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Cover Page Footnote

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Social Justice Advocacy Training: An Innovative Certificate Program for Counselor Education

Katherine A. Feather, Tiffany M. Bordonada, Kimberly A. Nelson, Kathy M. Evans

■ The authors outline an innovative certificate program that promotes the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (MSJCC; Ratts, Singh, Massar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015) and discuss how counselor education programs can commit to a social justice approach. In addition, the authors provide a detailed summary of the certificate program that requires counselors-in-training to move beyond a multicultural understanding of diverse cultural worldviews so they commit to becoming social change agents and take action on issues of equality and justice. Limitations and implications for counselor educators are presented.

Keywords: social justice, advocacy, certificate program, counselor education

Leaders in the field have promoted specific multicultural counseling competencies (MCC) that have been adopted in professional training standards in counseling and higher education (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The value of training culturally competent counselors, which has been empirically validated, supports the notion that a counselor's cultural competence is essential in meeting the needs of culturally diverse clients (Chao, 2013; Ivers, Johnson, Clarke, Newsome, & Berry, 2016; Ivers & Villalba, 2015; Johnson & Williams, 2015; Rogers-Sirin, Melendez, Refano, & Zegarra, 2015). In fact, the American Counseling Association's (ACA; 2014) *Code of Ethics* specifically states that "whereas multicultural counsel-

ing competency is required across all counseling specialties, counselors gain knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, dispositions, and skills pertinent to being a culturally competent counselor in working with a diverse client population" (p. 8). Furthermore, the leading accrediting board for counseling, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2015), requires counselor education programs to commit to and integrate diversity training into their curricula.

Characteristically, MCC is a multifaceted process (Barden & Greene, 2015) that may be developed during one's pre- and post-educational training (Collins, Arthur, Brown, & Kennedy,

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2015). The counseling literature recognizes that forms of injustice and institutionalized “-isms” (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and ableism) impact the clients we serve and that it is essential for counselors to foster a social justice orientation (Chan, Cor & Band, 2018) and address identity, marginalization, and privilege (Ratts, 2017). Thus, Ratts, Singh, Massar-McMillan, Butler, and McCullough (2015) revised and operationalized MCC to include social justice competencies (i.e., multicultural and social justice counseling competencies [MSJCC]), which the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development and the ACA have endorsed.

Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies

Ratts, Singh, Massar-McMillan, Butler, and McCullough (2016) aimed to be reflective of the lifelong process of counselor development and summarized the aspirational and developmental competencies. The authors maintained the original multicultural competencies: awareness, knowledge, and skill. However, they added a fourth developmental competency, *action*, which they believed generates the highest influence on counseling interventions with clients (i.e., out-of-office-based social justice advocacy counseling). Advocacy was integrated into the MSJCC framework as a necessary aspect of multicultural and social justice competence (Ratts et al., 2016; Steele, 2008). In addition, MSJCC addresses clients’ and counselors’ intersecting identities and the marginalized and privilege statuses present in the helping space (Ratts et al., 2016).

The timely revision of MCC speaks to the expanding role of professional counselors to include social justice advocacy (Ratts et al., 2016). Vera and Speight (2003) affirmed that multiculturalism is founded in social justice and the existence of systemic “-isms” within our society. Chang, Crethar, and Ratts (2010) emphasized that both social justice and advocacy are essential for helping clients attain

optimal psychological health and well-being. Counselor educators have called for social justice-based education programs for decades (Lewis & Lewis, 1971), and researchers continue to encourage counselor education programs to integrate social justice and advocacy content (Chan et al., 2018; Ratts, 2017; Ratts & Wood, 2011). Furthermore, scholars have called for innovative teaching strategies that incorporate social justice into pedagogical practices to increase counselor preparation (Odegard & Vereen, 2010; Steele, 2008). However, traditional counseling programs have not adequately prepared and developed counselors’ competencies in the areas of social justice and advocacy (Bemak & Chung, 2011; Ratts, 2017). Therefore, counselor education programs may want to consider addressing advocacy and social justice concepts in counselor training curricula (Nilsson & Schmidt, 2005; Odegard & Vereen, 2010).

