Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory (Super, 1980), Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2000), and the Psychology of Working theory (Blustein, 2019).

organizations and populations' career difficulties with systemic and environmental barriers in mind (e.g., access to resources, systemic discrimination), rather than explaining career difficulties with individual-level variables (e.g., lack of personal awareness or knowledge) and to use established career theories to explain environmental or systemic forces that affected their consultee groups, thereby integrating career theory knowledge and social justice/advocacy frameworks. Each individual student completed reflection prompts (Appendix C) at the beginning and end of the semester. The first reflection paper emphasized consultation skills and asked students to focus on how they conceptualized and built working relationships with their consultee organization, while the second reflection paper emphasized social justice frameworks and asked students to reflect on how their identities and work-related experiences impacted their work with the consultee organization.

Current Study

We used a multi-method, qualitative approach to evaluate how a pilot consultation assignment in a graduate-level career counseling class enhanced students' development of career counseling theory and application and social justice advocacy. We used Ratts and Greenleaf's (2018) descriptions of intrapsychic and environmental/systemic frameworks to determine whether students' responses were aligned with a social justice advocacy model. Data were students' (1) narrative reports, which allowed us to see whether students used a social justice orientation intertwined with career theory to conceptualize their consultee organization and its clients and (2) reflection papers about the consultation assignment, which allowed us to see how students evaluated their own biases, identities and experiences when establishing a working relationship with their consultee and developing interventions grounded in both career theory and social justice for the consultee's clients.

Method

Participants and Data Identification

Participants were graduate students (hereafter, 'students'; 11 females, 7 males) were enrolled in a career counseling course; all were in their second year of a master's program in clinical psychology at a small, public, mid-Atlantic university. Most students identified as white (for confidentiality reasons, further details are redacted), resulting in nine pairs working with nine consultee organizations. Because the data were collected as course assignments obtained through standard educational practices, IRB approval (Penn State University - Harrisburg) was obtained several months after the completion of the course to allow us to analyze the data. The instructor and coders' information is provided below ('Positionality').

Data Analysis

We used a multi-method qualitative approach to answer our research questions. The nature of the narrative reports (Appendix A) lent itself to coding reliability thematic analysis (TA; Braun & Clark, 2018; 2020; Joffe, 2012). The two reflection assignments, which were more open-ended and introspective, lent themselves to a reflexive TA approach (Braun et al., 2016; 2017; Braun & Clark, 2018). While both approaches are forms of TA, they rely on different assumptions when it comes to "procedure and underlying philosophy" (Braun & Clark, 2021, p. 333). For the sake of organization, we first discuss the approach to analyzing the narrative reports, then our approach to analyzing the reflection assignments. Then we discuss our positionality and steps we took to mitigate bias.

Coding Reliability Thematic Analysis: Narrative Report Assignments

Coding reliability TA is meant to maintain objectivity, with a codebook created using an established theory prior to analyzing the data (Braun & Clark, 2020). I (S.W.B.) developed a codebook to determine whether students had described consultee and client problems as intrapsychic or systemic based on Ratts and

Greenleaf's (2018) CAS model. The codebook involved rating the first two prompts in the narrative report (Appendix A), where responses that described the consultee and client problem as individual and proposed individual-level changes were coded as "1" (intrapsychic), responses that had a systemic or environmental focus were coded as "3" and those in between were coded as "2." (S.W.B.)

The co-authors (Zainab Akef; Z.A., and Centia Thomas; C.T.) then individually coded each of the nine narrative reports using the codebook, then the research team met to discuss how coding was approached. The coding manual was revised based on discrepancies in the initial round of coding, and codes were more clearly defined. Z.A. and C.T. then independently coded the data again. The coders agreed on 83.3% of the data (15 of 18 codes), which is considered acceptable (Saldaña, 2009). S.W.B. reviewed their codes and resolved any discrepancies.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis: Reflection Papers

Reflexive TA recognizes the subjectivity of qualitative analysis and assumes emerging themes will be intertwined with the researchers' values and experiences (Braun & Clark, 2020). It can be used inductively or deductively; in this case our approach was more deductive as there are established frameworks of social justice from which we designed our study and we wanted to see how students' reflections contained social justice advocacy ideas. While these frames did not constrain our reflexive, iterative approach to identifying themes, they almost certainly influenced our analyses. Greater details on our positionality are provided below.

