January 2022

A Pilot Study on Counselor Trainees' Social Justice Identity Development and Effective Pedagogy in a Multicultural Counseling Course

Shelby Messerschmitt-Coen
Central College, Pella IA

Gayle Garcia
The Ohio State University

Colette T. Dollarhide
The Ohio State University

Damon Drew
Independent researcher

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc

Part of the Counselor Education Commons, and the Social Justice Commons

A Pilot Study on Counselor Trainees' Social Justice Identity Development and Effective Pedagogy in a Multicultural Counseling Course

Shelby Messerschmitt-Coen, Gayle Garcia, Colette T. Dollarhide, Damon Drew

Abstract: This pilot study examined social justice identity development for first- and second-year clinical and school counseling master's students enrolled in a one-semester multicultural and social justice counseling (MCSJC) course. Counselor educators can incorporate social justice pedagogy in their courses to better equip counselors-in-training with the knowledge and skills necessary to act (Odegard & Vereen, 2010), which can foster the development of their social justice identities (Miller et al., 2009). Students enrolled in the MCSJC course reported their social justice identity at the beginning and end of the semester to determine identity development over time. In addition, pedagogical strategies were evaluated for their impact on identity development. Significant increases in social justice identity domains were found, with group differences based on year and track in the program. This study identified pedagogical strategies such as cultural immersion activities, small group discussion, and guest speakers that fostered students' social justice identity development.

What is the public significance of this article? This study suggests that social justice identity can be developed during a semester long, masters-level multicultural and social justice counseling course. Counselor educators can consider effective and intentional ways to incorporate various pedagogical strategies in their curriculum to foster the growth of students' social justice efficacy and engagement, and the present study offers empirically-based evidence of such effective pedagogy.

Keywords: social justice, pedagogy, counselor education

The term *social justice* has evolved over time. In counseling, social justice is defined as actions taken by counselors to remedy social oppression and afford all people equitable access to resources and opportunities that have historically been reserved for those in privileged life spaces (Sue & Sue, 2013) through counselor leadership, advocacy, social activism, clinical empowerment, and personal/professional allyship (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020). Further, counselors have prioritized social justice as more than acts of advocacy but also a unique element of their personal and professional identities (Dollarhide et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2009) that can be understood through various identity domains

(Miller et al., 2009). As a foundation of the counseling profession, social justice is one of the core values (American Counseling Association, 2014), and a required competency in counseling curricula (CACREP, 2016, F.2.h). Previous researchers have emphasized various ways to effectively teach a multicultural counseling course, such as through a relational approach (Dorn-Medeiros et al., 2020), a transformative approach (Mitcham et al., 2013), an interactive cross-curricular approach (Chun et al., 2020), and through use of innovative pedagogy (Motulsky et al., 2014). These suggestions are useful for teaching multicultural courses; more research must be done to better understand how to intentionally foster

Shelby Messerschmitt-Coen, Central College; Gayle Garcia, Colette T. Dollarhide, The Ohio State University; Damon Drew (independent researcher). Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Colette T. Dollarhide, dollarhide.1@osu.edu

social justice growth in the classroom apart from the general understanding of multicultural issues so counselor educators may uphold their course's standards to those of CACREP's.

Counselor educators can foster social justice learning for counselor trainees through the application of social justice pedagogy (Killian & Floren, 2020). Social justice pedagogy is defined as counselor training experiences that engage students in acknowledging systemic social inequities and oppression while seeking to eliminate systemic oppression on individual and systemic levels (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Foundational competencies exist to guide counselors' social justice practice, namely the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016). However, few studies exist to help counselor educators evaluate various social justice pedagogical strategies (e.g., course activities, assignments, guest speakers) to facilitate students' development of these competencies.

Social Justice Identity Development

Counselor educators can benefit from an understanding of social justice identity development as they create the social justice training environment for students (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011). Social justice identity has been studied in various populations, including undergraduate students (Miller et al., 2009), counselors-in-training (Baker et al., 2020; Killian & Floren, 2020), professional counselors (Baker et al., 2020), and counseling psychologists (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011). Researchers have studied social justice identity due to its strong emphasis on one's personal and professional identity; social justice expands beyond the simple action, in that it becomes a critical part of one's salient identities (Dollarhide et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2009). The process for this development can occur in a variety of ways. For instance, Dollarhide et al. (2016) identified that social justice identity development was initiated by an activating event or experience, such as witnessing social oppression of clients or hearing a family story of oppression. In turn, counselors prioritize these activating experiences as a salient part of their identity rather than an isolated instance

in their past; counselors are motivated to engage in social justice in response to activating events.

