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What career development practitioners share with first-generation college students: a grounded theory study of self-disclosure in career counseling

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WHAT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS SHARE WITH FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SELF-DISCLOSURE IN CAREER COUNSELING

by
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Solange Alvarado, a student who became the

teacher with one simple question. May she forever be an inspiration to future generations

of first-generation college students.

Acknowledgements

I must first thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, for her infinite wisdom and enduring patience. I could not have asked for a better guide on this doctoral journey. My world changed for the better when I opened my eyes and looked around.

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I cannot thank my husband enough for knowing when to spend an entire weekend at the movies so I could write, and when to whisk me off on an exotic vacation so I could rest (sort of…)

I am indebted (literally and figuratively) to my dad, without whom this undertaking could never have happened. How different Football Sundays will be without stacks of journal articles close at hand.

Last, but most certainly not least, I send eternal thanks skyward to my mom (z"l), who kept a watchful eye over me from the heavens above. I forever carry with me her reminder to live my life as it is, not to lament what I think it was supposed to be.

Abstract

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WHAT CAREER DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS SHARE WITH FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SELF-DISCLOSURE IN CAREER COUNSELING
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Financial security is cited among reasons why first-generation college students pursue higher education (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Brooks-Terry, 1988; Shelton, 2011; Walpole, 2003), but the emphasis on perceived value of a bachelor's degree fails to account for the importance of career planning (NACE, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to examine how career counselors use their personal experience to support first-generation college student. The study was inspired by Knox and Hill's (2003) therapist self-disclosure types and their use in the counselor/client discourse. The findings suggest that first-generation college students benefit from hearing their career counselors' stories, particularly in the context of choosing a major and planning for a career. Further, in examining the findings within broader social theoretical constructs (Glaser, 2005), the themes that emerged from the data have the potential to inform a theory of career development that places counselor self-disclosure at its core.

Keywords: grounded theory, career counseling, first-generation, self-disclosure

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In December 2017, the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were 6.6 million people out of work in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017), yet 5.9 million unfilled job openings (BLS, 2018). This disparity has been largely attributed to a "skills gap" (Ebersole, 2015) between what people know and what employers need (Shipps & Howard, 2013), with a growing emphasis on attainment of a college degree (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Cappelli, 2015; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012; Gunderson, 2005). Roles in which less than half of the current workforce is non-college educated – for example, computer help desk analysts, retail sales managers, administrative support staff, and production supervisors ("Moving the goalposts," 2014) – close to 60% of new job postings now require a bachelor's degree ("Moving the goalposts," 2014).

A consequence of this push for higher education has been the increased enrollment of first-generation college students, those whose parents did not go to college (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Shelton, 2011). These students, who represent a quarter (Redford & Hoyer, 2017) of today's college student body, often hail from low-income, underserved environments, are funding their own way through school, commuting from home, and struggling to adapt to the rigors of college-level study (Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). While research has focused extensively on first-generation college student admission and retention (see, for example, Ishitani, 2006; Shelton, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011), little attention has been paid specifically to the career development needs of this

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population (National Association of College and Employers [NACE], 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012).

Addressing this gap in the literature is crucial as the cost of higher education continues to rise and debates ensue about the 'return on investment' of earning a college degree (Adams, 2013; Singletary, 2013). The potential for financial security and career growth are cited among reasons why first-generation college students choose to pursue higher education (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Brooks-Terry, 1988; Shelton, 2011; Walpole, 2003), but the emphasis on perceived value of a college diploma fails to account for the competitive nature of a global employment marketplace (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Schrock, 2013) and the importance of engaging in career planning – occupational exploration, development of a professional network, and participation in experiential education (e.g., internships, field work, study abroad) – during those college years (NACE, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012).

First-Generation College Students

The decision to attend college is a significant one for most young adults, and those who enter higher education as the firsts in their families to pursue this path enroll with a number of challenges generally not faced by their traditional peers (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). First-generation college students likely hail from lower-quality secondary education institutions, low-income backgrounds, and culturally underrepresented populations (Terenzini et al., 1996). They also often proceed through college unsupported by their families and graduate ill-prepared to transition into the professional, traditionally white-collar workforce (Brooks-Terry, 1998).

Pre-College education. The literature repeatedly points out the extent to which first-generation college students are underprepared for college-level academic study (Horn, Nuñez, & Bobbitt, 2000; Martinez et al., 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996; Tym et al., 2004). Not surprisingly, the quality of a student's secondary education is cited as a key factor in anticipated college success. First-generation college students often hail from underserved, urban school districts (Martinez et al., 2009; Tym et al., 2004), where the academic environment may be focused more on following rules and maintaining order than on encouraging creativity and critical thinking (Bowles & Gintis, as cited in MacLeod, 1995), skills crucial at the collegiate level (McMurray & Sorrells, 2009).

Socioeconomic status. First-generation college students are more likely than their non-first-generation peers to come from low-income families (Shelton, 2011). For these students, parental contributions, grant aid, and scholarship funds are generally not enough to cover the cost of attendance, leading to reliance on bank loans and credit card balances to make up the difference (Eitel & Martin, 2009). As a short-term, stop-gap measure to stem the rising debt levels, first-generation college students are prone to dropping classes and enrolling part-time so they can spend more time earning wages (King, 2003; Walpole, 2003). Decisions such as these have lasting effects, including longer periods of time to degree completion and increased likelihood of leaving higher education entirely (King, 2003; Walpole, 2003).

Cultural demographics. The population of first-generation college students is comprised primarily of immigrants and students of color (D'Amico & Dika, 2013; Jehangir, 2010; Shelton, 2013). While these groups are representative of changing

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demographics in the United States as a whole, "academic institutions and particularly large research institutions are unprepared for creating environments of success for these students" (Jehangir, 2010, p. 534). This failure to meet the needs of underrepresented students has been attributed, in part, to a lack of role models (Parks-Yancy, 2012). Essentially, Black, Latino, and other underrepresented groups within the student body are similarly underrepresented among faculty and staff. Additionally, with numerous studies identifying first-generation students as lacking social capital, institutions' lack of attention to filling in the information gaps contributes to the lower enrollment and persistence rates of Black and Latino students (D'Amico & Dika, 2013; Perna, 2000; Shelton, 2011).

Parental influence. For many first-generation college students, the pursuit of higher education involves spanning two different worlds – the one from which they came and the one to which they aspire (Brooks-Terry, 1988). One of the most notable challenges for first-generation college students is the lack of parental insight into the process and the demands of higher education (Dumais & Ward, 2010), and while there is evidence to show that parental involvement increases first-generation college students' degree aspirations (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), it has not significantly increased their degree achievement (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). In some cases, the student serves as a pioneer, a role model for siblings and other family members (Parks-Yancy, 2012). In others, however, students who have just graduated from high school face parental pressure to, "contribute to the family or move out and start their own family…just as the parents had to do when they completed their secondary education" (Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke, 2011, p. 21).

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Career preparation. First-generation college students lack a cohort of supporters who have been through the college-to-career process, and therefore may have limited knowledge about the importance of career development (Dumais & Ward, 2010, Parks-Yancy, 2012, Shelton, 2011). Additionally, an individual's personal connections – what's commonly referred to as their "social capital" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) – are often considered the key to career advancement (Dumais & Ward, 2010, Mehta et al., 2011; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Smith, 2005). The concept of personal connections as a thing to acquire for success is largely attributed to Pierre Bourdieu (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). For nearly four decades, Bourdieu's work, primarily focused on literature and the arts (for a collection of his works, see Johnson, 1993), has acknowledged the success of individuals who have "possession of a large social capital and the corresponding familiarity with the field…" (Johnson, 1993, p. 68). The acquisition of social capital is also key to students' success in securing degree-worthy employment. It is important for college students, first-generation college students especially, to prepare for the transition from student to emerging professional. In higher education, the tools for this transition are in the hands of career counselors trained to provide such insight.

The History of Career Development

The practice of career advising in the United States dates back to the early 20th Century, with the publication of Frank Parsons' 1909 seminal work, *Choosing a Vocation* (Seligman, 1994). Parsons (1909) implores the reader to take note of the importance of career counseling:

There is no part of life where the need for guidance is more emphatic than in the transition from school to work, – the choice of a vocation, adequate preparation for it, and the attainment of efficiency and success. The building of a career is quite as difficult a problem as the building of a house, yet few ever sit down with pencil and paper, with expert information and counsel, to plan a working career and deal with the life problem scientifically, as they would deal with the problem of building a house, taking the advice of an architect to help them. (p. 4)

Parsons had been pleading the case for a formal career advising practice for more than a decade prior to the publication of *Choosing a Vocation* (Parsons, 1909), and his influence in the early 1900s saw the opening of the Vocation Bureau of Boston, a branch office at the local YMCA, as well as "regular appointments at the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and at the Twentieth Century Club" (Parsons, 1909, p. 92). Around this time the United States, spurred on by the industrial revolution, underwent an economic – and vocational – shift from rural agriculture to urban manufacturing (Herr, 2001; Pope, 2000). Against this backdrop in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries came waves of immigration, changing attitudes about women and children in the workplace, and social reformers arguing that workers should be viewed, "not as the chattels of employers, not as property to be consumed and cast aside, but rather of persons of dignity with a right to determine their own destiny" (Herr, 2001, p.198). This confluence of change and progress increasing led to decades of focus on vocational guidance and teacher preparation (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).

It was not until the 1950s, however, that one began to see the emergence of career development as a profession embedded within higher education (Pope, 2000). This step

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was attributed to the federal government's push to compete with the growing Soviet space program by increasing the number of math and science college graduates (Pope, 2000). Additionally, with the G. I. Bill providing increased access to higher education, there emerged a growing need to offer services to returning WWII vets (Schwebel, 1984), primarily in the form of a 'last stop' for a post-graduation job placement (Kretovics, Honaker, & Kraning, 1999). The prevailing attitude in higher education at the time was that of *in loco parentis* – the college assuming the role of the parent (Kretovics et al., 1999) – but over the course of the following two decades, a paradigmatic transition moved higher education toward a model of student development and vocational guidance and job placement toward a model of career planning (Kretovics et al., 1999).

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of career counseling[1], an approach rooted in student self-assessment and occupational exploration (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Kretovics et al., 1999). Emphasis was placed on establishing a sense of self and developing an understanding of how personal characteristics and traits could be aligned with specific careers (Kretovics et al., 1999). As had been the case in the early 1900s regarding the immigrant population and child labor, the late 1900s saw increased attention paid to marginalized groups like women and minorities (Herr, 2001). The focus of the career development profession in this timeframe was to serve as a liaison between

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[1] In higher education, the term career 'counseling' is often used interchangeably with that of career 'advising' and 'coaching' (Kuhn, Gordon, & Webber, 2006) attributable to a lack of certification standards for the profession (Pritchard & Maze, 2016). In this study, career counseling will be defined as the practice of "assisting individuals in the development of a life-career plan with a focus on…how [the worker role] interacts with other life roles" (National Career Development Association [NCDA], 1997, para. 1.).