First, we individually read the reflection assignments to orient ourselves to the data. We each took notes and reflected on how themes developed as we re-read the reflection papers, focusing on the first reflection paper (assigned at the beginning of the semester) and then the second (assigned at the end). It is very likely that our interpretations of data from the first reflection papers influenced our interpretations of the second reflection papers. However, given that each participant wrote both a first and second reflection paper, it was expected that they would describe similar ideas between their papers. Given the subjective stance of reflexive TA, interrater reliability was not calculated (Braun & Clark, 2020; McDonald et al, 2019). Instead, during our subsequent meeting about the data we shared and explored each other's interpretation of the data and settled on themes through our discussion.

Positionality.

To acknowledge, and therefore reduce, bias and assumptions in the analytic process, we discussed our identities and experiences that influenced our interpretations of the data. I (S.W.B.) am a 32-year-old, white, cis-woman and assistant professor of counseling psychology. I identify with feminist pedagogical, supervision, and psychotherapy theories and developed and taught the career counseling course. I (Z.A.) am a 23-year-old Arab cis-woman and a second-year graduate student in an Applied Clinical Psychology program. I (C.T.), am a 23-year-old African American cis-woman and a second-year graduate student in the Applied Clinical Psychology program. It was important to acknowledge the inherent power differential between S.W.B. and Z.A. and C.T., due to job and education differences; this topic arose explicitly during research team meetings. S.W.B. routinely encouraged the other study members to challenge her interpretations and strove to maintain an awareness of how she listened to their proposed themes. To further ensure trustworthiness, S.W.B. recognized her bias of hoping to find many social justice ideas in the reflection papers, as the creator of the assignment and course instructor, and therefore deferred to the other authors when developing social justice themes.

When we began analyzing the data, we (Z.A. and C.T.) had not yet taken a career counseling class. When we finished analyzing the data, we both had completed the career counseling class with a different instructor and different course design. We both describe ourselves as being social justice oriented in our studies and clinical work. During the coding reliability TA of the narrative reports, we discussed and bracketed identities

that aligned with the consultee organizations (e.g., Z.A. is an international student and one of the consultee groups was an international student support organization).

Results

Coding Reliability Thematic Analysis: Narrative Report Assignments

In response to the first prompt of the narrative report assignment, “Social Justice Needs: This section should summarize why your consultee and organization needs services,” seven of the nine participant pairs’ responses were coded as systemic/environmental and two were coded as intrapsychic/individual. Students identified systemic/environmental factors such as “low socioeconomic status,” “racial discrimination,” “perceived discrimination,” “cultural barriers,” and a “lack of institutional supports.” Intrapsychic/individual-level factors included “confusion, stress, and distress” without any notation of where these symptoms emerged and “although there are large [societal] consequences of work-related stress and anxiety, these feelings are experienced at the individual level.”

In response to the second prompt, “Theoretical Rationale: Use career theory(ies) to explain the current problem or need of your consultee and their organization”, four responses were coded as systemic/environmental, four were coded as intrapsychic/individual, and one was coded as both. Four of the participant pairs used one theory to conceptualize their consultee groups; the remaining five pairs used multiple theories (three used 2 theories, one used 3, and one used 4). Of the career theories reviewed in class, participant pairs most often cited Social Cognitive Career Theory; participant pairs used SCCT to conceptualize problems as both intrapsychic/internal (e.g., “self-efficacy”) and systemic/environmental (e.g., “available resources,” “feedback from the environment.”).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis: Reflection Papers

We divided our themes into two categories: Student Development and Course and Assignment Logistics. While we expected Student Development themes, we were surprised by the emergent Course and Assignment Logistics themes, as we did not expect to see so many participant responses on this topic. We felt it was important to code and report these as areas for improvement in future iterations of this assignment. This second category also addressed students’ obstacles due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which transitioned all courses online halfway through the semester.