Further, social justice identity can be understood as a compilation of multiple domains: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interest, commitment, and perceived supports or barriers (Miller et al., 2009). *Self-efficacy* is defined as an individual's perceived ability to engage in social justice advocacy behaviors across a variety of domains (e.g., inter/intrapersonal, community). *Outcome expectations* are the perceived positive outcomes that might result from engaging in social justice advocacy. *Interest* is defined as the pattern of likes, dislikes, and indifferences regarding social justice advocacy activities. *Commitment* is an individual's choice-content goals or intentions to engage in social justice advocacy in the future. *Social supports and barriers* are defined as the perceived social response an individual would expect to receive if they were able to engage in social justice advocacy (Miller et al., 2009). Together, these domains predict the strength of one's social justice identity.

Social Justice Pedagogy

To foster students' social justice identity development in these domains, counselor educators can incorporate social justice pedagogy into their courses. Social justice pedagogy must be used intentionally (Killian & Floren, 2020; Motulsky et al., 2020), creating learning structures and experiences that deconstruct the dominant discourse, power differentials, and defensive stances taken by students in the dominant culture (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Oftentimes, social justice training falls into the multicultural counseling course's curriculum, as these two subjects are often conflated. Pieterse et al. (2009) found that most multicultural course syllabi tend to follow the *knowledge, awareness, and skills* paradigm of multicultural competence. These authors found that most instructors, based on their syllabi, appear to consider social justice to be within the scope of multicultural training, yet the authors argued that the overlap is confusing. They cited social justice content as "inadequate or not clearly articulated" in the syllabi they studied (Pieterse et

al., 2009, p. 109). This is important, as it suggests that confusion in teaching social justice can significantly impact the trainees' social justice self-efficacy, interest, and commitment (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011), thus emphasizing the importance of intentional social justice pedagogy in a multicultural counseling course to foster identity development.

Social Justice Identity Development Through Pedagogy

Researchers in the counseling field, broadly, have begun to empirically explore how social justice training and pedagogy can support the development of counselor trainees' social justice identities. For instance, two studies (Inman et al., 2015; Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011) with counseling psychology trainees as participants found that social justice self-efficacy significantly impacted the development of students' interest and commitment to social justice when students were in an environment that encouraged and fostered this type of identity development. Decker (2013) identified a significant positive association between social justice training and self-ratings of social justice competence in counselor trainees. The researcher also found a significant positive association between the counselor trainees' advocacy training and their likelihood to advocate (Decker, 2013). Additionally, researchers have identified the effectiveness of experiential learning opportunities to foster social justice identity development, suggesting the importance of immersive, hands-on experiences to foster this growth (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019). With this said, few empirical studies exist that examine social justice identity development in counselor education using specific, effective social justice pedagogy (Killian & Floren, 2020; Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019).

In response to this need, this pilot study (i.e., a small-scale, preliminary research study that follows the same rigor and format of a larger scale study) was designed to examine if the content in a MCSJC course would result in significant social justice identity development in a one-semester, 15-week course. The authors identified two primary research questions: (1) Can a counselor-in-training

significantly develop their social justice identity through a counselor educator's use of multicultural and social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies in a MCSJC course? and (2) Which multicultural and social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies are more influential on a counselor-in-training's social justice identity development? Previous literature is still developing in this area, therefore an exploratory research question was created to further assess for social justice identity development: Are there differences in social justice identity development in a MCSJC course between students dependent on their counseling specialization track or year in the master's program?

Method

The study included participants enrolled in a required MCSJC course (3-hour course, once per week) in a cohort-model, CACREP-accredited program at a large, midwestern university. The instructor (a counselor educator) of the course has taught the course 12 times over a 12-year period. The student sample was the population of all master's students in the program; this was the first and only semester that all master's students, both first-year and second-year students, took the course together, as the program was switching the course from the second-year course load to the first-year. The pedagogical strategies included in the MCSJC course were designed around three pillars: (1) didactic learning (e.g., instructor and guest lectures), (2) experiential learning (e.g., immersion experiences), and (3) personal insight process in small groups of 5–7 students facilitated by a doctoral student.