Social Justice Advocacy

Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, and Bryant (2007) defined social justice as follows:

[It] reflects a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment of marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share equal power in society because of their immigration, racial, ethnic, age, socioeconomic, religious heritage, physical ability, or sexual orientation status groups. (p. 24)

Based on Freire’s (1974) work, critical pedagogy is seen as a praxis-oriented educational movement that fosters an emphasis on change and a deep examination of the legitimacy of the social order in terms of access to socioeconomic resources and opportunities (i.e., social justice). The philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy coincide with multicultural and social justice advocacy education, and embracing a critical approach helps frame the role of counselor educators and supervisors, increases the

theoretical foundation of training culturally competent counselors, and promotes a critical consciousness in students by having them explore the dynamics of privilege and oppression (Manis, 2012; Ratts & Wood, 2011). To enact social justice advocacy in the classroom, counselor educators must start by knowing their students, i.e., the classroom environment needs to be shaped by the students and their learning styles (Brenig, 2016). Furthermore, students need to understand that multicultural and social justice advocacy classes are not lecture-based; multicultural and social justice advocacy education includes experiential activities (e.g., role-plays, case studies, guest lectures, group work, going outside the classroom), creative and reflective writing exercises, and activities to unpack the production of knowledge. Critical pedagogical strategies are warranted to raise the status of instruction and advance the standards of the profession.

Many researchers have supported the idea of “infusing” (Green, McCollum, & Hays, 2008, p. 14) and “incorporating” (Constantine et al., 2007 p. 24; Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 256) the social justice perspective into the counseling curriculum. However, there continues to be a limited number of published pedagogical approaches that counselor educators can reference to develop students’ MSJCC as related to social justice advocacy (Ratts, 2017; Ratts et al., 2016; Ratts & Wood, 2011; Steele, 2008). Thus, promoting “free-standing courses” is essential (Constantine et al., 2007, p. 28) due to the limitations of the single-course approach (i.e., a multicultural counseling class). One limitation is the amount of information that must be covered in a multicultural counseling course and the inadequate space available to discuss social justice advocacy. Collins et al. (2015) emphasized the need for a reliable, clear integration of social justice theory and practice to guarantee that students master the complex skills and competencies of social justice advocacy. Furthermore, to enhance learning, Manis (2012) stressed the importance of the developmental nature of a critical consciousness; students must be passionate about what they are advocating for to see how it

impacts the lives of their clients and possibly even themselves. When developing CITs’ competencies, counselor educators must consider the developmental level of each student, the extent of students’ engagement in the course material, students’ experience with culture and salient cultural identities, and how students interpret multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (Chan et al., 2018). Thus, a certificate program focusing exclusively on a transformative approach that mirrors the reality of the profession, allowing CITs to become vehicles of social change (Ratts & Wood, 2011).

Social Justice Advocacy Certificate

By definition, a certificate program is a cluster of courses on a particular subject (Johnson, Yuksel-turk, & Top, 2014). Research has shown certificate programs are becoming increasingly important because they emphasize skill development as well as conceptual and attitudinal change (Ginns, Kitay, & Prosser, 2008). The number of certificate programs is growing, and alumni have reported positive outcomes by enrolling in these programs (Johnson et al., 2014). Johnson et al. also found that the greatest benefit of certificate programs was the increase in alumni’s knowledge, skills, and professional confidence. To enhance the social justice perspective within the field of counseling, a certificate program is warranted. More recently, Counselors for Social Justice, a division of ACA, put out a call for a taskforce to develop and operationalize the social justice competencies through a training certificate program (L. Stretch, personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Through the innovative social justice advocacy certificate program, we organized six courses designed to be collaborative and transformative that can be easily infused into counselor training curricula. The first course, Multicultural Counseling, is typically part of counselor education programs’ programs of study; thus, it did not need to be added. The remaining courses were developed based on recommendations

from leaders in the field (Chan et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2010; Green et al., 2008; Ratts, 2017; Ratts & Wood, 2011; Vera & Speight, 2003). Overall, the six courses are devoted to increasing students' MSJCC and advocacy competencies (Toporek & Daniels, 2018). The sequential courses are as follows: (a) Counseling Diverse Populations; (b) Approaches to Multicultural Counseling and Theory (c) Power, Privilege, and Oppression; (d) Introduction to Social Justice Advocacy; (e) Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action; and (f) Practicum in Social Justice Advocacy. We propose this sequencing of the courses due to the developmental nature of MSJCC and advocacy competencies. In theory, by providing students a framework to explore their attitudes, biases, knowledge, and skills and allowing them to engage in action, MSJCC will cyclically develop. All six courses are three credit hours to meet the 18-credit-hour standard for a certificate program. However, we recognize some colleges and universities have different academic credit systems and requirements for how many credits it takes to establish a certificate program. Therefore, we recommend counselor educators use the proposed courses as a reference when building the certificate program.