Student Development

Five themes related to student development emerged from the data: (1) Navigating Privilege, (2) Navigating the Consultative Relationship, (3) Recognizing Client Needs, (4) Professional Self-Efficacy, and (5) Career Theory. The first four themes were present in both written assignments, while Career Theory as a theme appeared only in the second assignment.

Students reflected at the beginning and end of the semester on how their identities intersected with client identities; most often this involved a recognition of their own privilege, which included education level or status, racial or ethnic privilege, and gender privilege. All three coders agreed that the Navigating Privilege theme tended to transcend all other themes identified in the data, as students’ recognition of privilege tended to feed into their conceptualization of what careers should be promoted (e.g., “I assumed the clients would strive for the college life, I almost forgot that technical and military careers were viable options”), how to relate to the consultee organizations, and the process of recognizing client needs. In the first written assignment (where students wrote in pairs), one pair described an “awareness” of their privileged identities while meeting with the consultee for the first time, though also indicated they were not sure how to handle the discrepancy between their identity and their consultee and client identities:

“I think the elephant in the room is that I do not identify as LGBTQ+, and so while I am an advocate and do not consider myself to be uninformed with regard to these identities, I have also never lived with these identities and so cannot understand fully how that colors one’s experience.”

While students described how their identities related to consultee identities in the first assignment, deeper reflections on privilege emerged in the second reflection papers. Some noted they had made assumptions about what “career” means and corrected these as their projects unfolded: “I come from a privileged position with my identities and lived experience. Thus, I had to check my own experience and remain open to the validity of the students’ worldviews.” Further, students noted that their privilege sometimes made it difficult to connect to clients and the needs of the organization as easily. A white, cis-woman student working with a community organization for Latinx individuals described her meeting the consultee at their organization, “I remember talking to [my assignment partner] and telling her how out of place I felt. While I wouldn’t consider it a culture shock, I certainly felt displaced mainly because I was in the minority, the only white person there.” She went on to note that this racial/ethnic difference between her and the consultee and clients may have made clients “skeptical” of her, thereby recognizing that cultural differences can impact a developing consultative relationship.

Students were asked to describe the working relationship with their consultee across both assignments, leading to the theme of Navigating the Consultative Relationship. Students described varying levels of difficulty or ease in establishing agreed-upon goals with their consultee and how projects should be implemented. On the positive end, one student pair noted that their working relationship with their consultee was, “professional, respectful, and friendly.” Others noted their consultees were “understanding of boundaries” related to the class assignment and students’ time constraints. By contrast, some noted disconnects between the student and consultee’s expectations for the product, “we had difficulty setting boundaries with [our consultee], specifically in terms of implementing our product.” Others noted that their consultee seemed unprepared for the project, “our meeting was a little rocky at first as [our consultee] had forgotten we had a meeting with them and was not really familiar with the details of our project.”

Students also described an emotional dimension to their relationship with the consultee; these relationships tended to not change from the first paper to the second. That is, if a consultee was described as “wonderful” in the first paper, students continued to use positive terms to describe the relationship in the second paper (e.g., I feel extremely grateful, however, both for [the consultee’s] support of us and our project in the midst of his incredibly busy schedule”). More importantly, if students described a consultee as difficult to work with in the first paper, they often continued to do so in the second. For example, the student who struggled to set boundaries with their consultee regarding expectations for the final product explained, “I really enjoyed working with the organization but I am not sure I would recommend it for future classes due to constant miscommunication and unrealistic expectations from [our consultee].”