Data Collection

The pilot study's design followed a longitudinal survey method, where participants completed the assessments at the beginning and end of the semester. A member of the research team not involved in course instruction (proctor) collected the data at time 1 (first day of the course) and time 2 (last day of the course). Although course instructors were authors for the present study, they were not involved in the data collection process to mitigate against any possible tester effects, coercion, or social desirability of students' voluntary

participation in the study. Data collection lasted approximately 15–20 minutes at the beginning of the class period at time 1 and 20–25 minutes at time 2. The proctor distributed paper copies of informed consent to students and verbally reviewed the document. Interested students accessed the survey materials online via Qualtrics, where they gave electronic consent to participate. Participants created unique identifiers to ensure anonymity and to allow the research team to match pre- and post-data. Participants completed all survey materials during the allotted time in class.

Participants

Eligibility criteria for this study included (1) 18 years or older, and (2) current enrollment in the MCSJC course. The authors recruited from a course of 46 students; of these 46 students, 43 completed the pretest, and 40 completed the posttest. The authors matched the unique identifiers of the pre- and post-tests for 31 participants; participants with mismatched or missing identification codes were excluded from analysis. The final sample size used for analysis was 31 participants, which was deemed adequate for the pilot study (post hoc power $1-\beta = 0.86$). Most participants identified as female (80.6%, $n = 25$) and white (93.5%, $n = 29$). Participants were enrolled in either a clinical ($n = 16$) or school ($n = 15$) counseling track, and most participants were first-year master's students (67%, $n = 21$). At the pretest, most participants reported not having prior formal advocacy training (77.4%, $n = 24$).

Instruments

The present study consisted of two instruments: the Social Inquiry Questionnaire (SIQ; Miller et al., 2009) and self-report Likert-like items assessing the course's social justice pedagogy. The entire questionnaire took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete at time 1 (SIQ) and 20–25 minutes to complete at time 2 (SIQ and pedagogy assessment).

SIQ. Participants were administered the SIQ (Miller et al., 2009), a 52-item self-report instrument designed to measure respondent's social justice identities as defined by five domains: social justice self-efficacy, outcome expectations,

interests, commitment, and social supports and barriers. These five domains were subscales on the assessment. Participants indicated their agreement with items from each subscale on a 0 (low alignment) to 9 (high alignment) scale.

Self-efficacy items were prompted with the statement "How much confidence do you have in your ability to" and items included "examine your own worldview, biases, and prejudicial attitudes after witnessing or hearing about social injustice." The outcome expectations subscale was prompted with the statement "Engaging in social justice activities would likely allow me to" and items included "reduce the oppression of certain groups." Interest items were prompted with the statement "How much interest do you have in" and items included "reading about social issues (e.g., racism, oppression, inequality)." Items from the commitment subscale were prompted with the statement "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements" and items included "I think engaging in social justice activities is a realistic goal for me." Finally, social supports and barriers items were prompted with the statement "If you were to engage in social justice activities, how likely would you be to" and items included "feel support for this decision from important people in your life" (supports) and "receive negative comments or discouragement from family and friends about your engagement in social justice activities" (barriers).

The internal consistency was calculated (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) for each subscale of the SIQ in the current sample. Results indicate acceptable to high reliability (Kline, 2000) from the pre- and post-tests for self-efficacy ($\alpha = .94$ and .95), outcome expectations ($\alpha = .89$ and .93), interest ($\alpha = .83$ and .90), commitment ($\alpha = .88$ and .94), and social supports ($\alpha = .88$ and .84). Results for the social barriers subscale indicate low internal consistency during pr-test analysis, and acceptable internal consistency at post-test analysis ($\alpha = .58$ and .72). These alpha scores are comparable to the original study with the SIQ that included undergraduate students as participants (Miller et al., 2009). Additionally, construct validity was

calculated using a correlation coefficient between pre- and post-test variables for each SIQ subscale. Results indicated that construct validity was met ($p < .001$ for all subscales).

Social Justice Pedagogy. At the end of the semester, participants ($n = 31$) evaluated the impact of 28 pedagogical strategies from the MCSJC course on their social justice identity development on a 4-point Likert-like scale (1 = *none*, 4 = *a lot*). These items were created by the authors based on the pedagogical strategies used in the MCSJC course to determine the students' perspective of their effectiveness. These pedagogical strategies have been included intentionally in the course by the expertise of the course's instructor, years' worth of consultation with various experts in multiculturalism and social justice–oriented education and training, and previous literature that guided the development and evolution of the course over time (e.g., Bemak & Chung, 2011; Brubaker et al., 2010). Mean scores were calculated for each pedagogical strategy; higher mean scores indicate higher perceived effectiveness of that pedagogical approach in fostering the students' social justice identity development. Additionally, participants rated the MCSJC course experience as a whole on a 10-point Likert-like scale, assessing the effectiveness of the course in fostering social justice identity development (0 = not at all, 9 = very much). A mean score was calculated for this item, with a higher score indicating greater agreement that the course aided in social justice identity development.