The six courses encompass the MSJCC as well as the advocacy competencies to train and empower students to work against oppression with clients, collaborate with the community, exert systems-change leadership, and influence social and political action. As Constantine et al. (2007) emphasized, "Service-learning training program[s] can provide students with a practical understanding of large-scale societal inequalities, along with mechanisms by which they can intervene to effect change" (p. 27). Accordingly, the courses demand that CITs move beyond a multicultural understanding of diverse cultural worldviews so they may become social change agents and take action on issues of equality and justice.

Courses

For each course, we have outlined and provided a rationale as well as a course description, course objectives, recommended textbook(s), and thought-provoking assignments (Appendix A); supplemental readings are provided in Appendix B. The summary mirrors the syllabus for the course, and we encourage counselor educators to utilize the information as a basic outline. Many of the assignments cover real-world, social justice experiences that counselor education programs may want to include to enhance students' MSJCC and the advocacy competencies (Constantine et al., 2007; Dixon, Thicker, & Clark, 2010; Ratts, Toporek & Lewis, 2010). Increasing cross-cultural competencies is never the same for each student, and rarely is the process linear and rational since each student carries their own lived experiences (Heppner, 2017). Therefore, we recommend that counselor educators utilize a critical pedagogical approach that not only develops students' critical consciousnesses but also enhances transformative learning practices. Overall, the certificate program aims to educate counselors and CITs on viewing their clients from a holistic approach and to move the students beyond an intellectual understanding of social justice to become action-oriented advocates and change agents (Bemak & Chung, 2011).

Counseling Diverse Populations. Counseling Diverse Populations focuses on specific populations, such as Jewish Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, African Americans, women, LGBTQI+ persons, Indigenous Americans, multiracial individuals, Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, immigrants, refugees, older persons, persons with disabilities, and persons with low socioeconomic statuses. The course, which offers an introduction to the theory and practice of counseling members of diverse populations, is designed to assist students in developing MSJCC with these specific populations. At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to (a) discuss the nature of oppression of all diverse groups and (b) develop strategies to address

the needs of all populations through the role of being a change agent and social advocate. It is important to provide CITs with a course that specifically focuses on these diverse groups due to the shared experiences of oppression as well as the characteristics unique to each group.

We recommend the textbooks *Multicultural Issues in Counseling* by Lee (2018) or *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* by Sue and Sue (2019), which provide readers with specific information on diverse client groups in a variety of settings and offer suggestions and techniques for adequately addressing the needs of marginalized populations in a culturally responsive counseling session. These comprehensive textbooks include current research and multicultural theory, and they encourage students to examine internalized racism. We also suggest assigning supplemental readings throughout the semester (see Appendix B).

In addition, we propose several experiential activities to further students' transformational learning. Throughout the semester, the instructor can organize instructor-led immersion field experiences (ILIFE), which allow students and the instructor to engage with a specific oppressed cultural group outside the classroom. The instructor can be there in real time to talk with students as well as the diverse cultural group to make connections and address social concerns impacting the group. Furthermore, the instructor can link theory with the lived experiences of the cultural group and debrief students after the experience to help them further process the immersion experience.

We also recommend specific in-class experiential learning experiences in which the instructor focuses on a marginalized group. For example, the instructor can engage in a disability-related simulation. Such a simulation is a learning tool used to develop students' awareness and knowledge, increase their tolerance for ambiguity, and allow them to develop empathy for individuals with disabilities (Burgstahler & Doe, 2014). Counselor educators need to consider

ethics when engaging students in experiential teaching strategies and should discuss and process the disability-related simulation with students (Morrisette & Gadbois, 2006). Another experiential learning activity we suggest involves inviting a panel consisting of members of a diverse population (e.g., LGBTQ+ persons, multiracial persons) to talk to students and give students the opportunity to listen and ask questions. This activity can also be turned into a writing assignment. For example, students can be asked to prepare three questions before the panel discussion to ensure a rich conversation. Afterwards, students can be assigned a journal reflection in which they fully reflect on the experience, e.g., what they learned, what piqued their curiosity, and what personal reactions they experienced. In addition, instructors can enhance the experience by assigning a literature review covering the diverse population addressed. Students could also be asked to discuss how the literature coincides with the panel discussion and if they see a gap in the literature. Lastly, we encourage instructors to assign a group presentation at the end of the semester to give students an opportunity to showcase MSJCC on a marginalized population they are interested in, focusing on issues of privilege and oppression as well as counseling knowledge and skills relevant to that population. Instructors should consider having the presenters facilitate a group activity that brings to life the educational material discussed throughout the semester. In addition, the presenters may want to consider providing the class relevant resources and future actions for their population.