The third theme, Recognizing Client Needs, began as a general listing of client identities and backgrounds in the first paper and ended with more nuance in the second paper. For example, in the first paper, many students summarized clients’ career barriers and indicated that their understanding of client needs was taken directly from the consultee’s descriptions and expressed concerns. However, some students did note that their own personal experiences influenced their initial awareness of client needs. One student pair working with an on-campus organization for student-athletes noted, “We feel the relationship [with the consultee] was strengthened by our ability to identify with [being student athletes].” Others formulated plans to meet directly with the clients (when approved by the consultee), explicitly recognizing the importance of obtaining first-hand information. A student pair working with a community, you-based organization stated, “If we did not speak with [the clients], much of the [clients’ needs] would have been hearsay from the organization.”

In the second paper, students noted that after immersing themselves in empirical literature related to their consultee and client populations, and in some cases after meeting directly with the clients, they struggled to merge career and traditional, therapeutic interventions. One student noted of their work with an on-campus organization for students with disabilities, “However, as we discussed many of their lived experiences, it felt to me like there was a need for a more therapeutic rather than career-based intervention.” Another student, who implemented a process group on defining work and career for LGBTQ youth in the community noted, “It makes me wonder if there is a trauma informed career theory that is designed with the purpose of aiding individuals who have faced aversive experiences in finding and being comfortable in an occupation.” Similarly, their assignment partner noted, “There were times when [our group] started to feel like a group counseling session.”

The fourth theme, Professional Self-Efficacy, traced student perspectives on the feasibility of the assignment (e.g., their skill set, meeting consultee and client needs, etc.) from beginning to end. Students indicated initial hesitations regarding what they could contribute to the consultee’s organization and client population. One student working with an on-campus organization for students with disabilities stated, “I was honestly a little bit nervous about whether or not I would be able to create a project that my organization would like, one that would be useful, or even that connected to a career theory.” By the second paper, students spoke with increased self-efficacy about their work on the finished product. One student who worked with an on-campus organization for student athletes reflected on his development:

“I admit that I had anxiety and nerves about creating an actual product to present to a particular organization. Reflecting back on the completion of our project, this career consultation experience has been immensely rewarding, enjoyable, and meaningful for myself... I did struggle to conceptualize the project at first and was unable to visualize how best to implement some sort of... product... I am proud of the work we created, and I feel it does have many real-world benefits.”

Events that appeared to increase student efficacy were increased knowledge and awareness about their client population, learning by doing, and receiving support and encouragement from their consultee.

The final theme, Career Theory, emerged only in the second, final reflection paper. While students used career theory language throughout both assignments (e.g., “career barriers,” “career self-efficacy,” and “RIASEC”), students explicitly discussed a realization of the importance of career theory after completing their product (e.g., “our original product naturally changed and morphed in response to our understanding of career theory”). Many noted the need for a conceptual framework to guide career-based interventions:

“One area where I think [Partner] and I realized we had not fully conceptualized was near the start of the semester when we integrated career theory into our project. We later discussed how we had not realized that we had to integrate a career theory into our project conceptualization very early on in the Part 1 plan of our project, so we quickly met up to brainstorm in detail how career theory (SCCT [*author note: Social Cognitive Career Theory*]) integrated with our project. If we were to redo this project, integrating theory into it earlier is definitely one thing we would have done differently.”

There was some overlap here with the theme, Recognizing Client Needs, where students began to identify overlap between traditional psychotherapy interventions and career interventions, for example, the student pair that expressed curiosity about trauma-informed career theory (noted above in Recognizing Client Needs theme).

Course and Assignment Logistics

There were three themes related to course and assignment logistics: (1) Orientation to the Organization, (2) Consultees’ Feedback, and (3) COVID-Related Issues. The first theme, Orientation to the Organization,

emerged from the first paper where students were prompted to describe the consultee organization. We noticed that students had varying levels of success in obtaining information about the organization – and client’s needs – from their consultees. While some consultees were “very prepared” and “aware of what they needed from us,” as a student working with a community-based organization described, others noted that their consultants seemed unprepared (see above theme, Navigating the Consultative Relationship). Moreover, while some students indicated they had done some preparatory research on the organization prior to meeting with the consultee, others did not discuss any sort of preparation; potentially indicating a need for greater instructor guidance on how to initiate consultation.