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students and employers (Dey & Cruzvegara, 2014). By the early twenty-first century, students were also being counseled on how to establish and leverage a professional network of contacts and use emerging technologies as part of the job search process (Kretovics et al., 1999).

Contemporary career counseling. Today, career counselors in higher education settings have increasingly focused on building relationships with students over the course of their time in college (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pipkins, Rooney, & Jaunarajs, 2014). The role of career counselors now extends well beyond providing resume reviews and mock interviews (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014), to "preparing students for career development and decision making across the lifespan [so that they] leave college better equipped to navigate today's complex world of work throughout their professional lives" (Pipkins et al., 2014, p. 36). The field of career development, once considered a peripheral service, is transforming into the front-and-center driver of student engagement, "relationship building and creating strong career communities within and beyond campus" (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 14).

This latest fundamental shift has increased attention on the role of career development within the higher education landscape and parallel growth alongside admissions and enrollment management (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). There is general, positive consensus on this new direction (Pipkins et al., 2014; Steinfeld, 2014) and historical precedent in such a transformation: "Every paradigm shift in college career services in the past century was preceded by a major change in societal or economic norms" (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 15). However, as will become evident through further reading, a key social change – the increasing enrollment of first-generation

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college students (Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011), and a troubling economic norm –
the rising cost of higher education (Adams, 2013; Singletary, 2012), are not substantially
being addressed by the career development field.

Career development and the first-generation college student. The potential for
access to greater employment opportunities is a key driver of first-generation college
student enrollment (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012; King, 2003, Walpole, 2003), yet the very
cost of pursuing that education can derail career plans, as students reduce or pause
progress towards degree completion in order to work (Eitel & Martin, 2009).
Additionally, students from disadvantaged environments tend to be less confident in
making career decisions (Olszewski-Kubilius & Scott, 1992) but may not seek career
counseling because of a misconception about its function or an internalized stigma
against asking for help (Ludwikowski, Vogel, & Armstrong, 2009).

By not seeking out the guidance of career counselors, first-generation college
students may miss out on a critical source of social capital (Parks-Yancy, 2012). In a job
market where hiring managers are more inclined to rely upon referrals and
recommendations than a database of resumes, "potential applicants must know someone
who will tell them that the job is open" (Parks-Yancy, 2012, p. 510), and at the entry-
level, that "someone" is likely to be found in the campus career center. Additionally, with
industry's rapid response to technology advances, employees, too, must demonstrate
adaptability in the workplace (Rojewski & Hill, 2014). What this means for today's
college graduates is a need to understand career planning and preparation beyond 'getting
a job' to 'building a career'. For career counselors, the imperative is to make significant
efforts to reach out and draw students in, rather than serve only those who initiated the

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process of seeking career guidance (Ludwikowski et al., 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Scott, 1992; Mau & Fernandes, 2001).

Shared Experience: The Career Counselor as First-Generation College Student

First-generation college students yearn for a sense of belonging at college (Bradbury & Mather, 2009), and herein lies a potential opportunity for career counselors who had, themselves, been first-generation college students, to "build quick and effective relationships" (Pipkins et al., 2014, p. 39) with students based on this shared experience. In counseling, rapport between counselor and client can be established through the use of therapist self-disclosure, a technique in which the counselor shares personal experiences with the counselee as a means of gaining the client's trust (Carnegie, 2004, Farber, 2006; Knox & Hill, 2003). Therapist self-disclosure has been used in psychoanalysis and cognitive-behavioral therapy for several decades (Doster & Brooks, 1974; Knox & Hill, 2003). Among the benefits of this technique that directly align with the career counseling relationship is "…challenging clients' presumptions and erroneous thoughts about themselves and others" (Knox & Hill, 2003, p. 531). Additionally, counselor self-disclosure can provide the client with affirmation and validation of their concerns, a greater sense of self, and emotional closeness to others (Farber, 2006).

As a distinguished professional organization for the career development field, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, more commonly referred to as NACE, provides a set of Principles for Professional Practice of Career Services Professionals (NACE, 2012). Expressed in these principles is the directive indicating that career counselors should have appropriate counseling skills to meet students' needs and be able to provide students with tools to make informed career decisions. Likewise, the National

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Career Development Association, an authority on standards for career practitioners (NCDA, 1997), advocates for the implementation of multicultural career counseling techniques (NCDA, 2009). Yet despite extensive guidelines from both organizations, no formal recommendations exist to prepare career counselors for engaging first-generation college students in career planning and exploration (NACE, 2012), even though this group represents nearly a quarter of today's enrollment (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). Similarly, the professional guidelines established jointly by ACPA – College Student Educators International and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (Bresciani & Todd, 2010), define skill competency levels – a basic practitioner should be able to "establish rapport with students" (Bresciani & Todd, 2010, p. 6) while the advanced practitioner should be able to "provide effective counseling" (p. 7) – without offering best practices to demonstrate those skills.

With the documented effectiveness of counselor self-disclosure in therapeutic settings, first-generation college students' need for greater engagement in career development, and a lack of professional guidelines to meet this need, it would be beneficial to those in the practice of career counseling to know how the sharing of personal experiences with first-generation college students can lead to greater success for this underserved group. While this technique has been alluded to in the literature (Heppner & Heppner, 2003), it has not been thoroughly examined in its applicability to career counseling (C. Hill, personal communication, December 29, 2015; Sendrowitz, 2011).

Problem Statement

As a college degree becomes the primary marker of employment qualification, the number of enrolled students whose parents did not attend college has been steadily on the rise (IHEP, 2012; Lynch, 2013; Mehta et al., 2011). This population of first-generation college students generally arrives on campus unprepared for the rigors of college, funding their own way through college by working a considerable number of hours per week throughout the school year, and potentially supporting other family members financially (Martinez et al., 2009; Tym et al., 2004). The pressures of self-sustenance coupled with a lack of at-home supporters who understand the demands of higher education (Martinez et al., 2009) and the importance of career planning (Parks-Yancy, 2012) result in above-average dropout rates (Ishitani, 2006) and above-average levels of unemployment (Perna, 2000).

In response to the challenges first-generation college students face, a wealth of literature (Ishitani, 2006; Martinez et al., 2009; Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011) has emerged that provides student affairs practitioners, faculty, and university administrators alike with necessary tools to guide these at-risk students in the persistence to degree completion. Oft-cited works by these key researchers clearly outline the pre-college education, assumptions, and expectations of first-generation college students with specific, research-based implications and guidelines for those professionals who provide the support and direction of a student's path through college. A gap in the research emerges, however, when one specifically looks at the literature on first-generation college students and career development. Although the career development profession dates back to the early 1900s (Parsons, 1909) and has

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been an integral part of the higher education fabric since the 1970s (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014), the traditional paradigms and models fail to account for the unique circumstances of the first-generation college student's experience. Further, what little research does speak to this topic indicates that the members of the population who might very well derive the greatest benefit from career counseling will be the least likely to seek it out (Ludwikowski et al., 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Scott, 1992).

Crucial to mitigating the problem of un- and underemployment among first-generation college graduates as a result of degree persistence without career planning is to develop a new career development paradigm that fits today's societal and economic norms (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Counseling of any nature requires a sense of trust and mutual understanding between counselor and client (Farber, 2006; Knox & Hill, 2003), therefore, this new paradigm should be framed in the proactive steps career counselors can take to draw this marginalized group of students in. Industry's demand for a college-educated workforce (Ebersole, 2015) begs the creation of a career development model crucial for first-generation college students' post-graduation financial and professional success (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Pipkins et al., 2014).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to examine how career counselors who, themselves, had been the firsts in their families to go to college use that personal experience to support their first-generation college student clients. This study was inspired by Knox and Hill's (2003) therapist self-disclosure types and the use of self-disclosure in student/counselor career counseling discourse.

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Grounded theory was appropriate for this type of study in that it, "serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). The grounded theory researcher is constructivist in nature, focused on the interactions between parties and the social, cultural, and historical contexts that drive those interactions (Creswell, 2014). This approach, rooted in sociology, is designed, in part, to "be usable in practical applications" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3), and in the case of this study, can inform those who are engaged in the practice of career counseling.

This study focuses on career counselors at four-year public institutions across the United States, in light of the increased demand nationally for bachelor's degrees for employment ("Moving the goalposts," 2014). First-generation college students have a high risk of departing college after two years (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006), therefore restricting the sample takes into consideration the conditions under which first-generation students do make it through a four-year degree. This research study, conducted on a national scale, examined career counselors' individual experiences, separate from the practices within their respective institutions. To that end, participants were solicited via survey, through channels such as the membership distribution lists of professional organizations dedicated to the field of career development in higher education.

Data collection in grounded theory studies can take many forms, and be revised as new information is learned about the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). In this study, data were initially gathered through individual interviews for the purpose of understanding career counselors' experiences as first-generation college students and how they used that

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experience in their counseling practice. Additional sources, such as participant journals, provided a rich set of data in which to ground a theory (Charmaz, 2014) of career development for first-generation college students.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do career counselors who have been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?

2. How do they disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?

3. What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose?

4. How do they use their past experiences to support first-generation college students?

5. What insights emerge from their self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?

Definition of Key Terms

There are several terms used throughout this study that may have different or alternative meanings in other research contexts. For clarity, these terms have been defined below for purposes of this particular study.

Career counselor. An individual who engages in "the process of assisting individuals in the development of a life-career with a focus on the definition of the worker role and how that role interacts with other life roles" (NCDA, 1997, para. 1). The profession of career counseling lacks formal education and certification standards (Pritchard & Maze, 2016). See *counseling* below as to how it differs from advising.

Career development. Alternatively called career planning, it is an ongoing process of self-assessment, reflection, and action taken in the course of exploring career options and taking steps to achieve a career goal (Davies, 2010). As a department within a college or university, an office of career development is generally housed in the division of Student Affairs.

Counseling. A process that emphasizes helping others to recognize, accept, and/or develop their personal attributes as individuals (Butler, 1995). Distinctive from the process of advising – the dissemination of information to help others "learn what they need to know to successfully negotiate and/or adapt to societal standards, rules, and expectations" (Butler, 1995, p. 108).

Counselor self-disclosure. A technique prevalent in psychotherapy in which the therapist reveals personal information in an attempt to establish trust with the client and model behavior for the client to follow (Watkins, 1990).