Approaches to Multicultural Counseling and Theory. Building on the initial multicultural counseling course, the Approaches to Multicultural Counseling and Theory class offers students an opportunity to deeply examine counseling theories that address oppression and institutionalized “-isms” and develop their own multicultural counseling theoretical orientations. The objectives of the course are to (a) enhance students' understanding of multicultural theories and how traditional counseling theories have

culture-bound limitations, (b) broaden the helping roles and expand the range of culturally appropriate and system intervention strategies, and (c) develop students' personal counseling theories. Promoting a multicultural standpoint will later contribute to the enhancement of a social justice advocacy perspective (Manis, 2012) and MSJCC. Thus, this course will assist students in their quests to become culturally competent counselors by fostering a multicultural theoretical orientation and adopting a sociopolitical perspective in counseling.

To enhance the goals and objectives of the course, we suggest counselor educators use *A Theory of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy* by Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen (1996). Though dated, to our knowledge the book is the only one that presents the first multicultural counseling theory (MCT), allowing counselors and CITs to gain a deeper sense of how to conceptualize clients in a theoretically integrative manner. We also suggest several supplemental readings throughout the semester (see Appendix B). Ultimately, MCT is a helpful framework for understanding effective counseling practices with people from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives. In addition, students should read about and discuss other theoretical frameworks (e.g., feminist therapy, relational-cultural theory) that contribute to the knowledge and understanding of regarding intersectionality, disempowerment, and oppression.

To further students' understanding of MCT, we recommend that students engage in weekly role-plays in which they practice MCT and other multicultural frameworks so the theories come to life. Through role-plays, students raise their consciousness and develop critical thinking in relation to working with diverse populations (Collins et al., 2015). In addition, at the end of the semester, we suggest assigning a paper in which students have an opportunity to reflect on their personal counseling theories and discuss how they plan to integrate MCT into practice. Through this written assignment, students are challenged to de-

scribe the paradigm shift and how they will transcend culture-bound theoretical orientations. By understanding their self-authored positions and integrating MCT into their approaches, students can apply values tied to diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. Having a comprehensive, multidimensional understanding of multicultural counseling, diverse populations, and theories of multiculturalism will ultimately enhance students' MSJCC.

Power, Privilege, and Oppression. To understand power, privilege, and oppression, CITs must recognize their multiple cultural groups and identities so they can potentially experience privilege and oppression simultaneously (Chan et al., 2018). In this course, CITs will define and address privilege, voice an understanding of oppression and oppressive experiences (e.g., micro- versus macro-level perspectives), and discuss the intersection of privilege and oppression (Estrada, Poulsen, Cannon, & Wiggins, 2013). Furthermore, students will be introduced to the intersectionality framework, in which they move beyond simplistic silos of cultural identities by exploring interconnecting identity processes that can generate social action (Chan et al., 2018). Therefore, the objectives of the course include (a) understanding the link between one's cultural identities, marginalization, and privilege (Ratts, 2017); and (b) voicing an understanding of institutionalized "-isms," collective disenfranchisement (i.e., oppression), and the intersectionality framework.

We recommend the textbook *Privilege, Power, and Difference* by Johnson (2018). The book assists students in examining systems of privilege and differences in society and their connections to power and privilege. We also offer several supplemental readings to enhance the knowledge in the course (see Appendix B).

One assignment in this course involves teaching students how to use the MSJCC-Assessment Form (Ratts, 2017). CITs learn to chart counselor and client identities, understand marginalized and privilege

statuses, and frame interventions around the MSJCC sociological model (see Ratts et al. [2015] for a visual depiction of the model). Another critical assignment involves having students practice how to broach the subject of differences (e.g., race, ethnicity), which empirically strengthens the therapeutic relationship (Day-Vines et al., 2007). Acknowledging racial and cultural factors allows CITs to build rapport, offer a safe space, and invite open communication around diversity (Day-Vines et al., 2007). The two experiential in-class activities we recommend are the invisible knapsack activity by McIntosh (1988), which highlights the invisible nature of privilege itself, and the token activity, which fosters an awareness of power and disempowerment in counseling relationships (Patrick & Connolly, 2009).

Introduction to Social Justice Advocacy.

The Introduction to Social Justice course is a valuable part of the certification program because it introduces students to the theories and models of social justice, advocacy, and leadership. The purpose this course is to support students' development into well-rounded counselors who can properly attend to the holistic needs of their diverse clientele (Bemak & Chung, 2011). In addition, it is imperative to encourage students to move from understanding differences to considering oppression and how to effectively combat it. Due to collective disenfranchisement and institutionalized "-isms," it is necessary for counselors and CITs to be equipped with not only multicultural theories but also theories, models, and applicable teachings of advocacy and social justice (Ratts & Wood, 2011). Hence, the objectives of the course are to (a) bring awareness to and deepen students' understanding of social justice advocacy from the micro to the macro level and (b) develop clearer identities as social justice advocates.