The second theme, Consultees’ Feedback, emerged from a prompt from the second paper, where students were asked what feedback, they received from their consultee about the final product. Unfortunately, many students reported that they did not hear from their consultee at all (though this may have been due to COVID-related complications). The detail of consultee feedback varied, with some offering vague yet positive feedback and others giving more concrete responses. Concrete feedback from the consultees seemed to also increase students’ sense of self-efficacy (theme: Professional Self-Efficacy), as seen with a student working with a community organization that provides mentorship to at-risk adolescents, who reported:

“The delivery of our project validated our hard work and catalyzed some “feel good” emotions. I can say this for myself, because I felt competent in my skills to help others after [our consultee] gave us a resounding positive review...she ecstatically accepted the [product]. Then, she told us that the product was wonderful, and she loved the formatting.”

Finally, COVID-Related Issues reflected obstacles students faced as courses went online during March 2020 and there was a state-wide shut down for many organizations. Students noted that the delivery of their final product had to be changed to a virtual format (e.g., moving from “career box kits” for community adolescents containing stress balls, affirmation activities, and a career guide to an electronic career guide file). Students also noted that they lost consistent communication with their consultee (which may have also included consultee feedback). For example, one student working with an on-campus organization noted, ““Communication with our organization has been somewhat spotty most likely due to the situation surrounding COVID-19, but we did receive an e-mail thanking and appreciating us for our work.”

Discussion

Students in a graduate career counseling class completed a pilot consultation assignment which merged critical skills around of social justice advocacy and career knowledge of career counseling and consultation, two pillars of the counseling profession (e.g., ACA, 2015; Flores et al., 2014; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; Toporek & Daniels, 2018). We used coding reliability TA and reflexive TA to analyze students’ papers to observe developments in understanding career counseling theory and application and social justice advocacy. Given that the assignments were designed to encourage students to integrate social justice advocacy, career theory, and self-awareness of privilege and power, we had some expectations that students would demonstrate an integration of career theory and social justice, as Ratts and Greenleaf (2018) describe in their CAS model as conceptualizing individual problems with environmental and systemic origins.

Most students described their consultee and clients’ difficulties as stemming from environmental/systemic causes, reflecting a social justice advocacy stance (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). However, only half of the students integrated career theory and environmental/systemic issues into their proposed projects. Thus, while students were able to articulate problems as stemming from external causes, when asked to put these conceptualizations into practice with career theory they were less likely to do so. Many have noted that counseling theories focus on the individual, which deters counselors and counselors-in-training from becoming

more social justice oriented (e.g., McMahon et al., 2008; Sampson et al., 2011). It appears this remains the case with career counseling theories. SCCT was the most cited theory in the assignment; students discussed it in intrapsychic/individual and environmental/systemic frames. Butler (2012) has suggested that SCCT naturally lends itself to a social justice approach, as the theory focuses on environmental factors. More nuance may be needed when teaching this theory to explain who intrapsychic factors (e.g., self-efficacy) are influenced by external (e.g., role models) factors.

Identified student development themes from the reflection papers and reflexivity TA suggest that the pilot consultation assignment was successful in increasing students' awareness of their socio-cultural identities and how they related to their consultees' organization and clients, which is consistent with other qualitative investigations of social-justice oriented field work assignments (e.g., Field et al., 2019; Sanabria & deLorenzi, 2019). Students indicated that they recognized their privilege and how it shaped even the careers they wanted clients to aspire to. For some students, there was a nascent awareness of how their identities impacted their working relationship with their consultee and clients. These student insights can be furthered in future iterations of the assignment with explicit instruction and readings on working with marginalized communities, including the concepts of gatekeepers, building community trust, and so forth.

Alongside recognizing their privilege and how their identities related to the consultee and clients, students developed a more nuanced awareness of client needs as the semester progressed. By the end of the semester, some students had begun to note that client needs spanned career and traditional psychotherapy issues. Additional assignment prompts that ask students to deliberately integrate these, within a systems-level perspective, would help students tie together all of the concepts to which they were exposed during this project. Encouraging students to think more specifically about these issues over time could help them to develop a "personal advocacy style," (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001, p.395), which requires understanding the self's motivation for continuing to engage in difficult advocacy work despite barriers.