First-generation college student. A student whose parents did not go to college (Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011).

Social capital. Historically attributed to Pierre Bourdieu (Padgett et al., 2012) and colloquially expressed as "It's not what you know, but who you know" (Popik, 2009, para. 1). For this study, the term refers to a network of family, friends, and colleagues whose collective expertise would be considered an asset to an individual's access to career knowledge and opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

In the practice of counseling, the intended outcome is the "growth and development of the individual [client] to enable him or her to live more freely,

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unencumbered by the myriad maladaptive patterns that tend to restrict, confine, and limit one's potential" (Healey, 1990, p. 21). To that end, clients must sense the relationship with their counselors as trustworthy in order to feel comfortable disclosing all that which is holding back growth and development (Healey, 1990) – "their secrets…their hidden (and no so hidden) feelings…[and] their immediate experiences (Farber, 2006, p. 2). It is in this setting that clients "come to talk about themselves" (Farber, 2006, p. 2).

In traditional counseling techniques, such as those developed by Sigmund Freud around the turn of the twentieth century (Farber, 2006), places the counselor in the role of mirror, reflecting and rephrasing the client's words without offering opinion or judgement (Basescu, 1990). A more contemporary view, however, suggests the process should involve the perspective of both counselor and client (Gill, 1983). This break from counselor neutrality has led to a greater number of counselors disclosing personal information so that "patients come to know their analysts through the shared experience of the therapeutic relationship" (Basescu, 1990, p. 52). Additionally, counselor self-disclosure has been used as a means of modeling appropriate behavior (Bandura, as cited in Doster & Brooks, 1974) and eliciting more in-depth and thoughtful responses from clients (Hendrick, 1990; Knox & Hill, 2003).

Studies have focused on the types of information counselors reveal, such as facts about themselves, their feelings, and personal coping strategies (Farber, 2006) as well as the counselor's admissions of mistakes (Peterson, 2002). The value of counselor self-disclosure has been evidenced by research indicating that clients appreciate knowing their counselors' personal and professional backgrounds (Cashwell, Shcherbakova, & Cashwell, 2003) and have benefited from seeing challenges from a different perspective

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(Peterson, 2002). The technique is not without flaws, however, and has been met with some controversy, as a number of studies (Cherbosque, 1987; Dowd & Boroto, 1982; Hendrick, 1990) have questioned its overall effectiveness, whom it better serves (the client or the counselor), and how it impacts clients' perceptions of counselor professionalism.

Literature that has examined self-disclosure in higher education settings have focused on topics such as teacher self-disclosure's impact on student cognitive learning (Stoltz, Young, & Bryant, 2014), advisor self-disclosure in academic advising (Carnegie, 2004), and responding to students' self-disclosures in the classroom (Lucas, 2007). Stoltz, et al.'s (2014) conducted a quantitative study while the works by Carnegie (2004) and Lucas (2007) were reflective essays. None examined the specificity of the disclosures, their effectiveness in engaging students, or the special circumstances of first-generation college students. A study conducted for a student's doctoral dissertation (Sendrowitz, 2011) examining the influence of counselor self-disclosure in a career counseling environment also did not take into account any of these factors.

In career counseling, professional guidelines, such as those put forth by NCDA (2009) and NACE (2018), state that career services professionals, "without imposing personal values or biases, will assist individuals in developing a career plan or making a career decision" (NACE, 2012, "Principles for Career Services", para. 1), though those guidelines do not propose specific techniques by which to provide such assistance. In *Therapist Self-Disclosure: Research-Based Suggestions for Practitioners,* Knox and Hill (2003) identify seven types of self-disclosures and examples of each, a tool that will form the framework of this study. This framework will be explored in more depth in Chapter 2.

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Delimitations

A potential limitation of this study is the definition of first-generation college student. Using the standard of those whose parents did not go to college (Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011), does not account for students who were perhaps raised by guardians, grandparents, or other relatives. For purposes of this proposed study, the problem was remedied with a broader definition of first-generation college student and a more clearly-defined set of criteria for sampling.

A second limitation of the study is choosing a sample based on a specific job function – career counseling, not advising, coaching, or similar role. While such a limitation is appropriate for a study examining the use of a personal counseling technique, it fails to account for the potential benefits other career development practitioners may provide to first-generation college students. Complementary studies on other aspects of career development for first-generation college students would alleviate the limitations of this particular study.

The choice of focusing the study on practitioners who engage in career counseling at four-year institutions places limitations on the study's reach. The choice is being made in light of the increased demand for bachelor's degrees for employment ("Moving the goalposts," 2014) and the higher enrollment of first-generation college students in public institutions than private ones (Engle & Tinto, 2008). However, given this population's high risk of departing college after two years (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006), a similar study conducted in the community college environment would be of benefit to the research community.

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Taking into considering the three factors above – status as first-generation college student, job function of career counselor, and employment at a four-year institution – for the formation of the sample for this study, the identification of, and access to, participants may pose a significant challenge. Anecdotal evidence (the researcher's personal experience) suggests that career services professional organizations will be amenable to putting out a call for participants via email and other social media, but time, geography, and comfort with web-based interview tools like Skype on the parts of both the research and participant have the potential to limit the scope and reach of this study.

The use of a qualitative study design presents limits on the use of traditional, quantitative terms like *reliability* and *validity* in assessing the trustworthiness of this study's findings (Krefting, 1991). Qualitative research methods are appropriate for "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Further, they "aim to inform action and enhance decision making" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 5). However, the specificity and individuality of the circumstances under observation in qualitative research make the generalization of the findings difficult (Guba, 1981). The use of grounded theory to examine self-disclosure of the shared experiences of first-generation college students – in the context of career counselors and counselees - can provide an engagement model that may be applicable in other career counseling environments.

Along these lines of research rigor, I must account for the potential impact of my being employed in the same profession as my intended sample. Personal biases are likely, "especially if the investigator has a strong affinity for the participants being studied or is a member of the population itself" (Chenail, 2011, p. 255). These biases may present

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themselves in my interview questions, and should be addressed prior to commencing the study. A common remediation technique in qualitative research is to conduct a pilot study (Chenail, 2011), yet given my already predicted limited participant pool, it is crucial I keep as many prospects as possible available for the actual study. Chenail (2011) offers an alternative approach, "interviewing the investigator" (p. 258), in which I would request a colleague or dissertation committee member to conduct an audio-recorded interview with me (the researcher) posing as a study participant. I would then make adjustments to the interview protocol as needed based on the findings recorded.

Significance of the Study

As employers cut training and development budgets yet demand more highly-skilled workers (Rojewski & Hill, 2014), increasingly seeking candidates with at least two years of college education (Gunderson, 2005), greater attention must be paid to the career development centers in our nation's universities. With increasing enrollment levels of first-generation college students (IHEP, 2012), the results of this study have the potential to impact policy, practice, and research.

Policy. A pattern of high unemployment coupled with an extensive number of job openings has existed in the United States for years (Ebersole, 2015; Shipps & Howard, 2013), often referred to as a "skills gap" (Ebersole, 2015) between job seekers' abilities and job functions' requirements, prompting an increase in demand from employers for college-educated candidates (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Cappelli, 2015; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012; Gunderson, 2005). The value of the college credential is evident in research showing that, "on virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment—from personal earnings to job satisfaction to the share employed full time—

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young college graduates are outperforming their peers with less education" (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The financial benefit of higher education is clear, with college graduates earning 62% more than their high school graduate peers (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). This trend has been apparent for decades (Kurtzleben, 2014), but the gap between the college degree haves and have-nots has been consistently growing wider (Pew Research Center, 2014), due in large part to the cost of obtaining that education. "College costs have been rising roughly at a rate of 7% per year for decades. Since 1985, the overall consumer price index has risen 115% while the college education inflation rate has risen nearly 500%" (Odland, 2012, para. 4). As these costs continue to rise, much debate has ensued about the "return on investment" of earning a college degree (Adams, 2013; Singletary, 2013). The focus on the return can – and should – spotlight university career centers as the central hub between academic studies and professional practice. The Obama administration has brought this topic to the national stage through the implementation of the College Scorecard (U.S. Department of Education *n.d.*), which measures, among other factors, median borrowing levels and loan default rates. The site includes a component on graduates' average earnings, noting that the U.S. Department of Education is in the process of compiling that data.

While the White House has demonstrated a commitment to helping college students reduce debt through an income-based repayment program (Slack, 2012), honing in on the value of career development may generate policies at the state and national level that improve the accessibility and quality of career counseling. An example of this policy in action in New Jersey [the researcher's home state] is a recommendation put forth by

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the State of New Jersey Governor's Council on Higher Education to "strengthen links between employers and colleges" (State of New Jersey, 2015, p. 3). This report outlining strategic priorities for the state's institutions of higher education addresses issues of financial support and expanded access, and also recognizes that, "if New Jersey is to compete in the jobs marketplace with other competitor states and nations [it] must ensure that educational change keeps pace with economic change" (State of New Jersey, 2015, p. 18). For this to happen, the Council suggests, action-oriented college/business task forces, comprised of representatives from corporations, academia, and the government must take swift, concrete, and measurable action to ensure the career readiness of New Jersey college graduates (State of New Jersey, 2015).

Practice. As demand for college graduates in the workplace increases and enrollment of first-generation college students follows suit, this study addresses a critical need in higher education. While studies abound on first-generation college student enrollment and retention, the assurance that a population that was quite likely underprepared for college at the outset does not remain underserved crossing that final stage at commencement lies squarely in the hands of an institution's career counselors.

The evolution of the career development field is at a critical junction. While most college campuses across the United States have one or more offices dedicated to career planning/development (NACE, 2015), the specific needs of first-generation college students are generally not part of practitioners' discourse (NACE, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012). In addition, the field is staffed with a variety of personnel, with the terms counselor, advisor, and coach often used interchangeably (Kuhn, et al., 2006). Research suggests that the students who would benefit the most from the services provided in a

career center are the least likely to access them (Martinez et al., 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Scott, 1992), yet for those first-generation college students who do find their way to their campus career center, they may be met by staff who lack the knowledge of or empathy towards their special circumstances to establish connections and provide meaningful guidance (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). These conditions indicate the potential for greater standards and more uniformity of practice within the career development profession.

First-generation college students represent a quarter of today's college enrollment (Redford & Hoyer, 2017), making them a population worthy of increased attention. Potential benefits for the study's participants include an opportunity for self-reflection and deeper thought into the challenges their students face – prompts that may provide an impetus for more meaningful practice in the workplace. Readers of this study who engage in the practice of career counseling have the potential to keep these first-in-family students focused on degree completion, on track to reduce their debt load, and poised to share their positive associations with career planning with future generations of college graduates.

