

A Flipped Classroom Approach to Developing Sociopolitical Case Studies in Career Counseling

Career counseling courses have long struggled with low student engagement and a persistent gap between career theory and applied practice with challenges intensified by a sociopolitical climate that increasingly shapes clients' employment experiences. This teaching brief presents a flipped classroom learning activity that prepares counselors-in-training to address sociopolitical career barriers through the small-group development of sociopolitical case studies. Recommendations are provided to facilitate pre-class content on sociopolitical topics and the development of small-group case studies. We provide ethical, evaluation, and assessment considerations to support faculty in delivering this content.

SHAYNA FINN¹, NE'SHAUN BORDEN²,
& ZHIQI LIU³

¹Department of Psychology and Counseling,
Immaculata University

²Department of Clinical Mental Health
Counseling, Jacksonville University

³Department of Educational Leadership, Policy,
and Human Development, North Carolina State
University

KEYWORDS

*flipped classroom, sociopolitical, career
counseling, case studies, counselor
education*

Author Note:

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shayna Finn, 1145 W King Rd, Immaculata, PA 19345 (email: sfinn1@immaculata.edu).

Artificial intelligence (AI) was used to summarize and organize literature, however, all final interpretations, writing, and writing decisions were made by the authors. The case scenario was developed using AI.

Introduction

Teaching career counseling occupies a unique and often challenging position within counselor education. Although career development is one of the eight common core curricular areas of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the career counseling course has historically been associated with faculty reluctance and frustration, as well as lower levels of student engagement and perceived relevance compared to other areas of training (Carter & Bowman, 1994; Oberman & Studer, 2009). These longstanding pedagogical challenges are largely rooted in the difficulty of supporting counseling trainees in translating career theory into applied practice and integrating career concerns into their emerging clinical identities. Consequently, counselor trainees often approach career counseling with limited confidence and perceived competence in conducting career-related interventions (Lara et al., 2011).

Recent sociopolitical shifts have reshaped both the content and the instructional context of career counseling, requiring counselor educators to address career concerns embedded in broader social and structural conditions. Scholarship now emphasizes how systemic oppression and racial disparities shape clients' employment experiences, particularly during periods of widespread economic disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hill et al., 2021). Within counselor education, new legislation regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion has introduced tensions between ethical duties, curriculum requirements, and external regulatory pressures (Wilson, 2024). Furthermore, research in higher education indicates that heightened political polarization can inhibit instructional decisions and discourage students from engaging meaningfully with contentious sociopolitical content, thereby diminishing crucial learning opportunities (Aydarova et al., 2023).

Despite the recognized importance of practical learning, a persistent gap exists in the provision of experiential and case-based training that prepares trainees for real-world practice. While past surveys suggest that case studies have long been used in graduate-level career counseling courses, this use has often been informal and instructor-dependent, lacking systematic pedagogical design (Osborn & Dames, 2013). More recently, Holladay et al. (2025) found that counseling students, practitioners, and educators consistently reported inadequate preparation for applying career theory, prompting calls for greater use of applied, case-based, and inclusive teaching methods. In conclusion, a primary challenge when teaching career counseling is not the absence of case-based learning but the need for structured, pedagogically intentional approaches that actively involve students in the creation and analysis of career counseling cases.

Application of the Topic to Counselor Education

Career counseling is central to the identity of the counseling profession with its historical roots in vocational and career guidance distinguishing it from other mental health disciplines (Mellin et al., 2011). Frank Parsons, regarded as the father of the vocational guidance movement, used career guidance as a vehicle for social advocacy, working to connect marginalized and economically disadvantaged individuals with meaningful and sustainable work (Londoño-McConnell, 2014). Reflecting this legacy, CACREP (2024) identifies career counseling as a core curricular area and, in its 2024 Standards, outlines essential knowledge that all counselors must demonstrate related to career foundations, contextual influences, and evidence-based career counseling practice.

Although vocational guidance was originally designed as a pathway for promoting social justice (O'Brien, 2001) and despite the counseling profession's strong emphasis on multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (Ratts et al. 2016), a disconnect remains in how career courses are utilized to teach counseling students about advocacy and increase their awareness of sociopolitical factors that shape career development and overall quality of life (Fickling, 2016; Hansen, 2003). As Hutchinson (2019) stated in his keynote at the National Career Development Association (NCDA) conference in 2019, "Career development work always impacts social justice." With this understanding, we encourage counselor educators to integrate sociopolitical case studies into career counseling courses to more effectively highlight the systemic influences on clients' career trajectories.