The students had a wide range of experiences navigating their consultative relationship, including both alignment on the goal of the consultation product and the bond between students and consultee. Some of the more difficult experiences may have been due to the usual difficulties of finding community partners who are responsive to the idea that these initiatives do involve students, who are still developing, something that others have noted when implementing similar course projects (e.g., Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019). However, the spirit of social justice work indicates that the work of forming committed and open relationships with a community group falls on the consultants. Providing the students with frameworks for building relationships with a consultee within a social justice orientation could offer clarification and guidance on how to proceed in maintaining these relationships (e.g., Flores et al., 2014).

Students developed a sense of self-efficacy alongside a recognition for the utility of career counseling theories. As students realized that their consultation products directly aided many consultees with career-related goals for their organization, they also articulated greater understanding for why career theories matter. As students became more confident and empowered to develop quality products for their consultees, they also became more confident in naming and conceptualizing systemic career barriers with appropriate theory and intervention. Increased self-efficacy could lead to greater likelihood to advocate in future counseling jobs (Crook et al., 2015). Students in the career counseling class already had experience conducting psychotherapy and had completed ethics, multicultural competencies, and psychotherapy theories and techniques courses. Thus, it is likely that the gains students were able to make in this class and with this project were due to pre-existing experiences and knowledge related to counseling skills and these gains should be considered within its sequential curriculum.

Themes related to course and assignment logistics provide insight on specific areas for growth in developing this assignment. This pilot ran during the spring 2020 semester, during which COVID-19 became a

global pandemic and many universities moved to virtual instruction. Identifying COVID-19 related obstacles as a logistic theme helps clarify what logistical issues may have been specific to a unique situation rather than logistical issues that need to be addressed prior to assigning the project again. Remaining logistical issues to be addressed include assisting students in preparing for their initial consultation meeting and obtaining consultee feedback in a systematic manner. While some formal instruction was given at the beginning and during the semester on consultation, selecting a consultative framework and using it consistently throughout the semester may prove more effective (e.g., Falender & Shafranske, 2020). Finally, it was difficult to obtain consistent feedback from the consultees, as the instructor, students, and consultees were all developing their expectations for the partnerships as they progressed. I (S.W.B.) plan to introduce a consistent method for consultees to provide feedback about the students and incorporate this method (e.g., an evaluation/rating form) into the assignment and how the assignment is introduced to potential consultees.

While this novel course assignment and availability of data to analyze student development has its strengths, the assignment and analyses should be considered in the context of their limitations. They are summarized here:

1. Instructors should consider teaching specific consultative frameworks throughout the semester so that students have greater guidance when establishing their consultative relationships (Falender & Shafranske, 2020).
2. Instructors should consider including instruction and readings on developing and maintaining consultative relationships, including approaches to repairing ruptures, from a social justice perspective (Flores et al., 2014).
3. Instructors should consider more explicit reflection assignment prompts, and more frequently during the semester, to encourage students to tie various competencies together, to other counseling knowledge (e.g., psychotherapy), and to personal values (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Encouraging students to identify overlap in traditional psychotherapy interventions and career interventions could help them to recognize that career counseling can be integrated across therapy and consultation modalities.
4. Instructors should develop an evaluation form that consultees will complete to provide feedback to the students. This allows students to receive direct, specific feedback and signals to the student's specific behavioral markers they should meet when working with the consultee and organization.

Methodological limitations include the limited generalizability of a small, racially homogenous sample and single pilot. Data analyses were in part driven by pre-existing course assignment prompts, rather than established *a priori* research questions. Future iterations of this assignment should include consideration of research questions at the beginning so that these questions can be integrated into the assignments. Adding in quantitative, survey-based measures in future semesters, to track pre/post changes in students' self-reported efficacy with career interventions, social justice, and consultation would also be useful.