Students enrolled in the social justice course will focus on MSJCC, the recognition of culture, and the impact culture has on clients. Therefore, the goal of the course is to assist students in the continuing

development of the MSJCC and advocacy skills necessary to address social injustices in schools, agencies, and communities. More specifically, students will engage in practical learning and experiential activities designed to help them bridge the gap between theory and application, thus prompting transformational learning. To foster the learning objectives, we recommend *Social Justice Counseling: The Next Steps beyond Multiculturalism in Application, Theory, and Practice* (Chi-Ring & Bemak, 2012). This textbook addresses issues of social class, race, ethnicity, and other important issues that will enhance students' understanding of multicultural social justice counseling. We also suggest several supplemental readings throughout the semester (see Appendix B).

Numerous assignments exist that counselor educators can utilize in a social justice class; however, we recommend three process-oriented activities that enhance MSJCC and bridge the gap between theory and application (Collins et al., 2015; Vera & Speight, 2003). One assignment involves a weekly reflection journal that offers a space for students to self-reflect, self-evaluate, and react to the material (Steele, 2008), which exemplifies the MSJCC developmental domain of self-awareness. The second assignment involves writing a paper titled "Understanding Myself as an Advocate." This paper allows students to reflect on why they decided to accept the challenge of becoming an advocate and to apply theoretical constructs and ACA advocacy competencies (2018) to the understanding of self. In addition, it is important for counselor educators to encourage students to select a social justice issue the students experienced personally so they can bridge their intellectual understanding to their emotional understanding (i.e., transformational learning). The last assignment is an immersion activity, which is a practical, experiential learning activity designed to connect theory and application (Dixon et al., 2010; Green et al., 2008; Manis, 2012). Immersion activities provide CITs an opportunity to have direct contact with diverse individuals and communities (Manis, 2012). We would also want students to reflect

on the experience to gain a deeper understanding of social justice advocacy and consider how, if at all, the experience was different from the Counseling Diverse Populations course.

Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action. The Advanced Social Justice in Action course is a valuable part of the certificate program because it offers CITs the opportunity to examine their roles as change agents, leaders, and advocates at the community level (Bemak & Chung, 2011). Moreover, the course will address systematic barriers and challenges that prevent effective leadership on social justice and advocacy issues in organizational settings (Ratts & Wood, 2011). The objectives of this course are to (a) assist students with developing a better understanding of social justice advocacy and (b) demonstrate the appropriate multilevel interventions that address systemic issues and require counselors to work inside as well as outside the office environment (Ratts, 2017; Ratts et al., 2010).

To enhance the course objectives, we recommend either *Promoting Community Change: Making it Happen in the Real World* (Homen, 2016) or *Counseling for Multiculturalism and Social Justice: Integration, Theory, and Application* (Ratts & Pederson, 2014). Both texts promote practical strategies that can promote MSJCC and provide readers the skills and information they need to improve the lives of individual clients and entire communities. We also suggest several supplemental readings throughout the semester (see Appendix B).

Students enrolled in this course will understand what it means to be a social justice advocate by reflecting on their own cultural backgrounds, biases, values, and beliefs in small-group discussions and reflective writing assignments; students also further explore how they have been impacted by advocates in their own lives. This course also provides a platform for students to create a semester-long community-driven action plan implemented outside the classroom during

the practicum course. In this assignment, students will be paired with peers who have similar interests to create and implement a group action plan in response to a societal issue or underserved population. The goal of the group action plan is to challenge students through the actualization of dismantling systems of oppression based on self-conceptions, personal social identities, and the social identities of other people. The written plan will include (a) an objective, (b) a summary of the population or societal concern, (c) strategies to achieve goals, (d) a discussion of how the counseling profession should respond to the societal issue or oppressed group, and (e) potential outcomes or benefits. For this assignment, Bemak and Chung (2011) recommended that instructors encourage ongoing reflection and self-assessment so the learner's reality is a result of individual and social experiences. Thus, as counselors and CITs engage in developing a better understanding of social justice advocacy through individual reflection and practice, they obtain the skills and confidence necessary to advocate for those who live at the margins of society.