A Flipped Classroom Approach to Developing Sociopolitical Case Studies

Flipped classrooms build on problem-based and case-based learning approaches by shifting the focus from instructor-centered teaching to student-led engagement and knowledge construction (Counselman-Carpenter, 2018; Merlin-Knoblich et al., 2019; Osborn & Dames, 2013). Implementing a flipped model requires instructors to intentionally prepare students for this pedagogical shift by assigning pre-class activities such as targeted readings and recorded lectures that equip learners with foundational content before they arrive for the in-person class session (Merlin, 2016; Merlin-Knoblich et al., 2019; Merlin-Knoblich et al., 2020). Instructors can prepare students to participate in a flipped classroom by having students watch pre-recorded lectures before the face-to-face class period. To complete the learning activity proposed in this brief, students need foundational knowledge of career counseling theories and

assessments. Therefore, we recommend that this learning activity be incorporated into a career counseling and development course after students have already been introduced to a variety of career counseling theories and assessments, likely around halfway through the course.

The literature on the use of a flipped classroom model in counselor education is introduced in a case study by Moran and Milsom (2015) involving the use of a flipped classroom approach in the Foundations of School Counseling course, a master's-level course. The authors utilized the flipped approach by providing content (e.g., webinars, narrated PowerPoints) before class and more interactive learning during the in-class meeting times (e.g., small group projects, guest speakers). Although there was a small number of participants ($N = 15$) in their study analyzing the flipped learning approach, results suggested that, for facilitating student learning, the in-class activities were more effective than the pre-class content. In an examination of a flipped career development course, Fulton and Gonzalez (2015) implemented flipped learning in two career development courses ($N = 58$). They found more positive student attitudes toward and increased confidence in performing career counseling. Both studies highlight that a flipped classroom in a career development course can be an effective way to facilitate student learning and potentially improve attitudes towards this form of helping. Furthermore, Merlin (2016) noted that the career development course is an ideal setting for implementing a flipped approach. Given research supporting the use of flipped learning in counselor education, we propose counselor educators use an experiential learning activity focused on sociopolitical case study development to enhance student learning in career counseling.

LEARNING ACTIVITY STEPS

In the current learning activity, we recommend engaging in five steps. First, to prepare students to develop sociopolitical case studies, they must first establish a connection between career counseling and social justice advocacy. Students could begin forming these connections by reading short articles published by the NCDA, such as *Empowering Clients to Manage Uncertainty in the Job Search* (Smith, 2024) and *Career Crossroads: Guiding Clients Through Transition and Reinvention* (Seo & Elrath, 2025). Students could also read *Helping Federal Workers Manage the Uncertainty of a Chaotic Work Environment*, published by the American Psychological Association (Andoh, n.d.).

Second, after reading these articles or relevant articles of the instructor's choosing, the instructor assigns students to complete a discussion board post prior to class to encourage students to reflect on the following prompts: "What are your initial thoughts, feelings and reactions to the assigned readings?" and "As a counselor, what would it be like for you to work with a client whose career has been impacted by sociopolitical issues?" Instructors could use this task as time to provide students with some examples of current sociopolitical issues impacting career development, such as the lack of availability of decent work, labor migration, job displacement and reallocation, the impact of artificial intelligence on the job market, and the need for workers to develop new skills to remain relevant in the job market (Warwick, 2024). Alternatively, instead of asking students to write a response, students could

be given the option to record a video to share their reactions to the readings. To that end, Hadmai and colleagues (2023) found in a small study that video responses on discussion board posts increased student engagement.

Third, when students arrive at the career counseling class, having already prepared by completing the assigned readings and responding to the discussion board prompt, they will utilize class time to develop a case study in groups of three or four. The learning activity can be completed for in-person and online, synchronous classes if there are options for students to enter breakout rooms. The case study should focus on a client that is seeking counseling due to the impact of current sociopolitical issues and career development or obtainment. The case study should include these items: (a) client's background, (b) client's sociopolitical/contextual concerns, (c) application of one career theory, (d) identification of one career assessment that counselors could use with the client, and (e) identification of two-to-three goals for work with the client. A sample sociopolitical career case (Lina) that models these required elements is provided in Appendix A. We have also included a list of current sociopolitical topics below that students might consider when developing their case study.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF SOCIOPOLITICAL CASE STUDY TOPICS