Results

Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25). A paired-samples *t*-test was used to determine overall change in the social justice identity domains from pretest to posttest for all participants. Additionally, independent samples *t*-tests were used to determine change scores in social justice identity domains between groups (e.g., year in program; counseling track). Change scores were calculated by subtracting the student's raw pretest scores from their matched raw posttest scores for each SIQ subscale; a positive score indicated growth from the beginning to the end of the course in that social justice identity domain. Additionally, the authors calculated mean scores from the pedagogical strategies and overall course experience to address the second research question. Assumption tests were conducted for the independent samples analysis (i.e., independent observations, normality, and homogeneity) as well as paired-samples analysis (i.e., continuous dependent variable, assumptions of independent samples *t*-tests). Assumptions tests were met in both pre- and post-test samples (i.e., Levene's test > .05; skewness and kurtosis acceptable).

Social Justice Identity Development

The author's first primary research question was stated as follows: Can a counselor-in-training significantly develop their social justice identity through a counselor educator's use of multicultural and social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies in a MCSJC course? Additionally, the authors

Table 1

Paired-Samples t-Test: Overall Social Justice Identity Development

| | Pretest | | Posttest | | |
	M	SD	M	SD	t-test
Self-efficacy	5.98	1.14	7.37	0.95	-5.732*
Outcome expectations	7.98	1.18	7.98	1.16	-1.568
Interest	7.46	1.31	8.16	1.43	-4.898*
Commitment	7.06	1.43	8.09	1.56	-4.881*
Supports	8.47	1.51	8.65	1.23	-1.039
Barriers	4.59	1.53	4.36	1.83	0.944

Note. * $p < .001$

indicated one exploratory research question: Are there differences in social justice identity development in a MCSJC course between students dependent on their counseling specialization track or year in the master's program?

Participants showed growth in multiple domains of social justice identity (see Table 1). Participants reported significant development in self-efficacy, $t(29) = -5.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.32$, interest, $t(30) = -4.90$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.51$, and commitment, $t(30) = -4.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.69$. These differences indicated a medium to large effect size (Cohen, 1988). The data indicated nonsignificant changes over time in outcome expectations, supports, or barriers ($p > .05$). Participants had statistically significantly greater scores on social justice self-efficacy, interest, and commitment at the end of the course compared to the beginning. This said, the researchers identified partial support for primary RQ1, in that some social justice identity domains did indicate a significant growth from the beginning of the semester to the end.

Year in the program as well as counseling track had a significant impact on social justice identity development in different domains (see Table 2). First-year participants had significantly greater development compared to the second-year participants in social justice self-efficacy, $t(28) = 2.24$, $p = .033$, $d = 0.90$. This group difference indicated a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). There were nonsignificant changes comparing first- and second-year students in social justice identity domains of outcome expectations, interest, commitment, supports, or barriers ($p > .05$). School counseling participants had significantly greater development compared to clinical counseling participants in social justice self-efficacy, $t(28) = -2.55$, $p = .016$, $d = 0.93$, and outcome expectations, $t(29) = -2.38$, $p = .024$, $d = 1.84$. Enrollment in the school counseling track versus the clinical counseling track had a large effect on social justice identity development (Cohen, 1988). There were nonsignificant changes comparing clinical and school track students in social justice identity domains of interest, commitment, support, or barriers ($p > .05$). School counseling students reported more growth in their social justice self-efficacy and outcome expectations compared to

Table 2

Group Differences: Year in Program and Counseling Track

| | First-year | | Second-year | | |
	M diff	SD	M diff	SD	t-test
Self-efficacy	1.75	1.33	0.67	1.05	2.240*
Outcome expectations	0.31	1.01	0.18	0.88	0.358
Interest	0.73	0.83	0.62	0.74	0.350
Commitment	0.88	1.32	1.35	0.77	-1.038
Supports	0.12	0.86	0.30	1.20	-0.468
Barriers	-0.23	1.15	-0.23	1.72	-0.002

| | Clinical track | | School track | | |
	M diff	SD	M diff	SD	t-test
Self-efficacy	0.86	1.09	2.00	1.35	-2.552*
Outcome expectations	-1.00	0.62	0.67	1.12	-2.383*
Interest	0.61	0.64	0.78	0.94	-0.556
Commitment	1.00	1.22	1.07	1.17	-0.155
Support	0.15	1.13	0.21	0.80	-0.179
Barriers	-0.23	1.63	-0.22	0.97	-0.036

Note. $* p < .05$

clinical counseling students, which suggests partial support for exploratory RQ1.