Practicum in Social Justice Advocacy. A practicum, which consists of supervised experiences designed to enhance the professional skills of students in counseling programs, is typically the first opportunity for students to gain experience in a professional setting (Pitts, 1992; Trepal, Bailie, & Leeth, 2010). Counselor educators and students have reported that the practicum experience was the most important part of their education and that they feel they gained the most knowledge during these experiences (Daresh, 1990; Ryan, Toohey, & Huges, 1996). In addition, leaders in the field of MSJCC have called for active involvement in social justice advocacy through field-based experiences in the community (Bemak & Chung, 2011; Collins et al., 2015; Constantine et al., 2007; Green et al., 2008; Manis, 2012; Steele, 2008; Vera & Speight, 2003). When students move just outside their comfort zones, they can translate their academic knowledge into real-world contexts (Constantine et al., 2007). Therefore, the objectives of

the course include providing a professional training environment and experiential learning opportunities that (a) develop skills in social justice advocacy and (b) encourage and give space to professional identity development and the development of MSJCC. We suggest that the practicum experience consist of 150 hours and that 40 of those hours involve direct, face-to-face interactions with individuals and community members.

For this certificate program, we suggest a practicum experience upon completion of all courses. We recommend that the Practicum in Social Justice Advocacy course be the last requirement for the certificate and that it take place upon completion of all coursework because we recognize the benefit of students receiving feedback from their instructors on their action plans in the previous course, *Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action*. Moreover, the *Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action* course allows students to focus on writing their plans and obtaining the appropriate skills and confidence to advocate, which essentially prepares students to successfully implement their plans during the practicum experience. The practicum will also provide an opportunity for CITs to apply their knowledge in a professional setting while supervised by the instructor of the practicum course. More specifically, students are encouraged to find a field placement in which they can utilize the action plans they created in the *Advanced Social Justice in Action* course and engage in social justice activism. Moreover, the practicum will offer hands-on applications students can use to gain real-life experience with clients and other professionals in the community (Bemak & Chung, 2011; Constantine et al., 2007; Steele, 2008; Vera & Speight, 2003). At the end of the semester, we suggest assigning CITs a project in which they present their work with individual clients as well as the community to the practicum class. Students will be asked to summarize (a) their action projects, (b) how they integrated counseling theories, (c) MSJCC competencies and advocacy competencies, (d) three empirical articles supporting their work, (e)

ethical and legal concerns, and (f) diversity concerns. The practicum requirement not only further enhances knowledge and awareness but also contributes to developing skills and practical application among CITs.

Implications and Limitations

Researchers continue to call for social justice advocacy within counselor education, and they have encouraged the profession to improve and expand in this area (Chan et al., 2018; Ratts & Wood, 2011; Singh, Finan, & Hays, 2016). As Vera and Speight (2003) stressed, “Any multicultural movement that underemphasizes social justice is likely to do little to eradicate oppression and will maintain the status quo to the detriment of historically marginalized people” (p. 254-255). Therefore, based on recommendations from leaders in the field (Chang et al., 2010; Green et al., 2008; Ratts & Wood, 2011; Vera & Speight, 2003), we developed courses specifically tailored to promote counselors and CITs’ MSJCC that go beyond interweaving multicultural tenets (Green et al., 2008). In addition, the profession has called for innovative teaching methods in social justice and advocacy due to the limited research on how to effectively incorporate content into curriculum (Chan et al., 2018; Odegard & Vereen, 2010). A certificate program is a helpful alternative to ensure students are committed to social justice advocacy with their clients and community. Research has confirmed that certificate programs enhance professional confidence, knowledge, and skills (Johnson et al., 2014) and that they are effective continuing education options for professional counselors. Certificate programs not only reach established professionals across the helping professions but also serve as profitable endeavors for counselor education programs. In addition, having a certificate in social justice advocacy offers a resume booster and provides counselors and CITs an edge against applicants from other counselor education programs.

Therefore, we developed the certificate program with the intention of promoting a social justice

advocacy perspective within counselor education that is helpful for not only students and alumni but also profitable for programs. In addition, research has revealed limitations to a single-course approach (i.e., one multicultural counseling course); thus, the certificate program was developed to promote MSJCC so students can master theory and practice essential social justice and advocacy skills (Collins et al., 2015). The process of developing an action plan can have a positive motivating effect on CITs, and they may want to share their findings in their professional roles as counselors, present at professional conferences, or even submit articles for publication (Dixon et al., 2010).

We suggest that counselor educators offer the certificate program in their curricula and study the effects the program has on students' MSJCC and critical consciousnesses. In this same vein, we understand that the current CACREP (2015) standards do not address social justice, making it difficult to implement a social justice framework into CACREP-accredited programs. However, Chang et al. (2010) noted that "you cannot separate counseling from social justice" (p. 83); thus, counselor education programs are challenged to reflect this reality and embrace MSJCC (Ratts & Wood, 2011).