A number of organizations outside higher education are already addressing the career development needs of first-generation college students, providing a potential avenue for partnership with academia. FirstGenerationStudent.com (Degree Prospects, 2015) provides information on finding a mentor, working on campus, and the importance of internships, prompting students to visit their college career centers, "They can help with job searches, internships and researching graduate schools. They also help with resumes, cover letters and job interviews" (Degree Prospects, 2015, "After", Section 2).

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The non-profit organization Center for Student Opportunity (2014) provides an 'I'm First' internet-based forum for first-generation college students to engage with professionals and each other on a variety of college and career topics. The findings from this study have the potential to inform the moderators of these online portals or to serve as a catalyst for the development of partnerships between these organizations and university career centers.

Research. While this study focuses on the approaches and actions of career counselors in a higher education setting, it is equally worthwhile to examine the impact of those factors on students. Several studies, encompassing a range of methodological approaches, could be derived from my initial findings. For example, a large-scale quantitative study could measure first-generation college students' level of engagement and satisfaction with their college career center, and compare those levels with career outcomes. To provide a direct counterpoint to the study I conduct, a researcher might choose a qualitative approach to explore how first-generation college students respond to the advice and personal stories shared by their career counselors. Should counselor self-disclosure be found through these complementary studies to yield positive results, an action research study might take place in a career center where the technique has not yet been tried.

Additionally, as the percentage of students who are the first in their families to enroll in college increases, an important addition to the literature will be documentation of successful attempts at addressing first-generation college students' career development needs. Case study research investigating institutions that demonstrate excellence in first-

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generation college student engagement in career planning would be beneficial for practitioners throughout the field of career development.

Overview of Dissertation

This manuscript-style dissertation is arranged in six chapters. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the career counseling profession and the career planning challenges first-generation college students face in the pursuit of a college degree. Additionally, this chapter outlines the purpose of the research, the research questions, definitions of key terms, a theoretical framework, limitations, and the significance of this research to policy and practice. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the literature on first-generation college student enrollment, the importance of social capital, the practice of counseling in higher education, the counselor self-disclosure model, and the role of career development within higher education institutions to demonstrate the value of my research pursuits. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the rationale for the selection of grounded theory as a research methodology as well as a discussion of strategies of inquiry, participant selection, and data collection techniques. Chapter 4 provides an overview of findings as they relate to the research questions guiding this study. In anticipation of submitting manuscripts for publication, the contents of Chapters 5 and 6 were determined during or following data collection and analysis, but are formatted in the style of journal articles for publication.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Over the course of the past decade, there has been an increased demand for a college educated workforce (Ebersole, 2015; Shipps & Howard, 2013), which had led to an increasing number of first-generation college students (Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011) pursuing higher education. This group, generally characterized as lacking college readiness and exhibiting a high likelihood of dropping out (Horn et al., 2000; Ishitani, 2006; Martinez et al., 2009), has been the subject of a great deal of literature focused on steps teachers, guidance counselors, admissions officers, and other administrators can take to improve this at-risk population's college admission, retention, and graduation rates. However, while the impetus behind first-generation college students' decision to enroll in college in the first place is the desire for greater career success (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Brooks-Terry, 1998; Shelton, 2011; Walpole, 2003), there is a dearth of literature specifically addressing these students' career development needs.

The literature review that follows examines the most prominent career development theories used in training and practice, the pre-college and enrollment experiences of first-generation college students, the intersection of personal and career counseling, and how the psychotherapy technique of counselor self-disclosure may be used to address a key gap in the literature.

The Practice of Career Counseling

An emerging concern in the field of career development is "the shortage of counselor training programs and professionally trained counseling staff to deliver career services to individuals who need them" (Hartung, 2005, p. 13). This sentiment, expressed

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by a multinational panel of career counselors, has been echoed by counselors-in-training themselves who, despite enrollment in a career counseling course, did not feel competent to actually engage in the practice of career counseling (Lara, Kline, & Paulson, 2011). Such statements then beg the questions: What are counselors-in-training being taught and what is it their clients need in practice?

Career counselors-in-training. An examination of the career counseling preparatory literature over the course of a century (Savickas, 2013) yields an extensive history of theory-based teachings. A trifecta of standard theories – vocational guidance (Parsons, 1909), life stages (Super, 1953), and occupational choice (Holland, 1959) – dominate career counseling education (Seligman, 1994). Parsons (1909) is considered the founder of the profession, having developed a trait-and-factor theory of career choice embedded in transition from farm to factory during the industrial revolution (Herr, 2001). Parsons (1909) posited that a counselor-driven reflection of five key traits, namely, "heredity and circumstance, temperament and natural equipment, face and character, education and experience, and dominant interests" (p. 45) examined in light occupational factors such as the training required, availability of opportunities, and "conditions of success" (p. 46) for individual occupations would yield effective career choices. This approach held strong for decades, until Donald Super pioneered a more modern theoretical foundation (Super, 1953). He viewed vocational development as the matching of an individual's abilities and personalities with occupational competencies through a series of life stages characterized as those of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline" (Super, 1953, p.189). Criticizing Super's approach as too generic, John Holland (1959) more specifically defined "occupational environments" (p.

35) and "personal orientations" (p. 36), the intersection of which – occupational choice – could be discovered through intelligence tests and self-evaluation.

Evidence from practitioners trained in these theories shows that career counselors who have been in practice for a number of years are likely to apply them to their work (Brown, 2002). Most prominent among these theorists is Holland (Brown, 2002; Savickas, 2013), whose work presumed that "a person is the product of the interaction of his particular heredity with a variety of cultural and personal forces including peers, parents and significant adults, his social class, American culture, and the physical environment" (Holland, 1959, p. 35). Further, Holland (1959) posited, these factors would form the basis of occupational choice as one sought to find work that matched one's "habitual or preferred methods for dealing with environmental tasks" (p. 35).

Holland's theory, like those of Super and Parsons before him, are most applicable to students who already have a sense of desired outcomes (Holland, 1959; Parsons, 1909; Super, 1953). However, that assumption does not account for the often under-educated and under-informed nature of first-generation college students' experiences (Horn et al., 2000; Martinez et al., 2009; Tym et al., 2004). This gap may help explain why emerging career counselors perceive a disconnect between theory and practice. Qualitative data from a study of counselor education students enrolled in a career counseling course indicate that despite extensive study of theory, graduates feel unprepared for practice (Lara et al., 2011). From a second qualitative study (Scholl, Gibson, Despres, & Boyarinova, 2014), in which an out-of-the-ordinary approach (the use of a film from popular culture) to teaching theory was taken, 90% of students agreed that "using the film helped them to understand how to apply career development theories to people's lives"

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(p. 16) and 86% percent agreed that "using the film promoted their personal engagement with career development and counseling theories" (p. 16), yet also revealed that half the students misunderstood at least one of the counseling theories studied! Such results indicate that better training – and perhaps better theories – are in order to best serve the 21st century college student.

Career counselors-in-practice. It appears that counseling students who have extensively studied theory without practice (Lara et al., 2011) as well as counselors who have extensively engaged in practice without theory (Pipkins et al., 2014) may not be adequately prepared to meet the career counseling needs of today's students (Bedi, 2004; Hartung, 2005; Lara et al., 2011). This is, in part, a reflection of the lack of standardized preparation or certification for the career counseling (Pritchard & Maze, 2016) and the tendency in higher education to apply the term 'counseling' to practices called 'advising' or 'coaching' elsewhere (Kuhn et al., 2006). However one comes to be employed in this field, there is ample literature to support the premise that "theories prove useful for guiding the delivery of career services only if the concepts and models relate meaningfully to the culture" (Hartung, 2005, p. 15; see also Flores & Heppner, 2002), and plenty of evidence showing that first-generation college students hail from a multitude of cultural backgrounds (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Jehangir, 2010; Parks-Yancy, 2012).

To that end, a literature search for "multicultural counseling" often leads to the works of Derald Sue (cf, Sue, 1977; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), recognized for his expertise in bringing attention to the disparity between traditional counseling approaches and the lived experiences of non-White clients (Romero & Chan, 2005; Sue,

1977). Kiselica (1998), who cites much of Sue's work, noted a steady growth in literature on multiculturalism through the 1980s and 1990s, and offered recommendations, based on his own experience, for how Anglo – defined as "non-Hispanic, White, and of European ancestry" (p. 6) – counseling psychologists should prepare for, engage in, and train others on multicultural practice. Kiselica's (1998) motivation seems genuine, though perhaps a bit misguided. In describing his segregated upbringing, he notes how missing out on experiences like gospel choir and reggae music affected him and how he "encourages Anglo trainees to openly mourn the destructive effects of racism on their lives" (p. 10). This piece seems to offer the author (Kiselica, 1998) some catharsis for discovering how White-privileged he is, and alludes to a positive response from his Anglo students when sharing his experiences (Kiselica, 1998). However the article is strictly a narrative, therefore one must be careful in drawing conclusions about Kiselica's (1998) findings or generalizing them to the practice of counseling underrepresented students.

Multicultural Career Counseling

Although Sue (1977) and Kiselica (1998) write of multicultural counseling in general counseling psychology terms, neither speaks directly to it in the context of career counseling. A handful of authors, however, have woven these two concepts together (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Flores & Heppner, 2002; Hughes, Gibbons, & Mynatt, 2013; Vespia, Fitzpatrick, Fouad, Kantamneni, & Chen, 2010). The case for career counseling from a multicultural perspective is made clear by Flores and Heppner (2002) who point out the importance of "career counselors' knowledge of how the world of work operates

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for individuals from various racial/ethnic groups" (p. 184) and calls for practitioners to move beyond traditional career counseling theories to more diversity-friendly options.

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) takes cultural context into account. Based on Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, which stressed the dynamic, reciprocal influence of behavior on environment and of environment on person, SCCT (Lent et al., 1994) developed three interconnecting concepts: self-efficacy (individual's recognition of their abilities), outcomes expectations (imagined consequences of making career decisions), and goal representations (visions of future plans). Lent et al.'s (1994) focus on environment and choice have made SCCT a popular framework in multicultural studies, including those of Black (Gainor & Lent, 1998), Asian American (Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999), and Mexican American (Flores & O'Brien, 2002) populations.

A second, more current, career counseling theory with a multicultural approach is that of happenstance learning (Krumboltz, 2009), or HLT. Running counter to established models which focus on matching moment-in-time characteristics with one particular occupation, HLT (Krumboltz, 2009) argues that career counselors should instead, "help clients learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives—not to make a single career decision" (p. 135). HLT embraces the genetic and social circumstances of one's upbringing and a learning process reflective of parental and peer influences (Krumboltz, 2009). On the surface, HLT seems to be a valuable approach for a diverse student body, though little empirical evidence exists at this point to substantiate that claim. A single study (Kim, Jung, Jang, Lee, Rhee, Cho, & Lee, 2014) conducted in Korea has measured (and attested to) the reliability and validity of HLT.