Social Justice Pedagogy

The authors indicated a second primary research question that is stated as follows: Which multicultural and social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies are more influential on a counselor-in-training's social justice identity development? Participants reported the impact of specific pedagogical strategies on their social justice identity development (see Appendix A). Greater mean scores for pedagogical strategies were interpreted as those approaches being more impactful in the development of overall social justice identity. On a 4-point scale, participants rated the most impactful course activities as the cultural immersion experience ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.68$), the cultural autobiography ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.77$), the cultural identity analysis ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.80$), and the small group discussions ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.89$). Additionally, participants reported guest speaker presentations to be impactful, particularly lecturers who spoke on self- and client-advocacy ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.86$), microaggressions ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.87$), and anti-Black structures in the United States ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.87$). Finally, participants reported that, overall, the MCSJC course aided in the growth of their social justice identities ($M = 6.77$, $SD = 1.99$; 10-point scale). There were no significant differences between groups (i.e., year in program; counseling track) regarding overall impact of the course on social justice identity development.

Discussion

The purpose of this pilot study was to examine the effectiveness of multicultural and social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies on counselors-in-training's social justice identity development over the course of a semester-long MCSJC course. The authors identified support for the primary hypotheses. Three social justice identity domains (i.e., self-efficacy, interest, and commitment) showed a significant increased growth from the beginning of the semester to the end. Additionally, the authors identified support for the exploratory research question. First-year students indicated

significantly greater development in self-efficacy, and school counseling students indicated significantly greater development in self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Finally, participants reported that pedagogical strategies such as the cultural immersion experience, the cultural autobiography, and the cultural identity analysis were most effective in fostering the development of their social justice identities.

Social Justice Identity Development

Regardless of year in program and counseling specialization track, students in the MCSJC course indicated significant growth in their social justice identities as defined by self-efficacy, interest, and commitment. The results of this pilot study are consistent with past studies regarding counseling psychology trainees (Inman et al., 2015; Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011) and recent counselor alumni (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019). In this study, participants' scores on social justice self-efficacy, interest, and commitment increased significantly through the course. The growth in trainees' self-efficacy could have more influence on the other social justice domains as well; other studies found that self-efficacy had a direct positive association with interest and commitment (Inman et al., 2015). Consistent with the findings of Miller and Sendrowitz (2011), interest and commitment may increase because of trainees' beliefs that they can engage in social justice work.

Two social justice domains did not result in significant change over the semester: outcome expectations, and perceived supports and barriers. This finding may suggest that students in the sample already had a strong understanding of the positive outcomes from engaging in social justice work that did not show any change over the course of the semester. Ceiling effects of this domain are possible, in that the pretest outcome expectations ($M = 7.89$; $SD = 0.96$) and posttest outcome expectations ($M = 8.25$; $SD = 1.16$) were already quite high. Minimal longitudinal research has been done to identify how outcome expectations change over the course of a semester, therefore it is unknown how much time and training is required to

see observable differences in counselor trainees' outcome expectations of social justice work.

Further, the authors understand that perceived supports and barriers may not have changed over the course of the semester, as well, which may explain the lack of significant findings in this domain. Like the concern with outcome expectations, minimal research has addressed how perceived supports and barriers change, if at all, over time; this study was one of the first to consider these social justice identity domains in a longitudinal design. Students' social connections may not have significantly changed over the course of a few months, as we might expect other social justice identity domains to change over the course of a semester with the influence of a MCSJC course.

Group Differences in Identity Development

The authors have identified that the findings of this pilot study not only supported the results of past studies but also expanded the research in social justice training. The authors found that first-year students had significantly greater development than the second-year students in the domain of social justice self-efficacy. It may be that the course provided an activating experience (Dollarhide et al., 2016) for first-year students that was different from that of the second-year students. Specifically, this MCSJC course was in the first semester for these new students, and their openness to learning about the counseling profession may have allowed them to internalize social justice learning as a natural part of the profession, thereby reducing resistance and increasing optimism, which fostered self-efficacy.