We would like counselor education programs to consider who teaches the social justice advocacy certificate courses. Counselor educators' teaching methods, skill levels, awareness, and identity development are likely to impact the training process (Chan et al., 2018). Therefore, we suggest that counselor education programs avoid focusing on specific faculty members to teach these courses but instead promote a department initiative and commitment to continue developing competencies in multiculturalism, social justice advocacy, and global mindedness (Bemak, Chung, Talleyrand, Jones, & Daquin, 2011). Competence is not an end goal; it is an evolving process. Thus, departments should assess faculty's views and definitions of MSJCC and advocacy, establish a consensual definition of MSJCC and advocacy, create

a mission statement that becomes a core value in the program, and explore how to implement these values into all counseling classes (Bemak et al., 2011) as well as support a certificate program on social justice advocacy.

Furthermore, we suggest using formal assessments to assess skills among CITs. The Privilege and Oppression Inventory (Hays, Chang, & Decker, 2007) assesses CITs' beliefs about race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. The Social Justice Advocacy Readiness Questionnaire (Chen-Hayes, 2001) evaluates several domains of trainee advocacy, including individual awareness, values, and skills in social justice work. Burnes and Singh (2010) suggested that these tools can be used at the beginning, middle, and end of practicum placements to understand and monitor CITs' understanding and belief systems with regard to various social justice constructs. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that CITs receive supportive supervision when using formal measures to evaluate one's social justice strengths and growing edges so areas for improvement can be collaboratively explored (Burnes & Singh, 2010).

According to Dollarhide, Clevenger, Dogan, and Edwards (2016), activities and class discussions should prompt reflection and information about early and current experiences, challenges, and supports with social justice work. For example, participating in service experiences in the field with oppressed populations, journaling about changes in self as a result of such service, engaging in social justice communities on campus, and assigning advocacy experiences with real clients in field experiences will contribute to one's commitment to social justice and overall identity (Dollarhide et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Odegard and Vereen (2010) found that a detailed focus on curriculum and resource development specifically as related to social justice can enhance the training and development of emerging counselors. Therefore, counselor educators

committed to promoting social justice may influence novice counselors to do the same in their clinical work (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Moreover, an emphasis on incorporating social justice constructs throughout the curriculum encourages emerging counselors to practice ethically while being sensitive to diverse groups (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Although counselor educators may lack training in facilitating social justice courses, these ideas for activities and discussions can be implemented in both classrooms and field experience supervision (Dollarhide et al., 2016). Moreover, counselor educators can and should be role models for social justice commitment and action to encourage social justice identity development (Dollarhide et al., 2016). Furthermore, through dynamic learning experiences in the classroom and community, students and faculty can collaborate to reflect upon and transform action that indicates social justice understanding (Montero, 2009). Thus, counselor educators need to provide a space for students to engage with and commit to social justice work to influence development and identity among CITs.

A major limitation of the proposed social justice advocacy certificate program is that it has not been piloted by a counselor education program and no data exists on how well the certificate program increases students' MSJCC and other factors. Research has shown limitations to a single-course approach (i.e., multicultural counseling course), and there are currently no guidelines for how to implement social justice advocacy courses or empirically validated pedagogical approaches to addressing MSJCC (Chan et al., 2018; Steele, 2008); thus, the certificate program was developed to promote MSJCC so students can master theory and practice essential social justice and advocacy skills (Collins et al., 2015). As stated previously, certificate programs have been found to increase confidence, skill, and knowledge (Johnson et al., 2014).

Conclusion

It is essential for counselor training programs to continue to improve and grow in the areas of MSJCC. The profession has established the importance of social justice advocacy orientation; however, counselor education continues to push the competencies to the margins of our profession (Ratts et al., 2017; Ratts & Wood, 2011). Adopting a social justice advocacy framework is imperative to reflect the reality of the counseling field so emerging CITs can serve their clients. Therefore, the social justice advocacy certificate program is an innovative strategy to promote these competencies in counselor education. We offered six multidimensional courses that build on one another to form students' MSJCC. Hence, our goal was to develop courses that demand students move beyond a multicultural understanding of diverse cultural worldviews so they may become social change agents and take action on issues of equality and justice.

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Appendix A

Social Justice Advocacy Certificate Program Outline **Counseling Diverse Populations**

Description: The course, an introduction to the theory and practice of counseling with members of diverse populations, is designed to assist students in developing MSJCC with these specific populations.