- Dismantling of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts through the elimination of related terminology (e.g., workplace mandate to remove pronouns from email signature) and office closures
- Reclassification of professional degrees impacting access to student loans and leading to workforce shortages
- Job displacement due to artificial intelligence (AI) replacement
- Assumptions related to ageism, such as one's cognitive or physical capabilities due to their age
- Mass layoffs of the federal workforce due to the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) downsizing
- Cutting of federal funds and grant programs impacting access to support services and research

Fourth, after working in small groups, students present their case studies to the class and answer questions from classmates. Presentations can be kept brief (e.g., 5-10 minutes per group) with peers prompted to ask about the group's choice of career theory, the fit of the proposed assessment, and the feasibility of the client goals. Lastly, at the end of the presentations, the instructor facilitates a discussion on ethics and multicultural considerations, which invites students to reflect on which sociopolitical factors were most challenging to address and how their own reactions shaped their case conceptualization. In the following section, we provide ethical considerations that faculty can use to foster a safe classroom environment.

Ethical Considerations

We recognize that discussing sociopolitical issues in the classroom environment can cause discomfort for some students. Counselor educators must also recognize that classrooms are themselves diverse spaces, where students bring varying political perspectives, lived experiences, and personal connections to the issues being discussed. Some students may have directly experienced the career barriers depicted in the case studies, while others may hold differing views regarding the causes or significance of these issues. Counselor educators are ethically obligated to actively infuse multicultural and diversity competency into their teaching and to foster inclusive learning environments that support students across diverse backgrounds (NCDA, 2024, Standards G.6.c, G.8.c), while remaining aware of their own values and avoiding imposing those values on students (NCDA, 2024, Standard A.4.b).

Although we cannot guarantee that all students will feel safe enough to disclose their feelings related to the current political climate and issues impacting career development, Trottier (2024) recommended that counselor educators utilize the promoting excellence and reflective learning in simulation (PEARLS) framework to debrief experiential activities, and we recommend employing that framework with this learning activity. Eppich and Cheng (2015) described the PEARLS framework as one that supports students' psychological safety through a structured five-stage debriefing process that includes: setting the expectation for the debrief, processing student reactions, describing the learning experience, analyzing the experience by having the students self-assess and offering feedback, and finally applying and summarizing the takeaways from the activity (Trottier, 2024). This framework can assist students in reflecting on their experience of the pre-class materials and in-class activities while tending to the potentially sensitive nature of sociopolitical discussions.

Moreover, we recommend establishing clear group norms at the outset of the activity, such as maintaining confidentiality within the classroom and approaching differing perspectives with curiosity rather than judgment, which can further support a psychologically safe learning environment. Counselor educators are also encouraged to remain available for individual follow-up conversations after class and to be familiar with campus-based student support resources should a referral be warranted (NCDA, 2024, Standard G.7).

Demonstrated Reflexivity and Intrapersonal Awareness

We hold both privileged and marginalized identities and identify racially as White, Black, and Chinese women, respectively. We have all taught or co-taught the career counseling

course at our respective institutions and met at an academy geared towards enhancing the career counseling course. As we discussed implementing this activity into our courses, we discussed the personal impacts that the current sociopolitical climate has had on us and how this might impact how we would present and debrief this activity with our students. We processed these feelings with each other and engaged in reflexivity and consultation over the course of this project. Processing how the current sociopolitical climate has impacted our career experience and trajectory as a writing team allowed us to identify potential biases that we hold and how that might impact how we implement and evaluate this assignment in our courses. Our reflection also led us to revisit the case study included in Appendix A to ensure it accurately represented the experience of an international student currently seeking work in the United States. We encourage instructors implementing this assignment in their career counseling courses to engage in reflexivity prior to implementing this assignment.

Evaluation and Assessment of the Flipped Classroom

Instructors can align this activity with the *2024 CACREP Standards* and use it either as a standalone assignment or as a key performance indicator within their program evaluation plan. This activity directly supports CACREP Standard 3.D. Career Development, particularly standards 3.D.2, 3.D.4, 3.D.7, 3.D.8, and 3.D.12. These standards address the interrelationships between work and other life roles, the impact of work on life experiences, the development of culturally responsive strategies for supporting individuals in education and employment contexts, advocacy for clients facing work-related barriers, and ethical and legal considerations in career development and counseling (CACREP, 2024). Through this activity, students can demonstrate their ability to integrate sociopolitical awareness with career counseling competencies, applying both conceptual understanding and practical skills.