As others have noted, calls to integrate social justice advocacy into counseling are not new (e.g., ACA, 2009; Cook et al., 2005; McMahon et al., 2008; Sampson et al., 2011). Data from the pilot assignment described above suggest that students develop an increased awareness of and self-efficacy for acting on social justice issues, particularly their own privilege, career counseling, and consultation when asked to address these issues in real-world settings. Programs and instructors can merge core counseling competencies into applied, long-term assignments to assist students in developing their professional identities as social justice-oriented counselors.

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Appendix A

Career Consultation Assignment

Learning Objectives

1. To understand and apply the major theories of career development and decision making to real-world population.
2. To develop knowledge and self-efficacy as a consultant to a community or campus organization and their clients.
3. To understand how systemic forces and social justice issues (i.e., oppression, barriers, discrimination) affect real-world communities and their career development.

Assignment Requirements

1. Your **final product** is what you deliver to your consultee and their organization, and therefore it will be graded on appearance in addition to content.
2. You will submit a **narrative report**, with your partner, which will mirror the structure of Jackson and associate's (2013) text:
 1. Social Justice Needs:* This section should summarize why your consultee and organization needs services, with references to peer-reviewed literature on the population in question.
 2. Theoretical Rationale:* Use career theory(ies) to explain the current problem or need of your consultee and their organization. Use this (these) career theory(ies) to guide the development of the product you will deliver to the organization.
 1. For example, if you use Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory to conceptualize the organization's needs and will be providing information in a pamphlet, how will provided information align with Super's theory to promote change?)
 3. Resources Needed: What technology or other equipment will you need to develop your product?
 4. Plan for Delivering Your Product & Expected Outcomes: How will you deliver your final product (e.g., In person? Electronically?) How do you expect this product will positively assist the organization or the clients associated with the organization?
 1. *Note:* Students are not expected to measure outcomes of their product.
 5. Product: Please provide an electronic or paper copy of your final product.
 6. Appendix and References

Note. *Coded in coding reliability TA analyses.

Appendix B

Example Assignment

Note. The name of the consultee organization has been redacted for confidentiality purposes. We would like to thank Ingrid Morales-Ramirez, M.A., and Chelsea Hoffman, M.A., for agreeing to share their responses to the narrative report, prompts 1 and 2, here.

Social Justice Needs: Latinx Adolescents

The population we are working with are Latinx high school students who come from a low-socioeconomic status and whose primary language is Spanish.

Research has shown that Latinx adolescences experience multiple barriers such as lack of financial and language resources, negative peer influences, and discrimination from teachers, peers, and even within their own families (McWhirter et al., 2013). According to Rodriguez et al. (2015), Latinx individuals face many barriers on their way to obtaining a college degree. These barriers include the need for immediate financial stability, which may result in obtaining a job out of high school rather than pursuing further education. Other barriers include an overall lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of obtaining a college degree, how to financially plan for college, lack of guidance on how to obtain a college degree, and lower expectations on the Latinx population.

Literature substantiates that Latinx adolescences, in particular high school students, need guidance in pursuing higher education. In the booklet, we hope to deliver guidance on how to prepare for college during high school, how to apply for college (i.e., filling out essays, obtaining the necessary materials such as recommendation letters, taking the SAT, etc.), and how to obtain financial aid. In addition, the booklet includes information on mentorship and information for undocumented students. Our goal was to address as many information-based barriers as possible in order to assist these students in the best way possible. Furthermore, the booklet is translated in Spanish to diminish the language barrier that exists for these students (McWhirter et al., 2013).

Theoretical rationale: Gottfredson, Super, & Social Cognitive Career Theory

Gottfredson's career development theory of circumscription and compromise aligns with pamphlet objectives. Circumscription is the process of ruling out careers as we develop our self-concept (Gottfredson, 1996). The first aim of the pamphlet is to achieve circumscription by assisting the students in developing their self-concept (i.e., the way they view themselves) with the information provided in the college-prep pamphlet. By researching colleges, majors, and careers with the resources given to them will result in the students screening out jobs that don't align with their self-concept and choose careers that better suit them.