Objectives: (a) Discuss the nature of oppression of all diverse groups; (b) Develop strategies to address the needs of all populations through the role of being a change agent and social advocate

Textbooks: *Multicultural Issues in Counseling* (Lee, 2013) or *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (Sue & Sue, 2019)

Assignments: ILIFE, reflection journals, cultural group panel, disability simulation, group project

Approaches to Multicultural Counseling and Theory

Description: The course offers students an opportunity to deeply examine counseling theories that address oppression and institutionalized “-isms” and develop their own multicultural counseling theories to practice.

Objectives: (a) Enhance students’ understanding of multicultural theories and how traditional counseling theories have culture-bound limitations; (b) Broaden the helping roles and expand the range of culturally appropriate and system intervention strategies; (c) Develop student’s personal counseling theories

Textbook: *A Theory of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy* (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996)

Assignments: Role-plays demonstrating MCT and other multicultural frameworks, personal counseling theory paper

Power, Privilege, and Oppression

Description: In this course, students will define and address privilege, voice an understanding of oppressive and oppressive experiences, discuss the intersection of privilege and oppression, and be introduced to the intersectionality framework.

Objectives: (a) Understanding the link between one’s cultural identities, marginalization, and privilege; (b) Voice an understanding of institutionalized “-isms” and collective disenfranchisement (i.e., oppression)

and the intersectionality framework

Textbook: *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (Johnson, 2018)

Assignments: Role-plays on broaching cultural differences and completing the MSJCC-Assessment Form

Introduction to Social Justice Advocacy

Description: This course provides an introduction to the theories and models of social justice, advocacy, and leadership.

Objectives: (a) Bring awareness and deepen students’ understanding of social justice advocacy from the micro to the macro level; (b) Develop a clearer identity as a social justice advocate

Textbook: *Social Justice Counseling: The Next Steps beyond Multiculturalism in Application, Theory, and Practice* (Chi-Ring & Bemak, 2012)

Assignments: Weekly reflection journals, “Understanding Myself as an Advocate,” immersion experience

Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action

Description: Students have the opportunity to examine their roles as change agents, leaders, and advocates at the community level and discuss systematic barriers and challenges that prevent effective leadership on social justice and advocacy issues in organizational settings.

Objectives: (a) Assist students with developing a better understanding of social justice advocacy; (b) Demonstrate appropriate multilevel interventions that address systemic issues and require counselors to work inside as well as outside the office environment

Textbooks: *Promoting Community Change: Making it Happen in the Real World* (Homen, 2016) or *Counseling for Multiculturalism and Social Justice: Integration, Theory, and Application* (Ratts & Pederson, 2014)

Assignments: Weekly reflection journals and the action project

Practicum in Social Justice

Description: This is a supervised, community-based social justice advocacy practicum experience emphasizing interaction with individuals, community members, and stakeholders seeking service from counsel-

ors.

Objectives: (a) Provide a professional training environment and experiential learning opportunities that develop social justice advocacy skills and encourage and give space to professional identity development and the development of MSJCC

Assignments: Final project presentation

Appendix B

Supplemental Readings

Counseling Diverse Populations Course

a) Women

- Szymanski, D. M., & Carr, E. R. (2011). Underscoring the need for social justice initiatives concerning the sexual objectification of women. *Counseling Psychologist, 39*(1), 164-170.

b) LGBTQ+

- Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling. (2012). ALGBTIC competencies for counseling LGBQIA individuals. Retrieved from <https://www.counseling.org/docs/ethics/algbtic-2012-07.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
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c) Older adults

- Whiting, P., & Bradley, L. J. (2007). Art-

ful witnessing of the story: Loss in aging adults. *Adultspan Journal, 6*(2), 119-128.

- Jungers, C. M., & Slagel, L. (2009). Crisis model for older adults: Special considerations for an aging population. *Adultspan Journal, 8*(2), 92-101.
- Fullen, M. C. (2016). Counseling for wellness with older adults. *Adultspan Journal, 15*(2), 109-123.

d) Disability

- Smart, J. F., & Smart, D. W. (2006). Models of disability: Implications for the counseling profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 84*(1), 29-40.
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Approaches to Multicultural Counseling and Theory Course

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Power, Privilege, and Oppression

- Ratts, M. J. (2017). Charting the center and the margins: Addressing identity, marginalization, and privilege in counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 39(2), 87-103.
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- McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. Retrieved from <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

Introduction to Social Justice Advocacy

- American Counseling Association. (2018). ACA advocacy competencies. Retrieved from https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/competencies/aca-2018-advocacy-competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=1dca552c_6
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Advanced Social Justice Advocacy in Action

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