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Despite the potential value of models like SCCT and HLT for a multicultural clientele, the question of counselor effectiveness (Lara et al., 2011) still remains. In a quantitative study of more than 200 career counselors (Vespia et al., 2010), data from a Likert-scale inventory indicated that most participants self-identified as having above-average cultural competence, while an analysis of open-ended questions suggested otherwise. This evidence correlates with Lara et al.'s (2011) findings of a critical disconnect between theory and practice.

Lastly, despite broad attempts at multicultural career counseling, first-generation college students are not well addressed within this body of literature. Two notable exceptions are Olson (2014) and Tate et al. (2015), although only the latter is an actual research study. What Olson's (2014) work contributes is a comprehensive overview of the first-generation college student experience and an extensive history of SCCT while highlighting a handful of examples. These "case studies" (p. 199) however are merely snippets that provide little information about the academic context in which these stories take place, making comparisons to other literature challenging.

Of greater benefit is Tate et al.'s (2015) exploratory qualitative study using focus groups at a large, public institution to examine first-generation college students' thoughts on choosing a career path and on post-college careers. This sample of 15 students, mostly in their first or second year of college (Tate et al., 2015), repeatedly stated their understanding that successful career planning includes the development of a network of knowledgeable professional contacts and their frustration of how easily such networks come to non-first-generation college students. Of equal importance was participants'

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statements about the "assumption made by university staff and faculty that they [the students] had access to a professional network" (p. 9).

One could argue that since first-generation college students often embody the same client traits multicultural counseling sets out to address, and existing research clearly suggests the importance of culture as a component of the counseling relationship, that additional studies specifically aimed at first-generation college students are unnecessary. However, as studies like Tate et al.'s (2015) reveal, first-generation college students' experiences with campus advisors who appear to lack understanding of their needs, especially in the early years of college, can have a direct impact on those students' choice or ability to persist in degree completion and career planning. Therefore, it is imperative that career counselors take these needs into considerations when engaging first-generation college students in the career planning process.

First-Generation College Students

Increasingly, institutions of higher education are seeing upticks in the enrollment of students who are the first in their families to attend college as a result of compelling arguments in favor of earning a bachelor's degree (Pascarella et al., 2004; Shelton, 2011). This particular group, commonly referred to as first-generation college students, bring to campus a set of unique personal characteristics and educational traits that often serve as barriers to college enrollment and degree completion.

Demographic background. The population of students characterized as first-generation college students is generally comprised of immigrants and students of color (Jehangir, 2010). This claim is supported by a study conducted at a large, public university with an enrollment greater than 25,000 students that identified more than 50%

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as the first in their families to attend college – and nearly a third of that group as students of color: "17% African American, 6% Hispanic/Latina(o), and 5% Asian" (D'Amico & Dika, 2013, p. 179). A study conducted at a similar institution with a 28% first-generation college student enrollment rate (Tate et al., 2015) yielded a sample where 60% of participants were Black, Latino, or Asian. Likewise, the newly-enrolled first-generation college student population at a private, liberal arts college represented 52% of the incoming class with 40% student of color (Banks-Santilli, 2014)

Another prominent first-generation college student trait is their likelihood to come from families with low income (Shelton, 2011; Terenzini et al., 1996). Lack of funding for college increases students' reliance on loans (Eitel & Martin, 2009) and has been shown to impact the number of colleges first-generation college students apply to, a factor based on the number of application fees they can afford to pay (Banks-Santilli, 2014). Often navigating the nuances of the financial aid process alone (Banks-Santilli, 2014), the funding provided often does not cover students' costs (Jehangir, 2010). As a result, first-generation college students are more likely to slow or pause their enrollment in order to earn enough money to continue (King, 2003; Walpole, 2003).

Academic preparation. Using quantitative data from 3,480 students across 23 higher education institutions that mirrored ethnic and gender enrollment rates nationwide, Terenzini et al. (1996) identified a number of pre-college and in-college attributes on which first-generation college students and traditional students differed. With regard to academic preparation for college, first-generation college students spent less time per week studying, demonstrated lower critical thinking skills, and were less likely to be enrolled in honors-level courses (Terenzini et al., 1996). These academic experiences in

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high school then impact academic experiences in college. In a study of community college students (Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003), quantitative data garnered from the students over the course of their first two years of study indicated that first-generation college students, "completed fewer credit hours; studied less; took fewer courses in the natural sciences, mathematics, and the arts and humanities; [and] had lower college grades…" than their non-first-generation peers (p. 425).

Persistence to degree. Ernest Pascarella ("Ernest T. Pascarella", 2015) and Patrick Terenzini ("Patrick T. Terenzini", *n.d.*) are two of the most prolific researchers on student persistence in higher education and have co-authored several works on first-generation college students. In the mid-1990s, they recognized that a number of studies had examined first-generation college students' pre-college expectations and transitions into the workplace but few had actually evaluated this population's experiences *in* college (Terenzini et al., 1996). Terenzini, Pascarella, and others set out to identify the student characteristics that impact the path to degree completion, choice of study, and experiences in and out of the classroom via quantitative study (Terenzini et al., 1996).

Parsing out the various traits indicative of degree-completion success that seemed to be missing from the first-generation college student's experience, Terenzini et al. (1996) cautioned that this growing student population was at risk, noting the "the need to smooth first-generation students' transitions from work or high school to college and to extend active, targeted support throughout their first year, if not beyond" (p. 17). Subsequent work by these authors examined the experiences of first-generation college students in the community college setting (Pascarella, et al., 2003) and a follow-up to Terenzini et al.'s (1996) work (Pascarella et al., 2004). In the latter, the authors examined

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a range of student outcomes by the third year of college, including writing skills, openness to diversity, learning for self-understanding, and education degree plans (Pascarella et al., 2004). Notably absent from their work is a discussion on the application of these outcomes to post-graduation success.

Around this same time, another oft-cited researcher, Terry Ishitani (2006), set out to examine the degree completion characteristics of continuous enrollment, acceleration credit hours (e.g., pre-college credits earned via Advanced Placement tests), and length of time to graduate. His study raised the alarm on the "precipitous decline" (p. 870) in first-generation college student enrollment after the first year of college and subsequently lower survival rates each year afterward for this population compared to their non-first-generation peers. Common characteristics of students at risk of departure from college – low family income, lesser educational expectations, inferior quality of high school education, higher enrollment in lower-tier post-secondary institutions – were, as other studied had shown, to be prevalent among first-generation college students (Ishitani, 2006). Acknowledging that "concrete recommendations on types of effective interventions that would reduce departure risks among first-generation students [were] beyond the scope of this study" (p. 881), Ishitani (2006) nevertheless recommended that higher education administrators focus on the first year of college, paying special attention to the greatest risk of departure after that time. As with Terenzini et al. (1996), Pascarella et al. (2003), and Pascarella et al., (2004), the emphasis in Ishitani's (2006) work was admission and retention, without acknowledgement of the preparation needed to embark on a career or on the importance of establishing a professional network of contacts.

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Social capital. In describing culture as, "not what one is, but what one has" (Johnson, 1993, p. 234), Bourdieu established the concept of cultural capital as having an appreciation for literature and the fine arts, positing that the knowledge derived from being in possession of such capital elevates one's real and perceived social status. From this model emerged the similar, somewhat interchangeable, concept of "social capital" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000), generally defined as an individual's network of personal contacts. The stronger the network, the greater the access to knowledge and opportunity (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

A substantial portion of the first-generation college student literature speaks of social capital as a student's network of contacts who can provide guidance and support throughout a course of collegiate study (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Mehta et al., 2011; Parks-Yancy, 2012). For first-generation college students, this network generally does not include parents, who lack the personal insights about the college application process, financial aid, and deciding where to attend (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Mehta et al., 2011; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). It is therefore necessary for colleges and universities to step in and fill the void. Bourdieu himself advocated for such intervention, noting that,

> Only an institution like the school, the specific function of which is methodically to develop or create the dispositions which produce an educated person…could offset (at least partially) the initial disadvantage of those who do not receive from their family circle the encouragement to undertake cultural activities…" (Johnson, 1993, p. 233)

Social capital is a critical component of career planning in two key ways: career exploration and access to employment opportunities. First, in both traditional (e.g.,

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Holland, 1959) and modern (Krumboltz, 2009) career counseling methodologies, the counselor has access to information about occupations as well as to tools for engaging students in self-reflection. Responding to the rapid-changing technological and social communication advances of the 21st century, career counselors can also help their clients envision career paths beyond the immediate future to a much longer, broader "life course" (Vondracek & Hartung, 2002, p. 375) Secondly, multiple analyses of hiring trends (Crispin & Mehler, 2014; SilkRoad, 2016) highlight the value of personal connections in securing employment. In Crispin and Mehler's (2014) survey of 50 large U.S. corporations, 20% indicated hiring from personal referrals and nearly 60% identified the professional social media site LinkedIn as "a critical component for their recruiters and sourcing groups" (p. 5). Gleaning data from a sample nearly 20 times larger (1,200 companies), the analysis conducted by SilkRoad (2016) concurs, driving home the frequently said and empirically proven concept of "It's not what you know but who you know" (Popik, 2009, para. 1) that matters in a job search.

Empirical evidence indicates that those who seek out career counseling are satisfied with the results (Mau & Fernandes, 2001), but this same study also reveals that non-traditional and culturally underrepresented students – two characteristics often attributed to those who are first-generation college enrollees – are less likely to seek out career counseling, missing out on this valuable piece of social capital. For first-generation college students, the institution has the potential to serve as the starting point for the establishment of that network.

Consistently, the literature paints the same academic, socioeconomic, demographic, enrollment, and social picture of the first-generation college student

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experience. These traits have primarily been drawn from quantitative studies (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Ishitani, 2006; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Mehta et al., 2011; Padgett, et al., 2012; Woosley & Shepler, 2011), and while valuable in identifying the need for continued research, do not necessarily capture the *importance* of the pursuit. What the few qualitative studies (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Jehangir, 2010, Parks-Yancy, 2012) reveal is that what first-generation college students need most in planning for a career is someone to talk to, yet little of the career counseling literature addresses this need.