Engaging in a class discussion after the groups share their case study with the class can serve as an assessment tool to understand students' takeaways related to ethics and multicultural considerations. Given that students will have different views and experiences of the current sociopolitical climate, instructors could also assign students to complete a brief reflection paper or video in which they share their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to how people are currently being impacted by the sociopolitical climate. Providing their reflections in a private format may allow students to be more vulnerable and open in what they choose to share. Prompts that instructors could assign students to reflect upon include the following: "Describe how the current sociopolitical climate has affected your thoughts, emotions, or sense of safety or belonging" and "In what ways does your identity (race, gender, class, etc.) shape how you interpret current events?"

Implications

In this teaching brief, we have presented a learning activity counselor educators can employ in a flipped classroom to better prepare trainees in career counseling courses to address sociopolitical career barriers. One key implication is the adoption of a flipped classroom format. This approach narrows the theory-practice gap by dedicating pre-class time to foundational theory and reserving in-class time for competency-based application, which culminates in an assessable career case formulation (Chan et al., 2021; Fulton & Gonzalez, 2015; Moran & Milsom, 2015). Furthermore, in environments where teaching sociopolitical topics may face intense scrutiny, counselor educators should utilize instructional designs that clearly define sociopolitical material as essential professional training. This approach involves transparent learning outcomes and demonstrable deliverables, making the content more structured than loosely bound classroom discourse (Dhanani et al., 2024). The implementation of these strategies is further strengthened by a PEARLS-guided debrief (Eppich & Cheng, 2015). This process supports psychological safety and helps students convert their affective reactions into reflective learning, clinical reasoning, and concrete, actionable career counseling decisions (Eppich & Cheng, 2015; Trottier, 2024).

Limitation and Future Directions

A primary limitation of this teaching brief is that the authors have not been able to collect data to evaluate the learning activity. Future research could gather qualitative data on students' experiences, allowing the activity to be refined and adapted over time as well as pre-and-post measures of students' perceived counseling preparedness and confidence. Another limitation is that the current climate of anti-DEI legislation may constrain faculty in delivering content on these topics. Pitts et al. (2024; $N = 129$) found that the barriers to inclusive teaching were both systemic, such as politics and local bills ($n = 43$), and personal, including limited confidence ($n = 24$) and fear of difficult conversations ($n = 23$). Faculty can address these systemic concerns by grounding the activity in the *2024 CACREP Standards* (2024) and the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014), framing it as professional competence rather than partisan advocacy and adapting case study topics to their local context. The personal barriers may ease when faculty recognize they need not do this work alone, as organizations such as Counselors for Social Justice and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development have publicly supported educators who continue this work despite restrictive measures (Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development [AMCD], 2025). With this support, faculty facing significant constraints can scale or adapt the activity rather than abandon it, preserving its goal of preparing students to address sociopolitical career barriers.

In addition, faculty will want to stay up-to-date with the sociopolitical climate in order to provide pre-class materials that are relevant and current. Given the fast-paced nature of how quickly issues may arise, change, or evolve, it may require faculty to spend time to intentionally revisit the pre-class materials and revise. Faculty can modify the assignment with videos, if appropriate, which would accommodate diverse learning styles.

Future directions for this learning activity could more intentionally center the social determinants of health (SDOH), emphasizing how non-medical factors, like economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhoods and built environments, and social and community context, shape health outcomes across populations (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], n.d.). Building on the existing case study, instructors could also deepen the learning experience by asking students to analyze how the sociopolitical climate influences long-term economic stability for disenfranchised groups. This activity would allow students to trace how barriers to obtaining meaningful, sustainable employment reverberate across other SDOH domains, including healthcare access, mental health services, housing security, and community well-being.

Conclusion

Career counseling has traditionally been connected to social justice, but counselor education has not always prepared trainees to address the sociopolitical factors that influence clients' work lives. This teaching brief introduces a flipped classroom activity aimed at bridging that gap through student-created sociopolitical case studies, with ethical and evaluative guidance for faculty. We hope it motivates counselor educators to include this vital content in career counseling courses and to keep improving its instruction.