A second aim of the pamphlet is to limit the extent to which a student compromises and add to their cognitive career maps. Compromise is the process of adjusting parts of their self-concept with careers that are available (Gottfredson, 1996). However, compromise is challenging for Latinx adolescents, given the economic and educational barriers they encounter. Hence, compromise occurs daily for these students due to a lack of resources.

This assumption also ties into Gottfredson's theory relating to the development of cognitive maps. Gottfredson argues that cognitive maps (i.e., schemas) for attainable careers are built on what is seen in a person's environment. Given the difficulties that the Latinx community face (i.e., low socioeconomic status, lack of resources), the college-prep pamphlet serves as a tool to combat these barriers by expanding the students' knowledge on opportunities available to them outside their immediate environment and limiting the compromise by adding resources they can use in their educational and social capital.

One assumption of Super's career development theory posits that career pattern is determined by a person's mental ability, socioeconomic status, skills, education, personality, and career maturity. Career maturity is an adolescent's decision-making ability, relevant to same-aged peers (Savickas, 1999). Further, career maturity is culture-laden, as it is affected by language barriers, socioeconomic status, and accessibility to resources. A majority of the Latinx students in the LISTO program face these cultural barriers. For instance, most of the students come from households with a low-socioeconomic status, which can negatively affect their education (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). Hence, because of the minimal allocation of funding for public schools, as well as their restricted skill set, career maturity will be limited due to their environmental circumstances and shortage of resources. In addition, some students have difficulty speaking and understanding English, which harms their career maturity. According to Super, if their career maturity is jeopardized, then their success is also jeopardized.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) centers on how academic and career interests manifest, how choices are made, and how success is achieved. Furthermore, contextual background variables- such as gender, ethnicity, social support, environment, perceived barriers- influence career choice and higher educational achievement (Manzano-Sanchez et al., 2019). Many adolescents within the Latinx community experience contextual background variables that influence their career and academic choices, which hinders their success. Research denotes that the most concerning barrier Latinx students face are a lack of financial resources and poor career guidance (Schneider et al., 2006). In a similar vein, Latinx students are the least likely to take college entrance examinations and apply to college (Schneider et al., 2006). These barriers partially explain why Latinx students have the lowest rates of college attendance (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2012). Given that this population faces many obstacles, it was important that this college-prep pamphlet offered a solution to some of these barriers in order to support the students.

In addition, a facet of SCCT is grounded in social learning theory (e.g., vicarious learning). To help the students develop career interests and choose an appropriate academic path, the students in the LISTO program are matched with mentors who have careers that match the students' career interests. Through continued activity exposure, practice, and feedback with the mentor, the students refine their skills, form a sense of their efficacy in particular tasks, and acquire certain expectations about the outcomes of activity engagement. To further support the students in understanding the purpose and expectation of mentorship, the college-prep pamphlet includes information with a focus on mentoring.

The booklet relies on change mechanisms from each of the three career theories. Overall, the main goal of the booklet is to provide psychoeducation and resources to support Latinx adolescents to reach their career and academic goals. Through the mentoring process, students will develop self-efficacy and a better understanding of outcome expectations relating to their career of interest. Finally, the booklet instills hope that achieving their goal in higher education is feasible.

Appendix C

Question Prompts for Students' Reflection Papers

1. Reflection Paper 1 (beginning of semester)
 - a. Briefly describe your meeting with the organization.
 - b. Discuss the process of identifying the organization's need. What sorts of things did you discuss (location, type of skill or information needed, type of delivery, target group)? What, if anything, was difficult about obtaining this information?
 - c. Describe the nature of your working relationship you established with the organization.
 - d. What is your plan for this project? Be as specific as possible in what sort of product you will deliver to this organization.
2. Reflection Paper 2 (end of semester)
 - a. Describe the delivery of your product to the organization. What feedback did you receive?
 - b. What would you do differently, if anything?
 - c. Do you conceptualize work differently than your organization does?
 - d. How did your work experience or your identities affect your approach to this project?