Apart from social justice self-efficacy, first-year and second-year participants did not report significant differences in other social justice dimensions: outcome expectations, interest, commitment, and perceived supports and barriers. The authors understand these findings to suggest that these important areas of social justice identity are not determined by one's year in their training program, but rather by being involved with a MCSJC in general. Experts in multicultural counseling have emphasized the importance *how* a counselor educator can effectively teach a

multicultural counseling course (Chun et al., 2020; Dorn-Medeiros et al., 2020; Mitcham et al., 2013; Motulsky et al., 2014) rather than focusing their research on more logistical aspects of the effectiveness of a MCSJC course, such as year in the program the course is offered. The authors suggest that year in the program is not as significant as the counselor educator's effectiveness in fostering and encouraging counselor trainees' self- and other-exploration around difficult social justice-related topics. The impact of the MCSJC course itself as well as the counselor educator's use of effective pedagogical strategies could explain one's significant increase in social justice self-efficacy, however the other domains are seen to generally increase, regardless of year in the program.

In addition to the differences between first-year and second-year students, the authors examined the differences in social justice identity development between clinical mental health counseling students and school counseling students. The results of this study indicate that school counseling students experienced more growth in the domains of social justice self-efficacy and outcome expectations than the clinical counseling students. This difference in both social justice self-efficacy and outcome expectations could be explained by the fact that school counseling students have a bounded system in which they can contextualize their social justice work. In contrast, the clinical counseling students may have a various large system of employment (i.e., hospitals, universities, community agencies, etc.) or may be self-employed (i.e., private practice), which may challenge their vision of future social justice efforts and efficacy. In addition, school counselors have the ASCA National Model to apply in their classes, practicums, and internships. The ASCA National Model's (2019) Professional Standards and Competencies emphasize multicultural competence, advocacy, and systemic change in schools. This emphasis along with the bounded system school counseling trainees learn in could be impactful on their efficacy.

Further, students did not report significant differences between counseling specialization when considering interest, commitment, and perceived supports and barriers. Like the previous discussion

addressing possible ceiling effects, counseling specialization may not have been the contributing factor to growth in these areas, as general involvement in the MCSJC course as well as the effectiveness of the counselor educator may have been more of an important contributing factor.

Social Justice Pedagogical Strategies

In this study, the MCSJC course environment was perceived to contribute to the trainees' social justice identity development, with a mean rating of 6.77 on a 10-point scale. These findings align with previous research that suggests the trainees' commitment to social justice would increase when the training environment is supportive (Inman et al., 2015). These findings from studies with counseling psychology students were mirrored in a sample of students from a counselor education program from this pilot study.

The current study contributes to the current body of research in social justice pedagogy. Findings from the current study identified the impact of social justice pedagogy strategies in fostering the development of social justice identity (see Appendix A). This study supports prior researchers' findings on effective pedagogy, such as inviting guest lecturers, assigning real-life advocacy work, and experiential learning (Decker et al., 2015; Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019). Prior research has indicated that experiential learning significantly fostered the development of counselor trainees' social justice identity development due to the hands-on nature of this experience (Sanabria & DeLorenzi, 2019). The authors recognize the importance of experiential learning in fostering social justice identity development from past research as well as the findings from the present study.

This pilot study identified data to support the impact of an intentionally designed MCSJC course on master's students' social justice identity development. Students developed in various domains of social justice identity, which was apparent based on the students' year in the program as well as their track in the program. Although there were differences in development based on domain and group differences, this is not to suggest that

incorporating a MCSJC course is "best" for one year in the program compared to another. Counselor education programs can determine advantages and disadvantages as to when to incorporate a MCSJC course into their programs, capitalizing on the strengths of such a course depending on the students' year and track in the program.

Limitations

Limitations of this pilot study include a small, homogenous sample size as well as confounding variables such as time. The sample size ($n = 31$) was limited based on the overall size of the course ($N = 46$), student consent to participate, and data loss from pre–post data matching. A small, homogenous sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, although it provides the opportunity to replicate the study in other counselor education programs. In addition, the MCSJC course was conducted over 14 weeks, therefore outside factors associated with time could have also influenced students' social justice identity development (e.g., other course curriculum, involvement in advocacy efforts, practicum and internship placements, personal experiences). Future studies may consider ways to better control for the effects of social justice identity development as they specifically relate to the MCSJC course (e.g., through qualitative analysis, structure of item prompts).