References

- Andoh, E. (2025, June 1). Helping federal workers manage the uncertainty of a chaotic work environment. *Monitor on Psychology*, 56(4). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2025/06/federal-workers-manage-uncertainty>
- Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development. (2025, March). *AMCD advocates for multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice* [Position statement]. Counselors for Social Justice. https://www.counseling-csj.org/uploads/1/2/3/6/123630265/amcd_dei_position_statement_march_2025.pdf
- Aydarova, E., Kelley, J., & Daugherty, K. (2023). Teaching in a war zone: A collective reflection on learning from a diversity course in contentious times. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, 15(1), 1–27. <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol15/iss1/3/>
- Carter, R. B., & Bowman, R. L. (1994). Counselor educators' perceptions of satisfying and dissatisfying teaching experiences. *Education*, 114(3), 439–444.
- Chan, D. V., Burkner, E. J., & Schmidt, J. A. (2021). Flipping the career development and employment classroom: Engaging students to enhance learning. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.24286>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2024). *2024 CACREP standards*. <https://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-Standards-Combined-Version-4.11.2024.pdf>
- Counselman-Carpenter, E. (2018). Efficacy of the flipped classroom to teach play therapy: A mixed-methods study. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 27(3), 146–156. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pla0000076>
- Dhanani, L. Y., Arena, D. F., Jr., & Bogart, S. M. (2024). The unequal burden of DEI bans. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 17, 503–506. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2024.44>
- Eppich, W., & Cheng, A. (2015). Promoting excellence and reflective learning in simulation (PEARLS): Development and rationale for a blended approach to health care simulation debriefing. *Simulation in Healthcare*, 10(2), 106–115. <https://doi.org/10.1097/SIH.0000000000000072>
- Fickling, M. J. (2016). An exploration of career counselors' perspectives on advocacy. *The Professional Counselor*, 6(2), 174–188. <https://doi.org/10.15241/mf.6.2.174>
- Fulton, C., & Gonzalez, L. (2015). Making career counseling relevant: Enhancing experiential learning using a “flipped” course design. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 7(2).
- Hamadi, H., Tafili, A., Kates, F. R., Larson, S. A., Ellison, C., & Song, J. (2023). Exploring an innovative approach to enhance discussion board engagement. *TechTrends*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-023-00850-0>
- Hansen, S. S. (2003). Career counselors as advocates and change agents for equality. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 52(1), 43–53. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00626.x>
- Hill, J., Testa, J., Baquet, S. N., & Muirhead, K. N. (2021). Implementing a social justice leadership framework in career counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 69(4), 326–339. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12277>
- Holladay, K. R., Cortés, R. D., Chen, C., & Sanders, C. (2025). Closing the gap in career counselor development with inclusive teaching strategies. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 62(4), 194–207. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joec.12250>
- Hutchison, B. (2019, February 15). *Career work is justice work* [Keynote presentation]. NCDA Career Practitioner Institute, San Diego, CA, United States.
- Lara, T. M., Kline, W. B., & Paulson, D. (2011). Attitudes regarding career counseling: Perceptions and experiences of counselors-in-training. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 59(5), 428–440. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2011.tb00969.x>
- Londoño-McConnell, A. (2014). Advocating, educating, inspiring: The expanding role of career professionals. *Career Convergence*. https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/62880/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false
- Mellin, E. A., Hunt, B., & Nichols, L. M. (2011). Counselor professional identity: Findings and implications for counseling and interprofessional collaboration. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89(2), 140–147. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00071.x>