Personal Counseling and Career Counseling

The most fundamental shift in the practice of career counseling has been a move away from simply matching client traits to occupational characteristics through pre-fabricated interest inventories to a more holistic approach of getting to know the client. This transition, traced back to the early 1990s, positions the career counselor as less of a knowledge disseminator and more of a guide toward client self-discovery (Savickas, 1993). The modern career development approaches taken by Lent et al. (1994), Krumboltz (2009), and Tate et al. (2015) uphold Savickas's (1993) position, that "career counselors are now becoming cultural workers who seek to remove barriers that keep people from speaking for themselves" (p. 210). In other words, career counselors must consider clients' heredity and heritage, culture, and pre-college experiences as part of the counseling process (Flores & Heppner, 2002).

Just as research suggests career counseling models should increasingly incorporate psychological constructs into practice (Niles, 2003), so too does it personal counselors, psychologists, and the like to "focus on the study of work in people's lives in which work is considered to be a central human activity that is not tied to or solely

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located in the occupational structure" (Richardson, 1993, p. 427). For example, counselors who traditionally just focus on a client's personal well-being, self-esteem, and emotions, should be aware of how these factors impact and influence job satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2012).

What these two bodies of research indicate, in essence, is that a continued examination of how career and personal counseling are intertwined is warranted. Indeed, some research suggests that this examination is necessary to demonstrate empirically that career counseling is, in fact, part of psychological practice (Whiston, Brecheisen, & Stephens, 2003). Tinsley, Tokar, and Helwig (1994) quantitatively examined students' expectations of the general practice of counseling against satisfaction specifically with career counseling, with results indicating a high correlation between the two. Expectations of counseling as defined in this particular study (Tinsley et al., 1994) fell into two categories: Personal Commitment, meaning "clients' expectations to assume personal responsibility for working hard and achieving progress in counseling" (p. 328) and Facilitative Conditions, such as acceptance, genuineness, self-disclosure, and trustworthiness. These conditions were cited as being "theoretically necessary for progress in counseling" (Rogers, at cited in Tinsley et al., 1994, p. 328). While Tinsley et al.'s (1994) study was based on a small sample and only considered the initial counseling session, it supports the notion, examined in more detail below, that of utmost importance in the counseling relationship is the quality of engagement between client and counselor.

Counselor Self-Disclosure

While a number of works on counselor self-disclosure date back decades (see Doster & Brooks, 1974), Stricker and Fischer's 1990 edited volume, *Self-Disclosure in*

the Therapeutic Relationship, serves as a seminal work on the revelations that emerge in a counseling relationship. On the premise that clients seek out therapy to return to a better state of mind, (Stricker & Fischer, 1990), it is evident that such goals are achieved through the development of a client/therapist relationship so trustworthy that clients reveal, and then examine, intimate details of themselves. Just one chapter in this volume, however, addresses *counselor* self-disclosure (Jackson, 1990), but significant interest in this topic is evident in later literature (e.g., Audet & Everall, 2010; Cashwell et al., 2003; Farber, 2006; Knox & Hill, 2003).

A number of studies (Audet & Everall, 2010; Cashwell et al., 2003; Cherbosque, 1987; Dowd & Borotto, 1982) set out to gauge the benefits and disadvantages of the practice on clients. Noteworthy within these studies is that while the phenomenon under examination is one of human interaction, nearly all of the research is quantitative; eve more intriguingly, these data were gathered from non-clients observing hypothetical counseling situations. The studies conducted by both Dowd and Borotto (1982) and Cherbosque (1987) involved participants watching video clips of counseling sessions and answering a series of survey questions. In both cases, counselors who self-disclosed were perceived as unprofessional and untrustworthy (Cherbosque, 1987; Dowd & Borotto, 1982). Using written transcripts as the basis for judgement, Andersen and Anderson's (1985) quantitative study yielded that positive or negative perceptions of counselor self-disclosure were directly correlated with the nature of the disclosure itself: positive counselor self-disclosures were viewed as beneficial, negative ones perceived as not helpful to the counseling relationship.

One of the few studies to assess the value and effectiveness of counselor self-disclosure from actual clients is the work of Audet and Everall (2010). In this qualitative study, the sample was composed of participants who had experienced counselor self-disclosure in a therapy-type setting. Participants were interviewed by the researcher for feedback on the experience. Contrary to the quantitative studies that showed counselor self-disclosure to be a negative technique, this qualitative study of real client experiences yielded quite the opposite. Participants in Audet and Everall's (2010) overwhelmingly found counselor self-disclosure inviting and egalitarian. Clients reported feeling "a sense of relief" (Audet & Everall, 2010, p. 333) and experiencing "a human dimension to the therapy" (p. 334). It is unfortunate that this particular study was conducted with just nine participants. The differentiating results from this type of study warrant further examination, but must be replicated or expanded to yield more generalizable results.

The work of Sarah Knox and Clara Hill (2003) takes a different approach altogether, using existing empirical evidence as the backdrop for their support of the technique. Knox and Hill (2003) outline specific types of self-disclosures and how they might be used in the therapeutic relationship (see Table 1). Their work has been cited extensively in clinical-oriented research (e.g., Bitar, Kimball, Bermudez, & Drew, 2014; Farber, Feldman, & Wright, 2014; Lee, 2014), but only once – and even then, just briefly – in a piece focused on career counseling (Dik & Stenger, 2008). Their work was a quantitative study measuring student satisfaction with a range of practices, including counselor self-disclosure. Although the findings support career counselor self-disclosure, a number of factors – the testing of several practices collectively, the context being a group workshop, a predominately White sample, and the study site being a single

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Catholic university – lacks applicability to the known characteristics and needs of first-generation college students.

Table 1

Types of Therapist Self-Disclosures

	Example
Disclosure of facts	"I have a Ph.D.in counseling psychology and work ...ily with college students."
Disclosures of feeling	"When I have been in situations similar to yours, I f... because I didn't know how things would turn out fo..."
Disclosures of insight	"When I was having a similar conflict with my mal... ...gue, I realized that I shut down because I was afraid t... reject me like my father did."
Disclosures of strategy	"When I faced circumstances like yours, it helped n... as much information as I could so that I would be ...ed for what might happen."
Disclosures of reassurance/support	"I understand your anxiety because I also have a dif... ...hen I have to give a talk."
Disclosures of challenge	"I don't know if you are aware that I, too, am divor... ...ve had to think hard about my contributions to the fa... marriage."
Disclosures of immediacy	"As you describe the cold relationships in your fam... ...eeling very distant and closed off from you. I wonder... similar to how you felt with your family?"

Note. Adapted from Therapist self-disclosure: Research-based suggestions for practitioners. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 59*(5), p. 530, by S. Knox & C. E. Hill, 2003. Reprinted with permission (Appendix A).

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Although the use of counselor self-disclosure as a therapeutic technique is not prevalent in the existing research on career counseling, multicultural counseling, or first-generation college students, key elements from each justify a study to do just that. First, the growing body of evidence that traditional career counseling theories miss the mark with today's college students (Bedi, 2004; Hartung, 2005; Lara et al., 2011; Scholl et al., 2014) opens the door for a fresh look at not only the practice of career counseling itself, but the demographic makeup and cultural experiences of career counselors in practice today. Secondly, there is a natural connection between multicultural counseling and the applicability of self-disclosure, since it has been noted that people of color and other underrepresented cultures "have had the special psychological stresses of adapting to mainstream American society" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 118) to which traditional mental health services have not readily responded. Lastly, few would argue that for first-generation college students, the acquisition of social capital – knowledge from those with shared experiences – is key to academic and professional success (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Mehta et al., 2011; Parks-Yancy, 2012).

Conclusion

The changing cultural composition of today's college campuses (Martinez et al., 2009; Mehta et al., 2011) and the increasing number of first-generation college students (Ishitani, 2006; Woolsey & Shepler, 2011) is a direct result of an economic drive for a more highly-educated workforce (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012). The call for more culturally-competent career counseling professionals through a renewed spirit of training that embraces more modern theories and more aptly serves the needs of today's students (Savickas, 2012; Vespia et al., 2010) must be heard.

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The growing body of literature on first-generation college students consistently notes this population's lack of access to a network of individuals whose shared experiences provide the guidance that their non-college educated parents often cannot. Without an existing model of career counseling that mitigates that deficit, the fundamental premise of my study is that the creation of such a model can be grounded in the experiences of career counselors who had been the firsts in their families to go to college, as they are uniquely positioned to provide today's first-generation college students with the social capital they need to succeed in their transition from college student to career professional.

Without the support structure to engage first-generation college students in career counseling nor a model of counseling that meets the needs of this population, the skill, education, and employment gaps between first-generation college students and their second-generation-or-beyond peers will only continue to widen (Pew Research Center, 2014). My research blends the known characteristics of first-generation college students and the operational practice of career counseling with a technique that speaks directly to the development of social capital.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to examine how career counselors who, themselves, had been the firsts in their families to go to college use that personal experience to support their first-generation college student clients. This study was inspired by Knox and Hill's (2003) therapist self-disclosure types and the use of self-disclosure in student/counselor career counseling discourse. Grounded theory was appropriate for this type of study in that it, "serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). The grounded theory researcher is constructivist in nature, focused on the interactions between parties and the social, cultural, and historical contexts that drive those interactions (Creswell, 2014). This approach, rooted in sociology, is designed, in part, to "be usable in practical applications" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3), and in the case of this study, can inform those who are engaged in the practice of career counseling.

This study focused on career counselors at four-year public institutions across the United States, in light of the increased demand for bachelor's degrees for employment ("Moving the goalposts," 2014). First-generation college students have a high risk of departing college after two years (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006), therefore restricting the sample took into consideration the conditions under which first-generation students do make it through a four-year degree. This research study, conducted on a national scale, examined career counselors' individual experiences, separate from the practices within their respective institutions. To that end, participants were solicited via

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survey, through channels such as the membership distribution lists of professional organizations dedicated to the field of career development in higher education.

Data collection in grounded theory studies can take many forms, and be revised as new information is learned about the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). In this study, data were initially gathered through individual interviews for the purpose of understanding career counselors' experiences as first-generation college students and how they have used that experience in their counseling practice. Additional sources, such as intake surveys, participant journals, and researcher memos, provided a rich set of data in which to ground a theory (Charmaz, 2014) of career development for first-generation college students.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?