Implications

The findings from this pilot study provide counselor educators an opportunity to consider the intentional use of social justice pedagogy, as well as unique differences between student groups, when designing multicultural counseling or MCSJC courses. First, the authors suggest that counselor educators consider the impact that offering a MCSJC course may have on students based on their group differences (year in program, track). For instance, counselor education programs that offer the MCSJC course to clinical counseling students may work to emphasize what social justice work can look like in their systems, to offer more insight for these students as to what advocacy can look like in their unique careers. When considering timing for other domains, such as interest and commitment to social justice, group differences were not identified,

therefore counselor educators may choose to offer the MCSJC course based on other program considerations (e.g., timing of course sequence, scheduling).

Additionally, the findings of this study also provide empirical evidence that infusing social justice pedagogy into a MCSJC course can have large, statistically significant effects on students' social justice identity development — attributes which lie at the core of the counseling profession (CACREP, 2016). The authors identified effective pedagogical strategies (e.g., cultural immersion, cultural identity analysis) that, from students' perspectives, fostered their social justice identity development more so than other approaches. These activating experiences (Dollarhide et al., 2016) can aid in students' recognition of the need for social justice, thus increasing their confidence to be a part of social justice in the future, as well as increase their interest and commitment to participation in social justice.

Researchers can consider building upon the findings of this pilot study. The authors suggest that future research considers conducting a similar study with larger, diverse sample sizes to increase generalizability of these findings. Additional social justice–oriented pedagogical strategies may also be considered in a MCSJC course. An important addition to research would be identifying the impact of these pedagogical strategies in a MCSJC course with a more diverse sample of counselor trainees as well, considering the pilot study's sample was primarily white women in their first year of their master's program. Finally, various opportunities for qualitative data collection are available in the structure of the MCSJC course from the pilot study (e.g., small group discussions, guest speakers, end-of-course evaluations), and the findings from a qualitative study would add more depth to the understanding of effective pedagogy.

Conclusion

This pilot study aligns with findings from previous studies that consider effective pedagogy in a multicultural course while building upon current literature examining social justice pedagogy in a combined MCSJC course. In doing so, counselor

educators can enhance the typical structure of multicultural counseling courses by intentionally including social justice pedagogy (e.g., immersion activities) to foster students' social justice identity development over the semester as well as adhere to the expectations of accreditation (CACREP, 2016). Ultimately, social justice pedagogy is imperative to foster counselor trainees' identity development, and counselor educators can promote this growth in a MCSJC course.

References

American Counseling Association. (2014). *Code of ethics*. https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/ethics

American School Counselor Association. (2019). *ASCA school counselor professional standards and competencies*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Baker, E., Messerschmitt-Coen, S., & Granello, D. H. (2020). The impact of curiosity on counselors' social justice identity. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology, 12*(2), 2–17. https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.12.2.2-17

Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C. (2011). Applications in social justice counselor training: Classrooms without walls. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, 50*(2), 204–219.

Brubaker, M. D., Puig, A., Reese, R. F., & Young, J. (2010). Integrating social justice into counseling theories pedagogy: A case example. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *50,* 88–102.

Chun, J., Connor, A., Alsaman, M., Urkmez, B., & Kosciulek, J. F. (2020). Capitalizing on diversity in counselor education: An application of the interaction for learning framework. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 48*, 161–175. https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12175

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2016). *2016 CACREP standards*. https://www.cacrep.org/

Decker, K. M. (2013). *A study of relationships between counselor education, social justice advocacy competence and likelihood to advocate* (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University). UMI 3602466. https://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/1468680195.html?FMT=AI

Decker, K. M., Manis, A. A., & Paylo, M. J. (2015). Infusing social justice advocacy into counselor education: Strategies and recommendations. *The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 8*(3).

Dollarhide, C. T., Clevenger, A., Dogan, S., & Edwards, K. (2016). Social justice identity: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *56*(6), 624–645. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022167816653639

Dorn-Medeiros, C. M., Christensen, J. K., Lértora, I. M., & Croffie, A. L. (2020). Relational strategies for teaching multicultural courses in counselor education. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 48*(3), 149–160. https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12174

Inman, A. G., Luu, L. P., Pendse, A. C., & Caskie, G. I. L. (2015). Graduate trainees' social justice supports, beliefs, interest, and commitment. *The Counseling Psychologist, 43*(6), 879–905. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011000015578932

Killian, T., & Floren, M. (2020). Exploring the relationship between pedagogy and counselor trainees' multicultural and social justice competence. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 98*, 295–307. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12324

Kiselica, M. S., & Robinson, M. (2001). Bringing advocacy counseling to life; The history, issues, and human dramas of social justice work in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 79,* 387–397. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2001.tb01985.x

Kline, P. (2000). *Handbook of psychological testing* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Routledge.