- Merlin, C. (2016). Flipping the counseling classroom to enhance application-based learning activities. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.7729/83.1127>
- Merlin-Knoblich, C., Chase, L., Smith, J., & Opiola, K. (2020). Comparison of student engagement in flipped, lecture, and online courses. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 17(1), 27–40. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2020.1822245>
- Merlin-Knoblich, C., Harris, P. N., & McCarty Mason, E. C. (2019). Examining student classroom engagement in flipped and non-flipped counselor education courses. *The Professional Counselor*, 9(2), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.15241/cmk.9.2.109>
- Moran, K., & Milsom, A. (2015). The flipped classroom in counselor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 54(1), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2015.00068.x>
- National Career Development Association. (2024). *NCDA code of ethics*. https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/3395
- Oberman, A. H., & Studer, J. R. (2009, March). *Strategies for effectively teaching career counseling* [Conference presentation]. American Counseling Association Annual Conference and Exposition, Charlotte, NC, United States.
- O'Brien, K. M. (2001). The legacy of Parsons: Career counselors and vocational psychologists as agents of social change. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 50, 66–76. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2001.tb00891.x>
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). *Social determinants of health*. *Healthy People 2030*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>
- Osborn, D. S., & Dames, L. S. (2013). Teaching graduate career classes: A national survey of career instructors. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 52(4), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2013.00044.x>
- Pitts, A., Terrell, K. R., Salpietro, L., & Hamadi, H. Y. (2025). Overcoming barriers and infusing inclusive teaching practices in counseling programs. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 19(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.70013/tidn75tx>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12035>
- Seo, G. & Elrath, M. (2025, 1 November 1). Career crossroads: Guiding clients through transition and reinvention. *Career Convergence*. https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/605087/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false
- Smith, K. (2024, 1 October 1). Empowering clients to manage uncertainty in the job search. *Career Convergence*. https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/574036/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false
- Trottier, D. G. (2024). Debriefing experiential learning in counselor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 63(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12299>
- Wilson, D. M. (2024). Significant challenges in teaching and preparing counseling and other helping professionals in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation. *Iris Journal of Educational Research*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.33552/IJER.2024.04.000580>
- Warwick, S. (2024, January 8). *8 global issues shaping and driving job creation*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/8-global-issues-shaping-and-driving-job-creation/>

Appendix A

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: “NAVIGATING AN UNCERTAIN SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION”

1. Client Background

- **Client:** Lina (pseudonym), a 29-year-old, cisgender woman originally from China.
- **Training status:** Currently in her final semester of a master’s program in clinical mental health counseling at a university in the United States.
- **Immigration context:** Lina resides in the U.S. on a student visa and has submitted an application for post-graduation work authorization. She experiences significant uncertainty regarding the timing of her approval and the availability of future employers willing to provide sponsorship.
- **Career goal:** To secure a professional counseling position following graduation that aligns with her clinical interests while establishing a viable pathway toward full professional counselor licensure.

2. Sociopolitical and Contextual Concerns

- Lina is concurrently managing the demands of graduation and a job search within a highly regulated profession while navigating the precarious timeline of her work authorization.
- As most counseling roles require licensure eligibility immediately upon graduation, Lina feels overwhelmed by the need to sequence her licensure steps and fears that any delay might jeopardize her ability to begin employment.
- While considering opportunities across various states, she experiences anxiety related to the transfer of credentials and the complexities of differing state board requirements.
- Furthermore, Lina is increasingly distressed by contemporary public discourse and policy shifts that appear to heighten employers’ reluctance to sponsor noncitizen workers.
- Presenting symptoms include:
 - Persistent anxiety manifested through rumination, sleep disturbances, and diminished concentration;
 - Avoidance of networking opportunities and professional development events;
 - A significant erosion of professional confidence and an emerging sense of non-belonging within the field.

3. Career Theory Conceptualization: Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT)

- Happenstance learning theory (HLT) posits that career development is fundamentally shaped by unpredictable events, highlighting the importance of developing skills to identify and capitalize on opportunities amidst uncertainty.
- In Lina's situation, unpredictable factors include work authorization timelines, processing delays for licensure, and shifting employer screening practices regarding sponsorship.
- Lina's current avoidance behaviors are limiting her exposure to chance encounters and potential opportunities thereby exacerbating her uncertainty.
- Counseling implications involve fostering planned happenstance skills (PHS) to help Lina regain professional engagement and generate new pathways through active information-gathering and values-aligned clinical decision-making.

4. Career Assessment: Planned Happenstance Career Inventory (PHCI)

The PHCI can be used to evaluate Lina's current strengths and needs across the five PHS domains—curiosity, flexibility, persistence, optimism, and risk-taking—allowing for interventions tailored to her lowest-scoring areas.

5. Counseling Goals

Grounded in the HLT conceptualization and assessment results, the following goals target each of the five PHS:

- **Curiosity:** Identify specific licensure requirements across different states and conduct informational interviews with potential supervisors or clinical directors.
- **Persistence:** Establish a consistent weekly routine for job-seeking and develop a coping strategy to manage inevitable professional setbacks.
- **Flexibility:** Formulate secondary employment pathways based on the feasibility of licensure and sponsorship across various geographic locations.
- **Optimism:** Monitor tangible indicators of progress, such as applications submitted and exams scheduled, to bolster a sense of clinical momentum.
- **Risk-taking:** Engage in active networking and rehearse professional discourse regarding work authorization with prospective employers.