2. How do they disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?

3. What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose?

4. How do they use their past experiences to support first-generation college students?

5. What insights emerge from their self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?

Assumptions of and Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

A study of the relationship-building process and social capital acquisition between first-generation college students and their career counselors warranted an approach that offered more than a numbers-driven, statistical analysis. Qualitative research provided the opportunity to examine participants' thoughts and feelings as well as to encourage self-reflection and meaning-making of their experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Research in the social sciences strives to go beyond just knowing that some phenomenon has occurred, but to understand why it has occurred and how those involved impact and are impacted by it (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Further, qualitative research is naturalistic and field-based, with data collected often taking place in the participants' physical environments (Creswell, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Such an up-close approach, in which the researcher – not a survey, experiment, or similar tool – is the data collection instrument (Yilmaz, 2013), yields a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

Qualitative research is guided by a number of philosophical assumptions. Ontologically, qualitative research proposes that there is no single objective reality, but several subjective ones, uniquely created by each participant (Yilmaz, 2013). In practice, then, the researcher must seek to make meaning of these various realities by searching for themes (Yilmaz, 2013). This perspective also applies to the researcher, since once immersed in the research setting, the researcher's own version of reality can impact the environment and the interpretations of what happens within (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Acknowledging and embracing this bias is a core axiological and epistemological assumption of qualitative research (Yilmaz, 2013). In gathering data, the qualitative researcher seeks to hone in on a particular group or specific set of circumstances (Rubin

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& Rubin, 2012). The data, when examined, are used to prepare an in-depth picture of the participants: how they look, what they say [or don't say], how they react in and respond to their environment. Borrowing a term from social anthropology, Geertz (1973) called this richly painted portrait one of *thick descriptions*.

Every researcher enters the field with a personal worldview, or way of understanding reality (Hall, Griffiths, & McKenna, 2013). This perspective, referred to as a research paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005), provides a contextual setting for the study at hand. One such paradigm is constructivism, which at its core, posits that reality is relativistic, belongs to the individual, and is influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist researcher recognizes these factors in him/herself as well as in a study's participants, and seeks to create (construct) a reality of the phenomenon being studied through direct interaction with the participants (Ponterotto, 2005).

The characteristics of the constructivist paradigm are found to align with the traits of effective counselors (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). These characteristics include accepting others' points-of-view, identifying themes in client statements, and eliciting as much information as possible before drawing conclusions (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). Counseling is a person-centered endeavor and as such should use humanistic language (e.g., empathy, relationship, and genuineness) to describe the counseling process (Hansen, 2014). So too should research in counseling psychology. In the constructivist paradigm, "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111), a supposition that supported this study in which participants were able to tell their stories and the researcher was given the opportunity to

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construct a portrait of how career counselors who had been first-generation college students disclose that identity to – and use it to support – their first-generation college student clients.

Strategy of Inquiry

Grounded theory guided the design of this qualitative research project, a methodology whose origin is credited to Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). Counter to traditional scientific research in which a theory is stated and then data collected to prove or disprove that statement, in grounded theory, data are collected first, then used to generate a sociological theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such a technique was designed specifically for sociologists, who, in the authors' opinion, were the only ones "trained to want it, to look for it, and to generate it" (p. 7). To conduct such studies, researchers first identify a group to examine, concurrently gather and analyze data from group members, then select one or more additional groups to research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The authors emphasized that only the first group could be preselected, and that data collection techniques and targets could not all be preordained, since the very assumption of grounded theory research is that the initial data collected and analyzed inform an emerging theory, which in turn leads the researcher to revise methods of inquiry and select additional theoretically relevant groups for study, in a process called constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The constant comparative approach involves gathering data through interviews, documents, and the like. After one or two interviews, the data are analyzed through an initial coding process (Charmaz, 2014). This process allows the researcher to step back and see what phenomena are occurring, what patterns have started to emerge, and why

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these occurrences may be of significance. The critical insights generated from this analysis then inform the next set of interviews and so on until data saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2014).

Of significance in grounded theory methodology is its evolution over the past few decades. In its infancy, grounded theory was developed for the comparison of groups, its qualitative analysis framed in the mimicking – albeit with some modification – of quantitative techniques, and its advocacy for researcher-detachment from the subjects under observation emphatic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Strauss, however, these concepts were the viewpoints of Glaser, not of himself (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Unlike Glaser's quest for researcher objectivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Strauss, in partnership with Juliet Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) advanced that, "analysis is the interplay between researchers and data" (p. 13), recognizing that the very nature of qualitative research means being in, and therefore being of, a research setting. Further, Strauss and Corbin (1998) posited that grounded theory did not require a direct comparison between groups. Still using Glaser's technique of analyzing data as it were collected, Strauss and Corbin (1998) focused on the occurrence of incidents and events (phenomena) rather than on physical traits of persons or organizations. This shift not only broadened the approach to grounded theory, but opened up the technique to researchers beyond the specific discipline of sociology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The most recent approach to grounded theory is the one advanced by Kathy Charmaz (2014). She posits that Strauss's divergence from Glaser was not as wide at it may have seemed 20 years ago, and that the core axiological, ontological, and epistemological tenets were still quite similar (Charmaz, 2014). Her approach to

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grounded theory, however, stands apart from that of its founders with the application of a constructivist worldview (Charmaz, 2014). First introduced in the early 2000s, constructivist grounded theory fully embraces the researcher's values and preconceptions as central to, not detracting from, a research study. Further, Charmaz (2014) claims, the writings of traditional grounded theorists clearly took on the tone of researcher authority, presenting findings as definitive statements about a studied environment rather than as the researcher's construction of that environment.

Charmaz's (2014) suggestion that theory is not discovered, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed, but *constructed* by researchers "as part of the world we study, the data we collect, and the analyses we produce" (p. 17) made the constructivist grounded theory approach ideal for the study conducted here. A number of studies in which counselors were the study participants were framed in constructivist grounded theory methodology (Mariska, 2015; Mayer, Surtee, & Barnard, 2015; Scarborough & Luke, 2008). Consistently across these studies, the rationale for this approach was the desire to explore a phenomenon in depth, rather than in broad strokes. Mayer et al. (2015) espouse constructivist grounded theory as an "exploratory and descriptive approach" (p. 105), echoed by Mariska (2015) and Luke and Scarborough (2015) who both note the methodology's emphasis on individual participants' experiences. True to Charmaz's (2014) intent, these prior studies and the one conducted here emphasized the researcher's place *within* the study as central to the construction of an emergent theory.

Participants and Context

As is common in qualitative research, there is no specific sample size target (Patton, 2002). This study sought depth of knowledge by gathering "information-rich"

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(Patton, 2002, p. 244) data from a distinctive group rather than breadth across a wide population. A sample was intentionally drawn from career counselors who were the first members of their immediate families to go to college and who currently work at four-year public higher education institutions. There were three separate defining elements of this population – job function, status as first-generation college student, and place of employ – each of which held significance for this study.

Career counseling operationalized. In its list of core competencies, NCDA defines career counseling as, "the process of assisting individuals in the development of a life-career with focus on the definition of the worker role and how that role interacts with other life roles" (1997, para. 1). Further, NCDA (1997) asserts these competencies should be met by those who hold a master's degree or above, though no particular field of study in which that degree should be held is indicated. The competencies cover a range of knowledge, from career development theory to program management, coaching, and group counseling (NCDA, 1997). In 2009, NCDA updated the descriptions of each competency to more specifically address multicultural career counseling. Here, the emphasis is for career counselors to support and advocate for students across cultural, ethnic, religious, physical, and gender identities, as well as to increase one's own self-awareness of inherent assumptions and biases (NCDA, 2009).

Despite the specificity of these career counseling standards, in higher education administration, the terms counselor, advisor, and coach are often used interchangeably (Kuhn et al., 2006). This practice is so common that the researcher must identify a specific set of behaviors, not simply look at job titles, to source a specific research sample (E. Balin, personal communication, October 12, 2015). Along a continuum of

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practices, advising at its most basic is the dissemination of information to a client, while intensive counseling on the other addresses psychological, emotional, and mental issues impacting a client's state of wellbeing (Kuhn et al., 2006).

Drawing from NCDA's (1997; NCDA, 2009) competencies as well as an article on operationalizing social justice counseling (Lewis, 2011) and another on operationalizing empowerment in vocational assessment (Power, 2006), a prospective participant for this study was defined as a career counselor if he/she engages in the following with undergraduate students:

- Regularly meets [or otherwise interpersonally communicates, such as by phone or video chat] with a student beyond an initial intake meeting (Power, 2006);

- Encourages students to share career planning expectations, perspectives, and needs, and facilitates students' self-exploration of options (Lewis, 2011; Power, 2006);

- Administers and interprets career self-assessment instruments (Power, 2006);

- Conducts outreach to underrepresented or marginalized students (Lewis, 2011) to initiate or increase participation in the career planning process;

- Responds to immediate needs while also promoting long-term developmental and preventive interventions (Lewis, 2011).

Additionally, participants were asked if they had knowingly counseled at least two first-generation college students in their practice, with "knowingly" defined as having learned of the first-generation status through a formal process, such as a referral from a

program/office specifically serving this population, or by student self-disclosure in a counseling session.

Career counselor as first-generation college student. First-generation college students do not necessarily envision academic success (Riehl, as cited in Woosley & Shepler, 1994; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007) but those who engage with faculty and staff are more likely to find it (Mehta et al., 2011). The necessity of social capital acquisition for this population (Dumais & Ward, 2000; Parks-Yancy, 2012) provided the impetus to identify role models who understand, by having lived through, the experience of being a first-generation college student. Further, this study aimed to add to the body of multicultural career counseling by elucidating a theory of how counselors reveal (self-disclose) those shared experiences with their student-clients.

Four-Year public institutions. Although the study strove to examine career counselors' individual practices, not their institutional ones, participants were drawn specifically from those who work at public, four-year colleges or universities. The choice of this institution type was to bring focus to first-generation college students who succeed in obtaining a bachelor's degree, since this group historically has had low completion rates at this degree level (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006). Among the first-generation college students who do pursue a four-year degree, enrollment levels are higher in public institutions than private ones (Engle & Tinto, 2008), increasingly the likelihood that career counselors have engaged with clients who are first-generation college students. Additionally, a key component of this research was the examination of shared experiences between counselors and clients, and it is highly likely that all career

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counselors at four-year institutions hold at least a bachelor's degree (O*NET OnLine, 2017).

Sourcing this initial population required extensive nationwide outreach, made possible through professional organizations. The initial recruitment strategy was conducted via requests submitted through a number of professional organizations dedicated to the field of career development. Examples of such organizations included the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2015), the National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2016), and related regional chapters. For this type of outreach, it is not uncommon to require the assistance of gatekeepers, internal administrators who can grant or control access to the desired population (Abrams, 2010). The use of agencies as a means of participant solicitation has been documented in other qualitative studies (Miles and Okamoto, 2008; Wahab, 2004). A survey (Appendix B) was used as a screening method to identify potential participants. The information collected included demographic background, educational and career history, and a gauge of practice in the field of career counseling.