Miller, M. J., & Sendrowitz, K. (2011). Counseling psychology trainees' social justice interest and commitment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(2), 159–169. https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0022663

Miller, M. J., Sendrowitz, K., Connacher, C., Blanco, S., Muniz de la Pena, C., Bernardi, S., & Morere, L. (2009). College students' social justice interest and commitment: A social-cognitive perspective. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56*(4), 495–507. https://doi.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0017220

Mitcham, M., Greenidge, W., & Smith, S. D. (2013). Teaching the multicultural counseling course: Facilitating courageous conversations and transformational multicultural pedagogy. *VISTAS*. https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/teaching-the-multicultural-counseling-course-facilitating-courageous-conversations-and-transformational-multicultural-pedagogy.pdf?sfvrsn=9

Motulsky, S. L., Gere, S. H., Saleem, R., & Trantham, S. M. (2014). Teaching social justice in counseling psychology. *The Counseling Psychologist, 42*(8), 1058–1083. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000014553855

Odegard, M. A., & Vereen, L. G. (2010). A grounded theory of counselor educators integrating social justice into their pedagogy. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 50,* 130–149. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2010.tb00114.x

Pieterse, A. L., Evans, S. A., Risner-Butner, A., Collins, N. M., & Mason, L. B. (2009). Multicultural competence and social justice training in counseling psychology and counselor education: A review and analysis of a sample of multicultural course syllabi. *The Counseling Psychologist, 37,* 93–115. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011000008319986

Ratts, M. J., Singh, A. A., Nassar-McMillan, S., Butler, S. K., & McCullough, J. R. (2016). Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies: Guidelines for the counseling profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44*(1), 28–48. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12035

Sanabria, S., & DeLorenzi, L. (2019). Social justice pre-practicum: Enhancing social justice identity through experiential learning. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology, 11*(2), 35–53. https://openjournals.bsu.edu/jsacp/article/view/3039

Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. (2014). Respect differences? Challenging the common guidelines in social justice education. *Democracy and Education*, *22*(2), Article 1. https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol22/iss2/1

Singh, A. A., Appling, B., & Trepal, H. (2020). Using the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies to decolonize counseling practice: The important roles of theory, power, and action. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 98*, 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12321

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2013). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (6ᵗʰ ed.). Wiley.

Appendix A

Top-Rated Course Activities and Abbreviated Syllabus Description

Course Activity	N	M	SD	Range	Abbreviated Syllabus Description
Cultural Immersion Experience	31	3.55	0.68	2–4	Part 1: You will attend two gatherings, one at a house of worship for a faith tradition that you have not attended, and the other at a celebration of a culture. You can attend these events with others from the class. These events do not have to be for the same culture. You will journal these experiences for your group discussion. Part 2: You will identify another culture, either on campus or in the community that meets the following criteria: (1) that constitutes a unique non-elective culture and (2) that is or has been disenfranchised or oppressed. This can include racial/cultural, religious, sexual identity, economic, or ability diversity. Outcomes of this experience: (a) journal entries and (b) visual artifacts that reflect strengths, challenges, and servant leadership ideas, and advocacy ideas for the group.
Cultural Autobiography	31	3.45	0.77	2–4	In this paper, you will examine your current level of cultural integration and identify what you will do to progress in your development. Paper includes (1) model of identity development, (2) interpreting your stage of development per the model, (3) self-exploration of traits and behaviors, (4) Project Implicit results.
Cultural Identity Analysis	31	3.39	0.80	1–4	Identify your top 3 non-elected identities that are prominent in your core self. Answer the following questions about those identities: (1) how you became aware of this identity, (2) social messages about this identity, (3) ability to advocate for others based on this identity, (4) how the identity will affect your ability to counsel others, (5) how the identity intersects with other identities.

Note. These assignments are presented in order of their rankings by students, not their chronological order in the course. Learning in the course was scaffolded so that self-exploration assignments occurred early in the course, while the cultural immersion assignments occurred later. For additional information regarding course pedagogy, contact the corresponding author (see author note).