Despite the specificity of criteria described above, of utmost consideration for a grounded theory study was that the first few participants selected constituted an *initial sampling* (Charmaz, 2014). The distinguishing characteristics of grounded theory research is *theoretical sampling* (Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2002), a second stage of sampling that can only be determined as data are collected and analyzed through the constant comparative method of data analysis (Patton, 2002). The application of theoretical sampling and constant comparison are addressed in more detail below as part of the discussion on data analysis.

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Data Collection

   A brief, initial survey (Appendix B) was used to solicit participants and gather demographic background, educational histories, parental educational history, and the type of engagement with students along with years of employment in the field. This survey also explained the general concept of the research and indicated the expected commitment level for participants.

   Once a survey respondent who met the eligibility criteria was confirmed as a willing participant, he/she was asked to sign an informed consent agreement (Appendix C) and provide an alias which was then used for all documentation and publication. The selection of an alias has been documented as a technique for protecting participant confidentiality (Mariska, 2015; Scarborough & Luke, 2008).

   Data were then collected from participants through journaling, initial interviews, and follow-up questions.

   Participant journal. An interview with each participant was scheduled for 1-2 weeks out following informed consent. In that ensuing time period, participants were asked to reflect upon times they have revealed personal information to students during [in personal or virtual] career counseling sessions. These journal entries, while informal in nature, provided the general context and content of the disclosure. Participants were instructed at the time of selection to only reflect on previous meetings with students. The purpose of this request was to mitigate participants subconsciously or intentionally *starting* to self-disclose. Participants were also instructed to keep this journal separate from their professional work and be prepared to submit it at the initial interview. Journaling is a common practice in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014) and appropriate

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for grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Asking each participant to keep a journal created a set of elicited documents that lent insight into the participants' thoughts, experiences, and feelings that complemented or contradicted information shared during a more formal interview (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, these documents, coupled with interview responses, provided robust data which were later analyzed in the context of Knox and Hill's (2003) counselor self-disclosure types.

Interview. Given the specificity of criteria for participation in this study, it was anticipated that participants would be drawn from local, regional, and national geography regions. The scope of such a study impacted data collection, as it was not practical or feasible to interview all participants in person. The recording of interviews by audio and video means is an accepted qualitative research practice (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), and is, in fact, encouraged in grounded theory as it frees the researcher from notetaking and allows for more focus on and engagement with the participant (Charmaz, 2014). Accommodating distance-affected research studies, it has become increasingly common to use Internet-based tools for conducting and recording interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Regardless of method, the type of questioning that took place during this research study was intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2014). This technique, which minimizes interviewer questioning, is common in grounded theory research because it offers participants significant leeway in telling their stories without strict content borders set by the researcher (Charmaz, 2014). The role of the researcher in intensive interviewing is to let participants tell their stories. Since early data collection influences the direction of a grounded theory study, it was best to proceed with a loosely defined interview protocol

that allowed the participants to do most of the talking (Charmaz, 2014). By listening more than speaking and using minimal prompts, detailed, in depth, vivid, nuanced, rich responses were elicited from the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Instrumentation

Descriptions of each data collection method and how they served to answer the research questions are explained below.

Initial survey. As noted previously, an initial survey (Appendix B) was sent out through national career development professional organizations (NACE, 2015; NCDA, 2016) or related regional chapters to solicit potential participants. The survey was based in part on the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (O'Brien, Heppner, Flores, & Bikos, 1997) and used to verify five specific characteristics of potential participants: that they themselves had been the first in their families to have graduated from college; that the nature of their work aligned with the study's definition of career counseling; that they were employed at a four-year, public institution; that they have counseled first-generation college students; and that they have on at least one occasion shared information about themselves with one of those students. Additional questions solicited additional character traits, such as gender and nationality as well as the number of years they have worked in the field of career development.

The survey itself was created in Qualtrics, an Internet-based survey tool. Access to Qualtrics was provided by Rowan University. There are a variety of question types, including fill-in, multiple choice, dropdown, and checkbox, and no limit to the number of questions allowed in a survey. Several of these techniques were used to create a survey that could be completed in less than 10 minutes. To distribute a survey, a researcher can

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take a system-generated URL and copy/paste it into an email. This latter option was the one employed in this study to reach potential participants through the professional organizations. Prior to official distribution, the survey was pilot-tested with a small group of colleagues to ensure functionality.

Participant journal. The purpose of the journal activity (Appendix D) was to give selected research participants time to reflect on their practice as career counselors prior to the formal interview. There was a semi-formal structure to the journal but minimal instruction, both acceptable practices for elicited documents (Charmaz, 2014). The term 'counselor self-disclosure' (Knox & Hill, 2003) was not mentioned at this time in order to avoid prejudicing or steering the nature of the responses. Participants were simply asked to think about the conversations they had had with first-generation college students during career counseling sessions, and then to jot down information about themselves they had shared with those students. Specifically, participants were asked to recall what they said, what prompted it, and how their client had reacted. Two examples – "I was a history major before I went into career counseling" and "I understand how you feel, because I was also the first one to go to college" – were included to help jumpstart the thought process. Participants were encouraged to think of at least three personal statements they had made to students. Lastly, participants were asked to include information that may help put the recollections in context, for example, if the counselor recalled a student being particularly anxious or excited or if the counselor's revelation was something often shared as part of a standard introduction when meeting students for the first time.

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Charmaz (2014) points out that the narrative participants present in journal writing is not necessarily complete, or even accurate. However, grounded theory research is less about getting the facts straight than it is about understanding the context in which the stories occurred and the participants' thoughts and feelings about those stories (Charmaz, 2014). Since this study did not involve observing counselors in their work, the journal exercise served primarily to address the research questions, "How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students" and "What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose," as well as provide a warm-up to the more formal interview.

Participant interview. The location of the interviews was dictated by geography. The preference was for interviews to be conducted in person, and every effort was made to meet near a participant's location if it was within a 150-mile/3-hour radius of central New Jersey. Since the research sought insight into participants' individual experiences separate from their particular workplace, interviews were conducted at a non-work location, such as a public library, bookstore, coffee shop, or private home. Two small, portable recorders – a primary and backup – were used to record the interviews. Regarding participants for whom meeting in person was not feasible, Internet technology (Skype) was used to conduct and record the interview.

Aiming to keep each interview to one hour, each started with reviewing the informed consent agreement (Appendix C) and answering a few initial, general fact finding questions to establish rapport and help the participant to feel comfortable (Charmaz, 2014). This process took approximately 10 minutes, and participants were then asked to turn to their journal entries, leading into a solid 45-minute block of time to

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delve deeply into their experiences, garnering data that potentially addressed each of the stated research questions. The last five minutes were set aside for closure and next steps, including a plan and timeline for sharing the transcript and/or asking follow-up questions to verify statements made (Charmaz, 2014).

There were a few challenging aspects of creating an interview protocol for grounded theory research. First, Charmaz (2014) recommends writing as few questions as possible, lest the interview "slip into an interrogation" (p. 65). While Charmaz (2014) indicated that she rarely uses a physical interview guide, she suggests novice researchers prepare a set of open-ended questions, primarily to ensure the researcher has prompts at-the-ready for more in-depth topic exploration. Next, once the first few transcripts were coded and analyzed through the constant comparative technique, the interview protocol changed. The initial interview protocol can be found in Appendix D, and was pilot tested with career counselors not eligible to be part of the formal study. Based on feedback from the pilot test, revisions were made before implementation in the formal study. Table 2 denotes how the research questions were addressed by specific elements of each data collection technique.

Table 2

Alignment of Research Questions with Data Collection Techniques

Research Questions	Journal Activity	Interview Questions
1. How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?	X	3, 4, 5

Table 2 (continued)

Research Questions	Journal Activity	Interview Questions
2. How do they disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?	X	4, 5, 6
3. What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose?	X	6, 7, 8
4. How do they use their past experiences to support first-generation college students?		3, 5, 7, 8
5. What insights emerge from their self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?	X	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Data Analysis

Analyzing data in a grounded theory study was a multistep process, and began almost as soon as the first pieces of data came in (Charmaz, 2014). Drilling down from the surveys submitted, two initial participants were selected from among those who met all the basic eligibility requirements, had indicated at least five years of experience in the field, and had answered "Always" to four key career counseling activity statements: "Encourages students to share career planning expectations, perspectives, and needs," "Assists students in understanding how their non-work life (e.g., family, interests, values, personality) affects career decision-making," "Is aware (by referral, inquiry, or student disclosure) that he/she is meeting with a first-generation college student", and "Shares personal information about him/herself with students to develop rapport and/or provide support." Additionally, these first two participants were chosen from a geographic region

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local to the researcher, as preference was given to interviews that could be conducted in person rather than by phone or video chat.

Following the first two interviews conducted, the audio file from each interview was sent to Landmark Associates, a transcription service recommended by a former colleague who had recently completed data collection for his doctoral research (R. Brown, personal communication, April 6, 2016). Subsequent interview audio files were sent to a more timely and cost-effective service, Rev.com. With both companies, the files were transcribed verbatim, including pauses, stutters, and filler words (e.g., "um") with timestamps every five minutes.

Coding. After receipt of the first two transcripts, field research was temporarily suspended so that these transcripts could be reviewed and coded. This was the most crucial step in grounded theory data analysis, what is referred to as the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014). This process is designed to give the researcher a chance to code the data, start developing a theory about the phenomenon under investigation, and best determine how to proceed with future data collection (Charmaz, 2014). In general, there are two or more stages to coding data in grounded theory: an initial review of the "words, lines, segments, and incidents" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 109) displayed in the transcripts, a second, more focused coding process to decide which direction to take the research, and additional options to be determined by the nature of the research and the experience of the researcher. As additional interviews are conducted, this coding process is repeated, with a continuous cycle of data collection and analysis to effectively hone in on particular elements of the broader research topic and generate a theory from them (Charmaz, 2014; Holton, 2010). The process concludes when the

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researcher has reached data saturation: an insightful, analytical suggestion of theoretical relationships arrived at through careful, continual, increasingly-focused, and evermore precise data gathering and analysis (Charmaz, 2014).

To begin the initial coding stage, the interview transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose, a web-based software application designed for qualitative data analysis. From here, the transcripts were read and tagged with an initial set of manually-created codes. Grounded theory studies align themselves with multiple initial coding techniques (Charmaz, 2014). For example, in the initial coding stage, a researcher might look at data word-by-word to seek out very particular nuances of speech, or line-by-line to source patterns of behavior from observations in the field (Charmaz, 2014). The nature of this study, however, lent itself to a slightly different initial coding technique called incident-by-incident. The identification of incidents, or indicators of something happening (Holton, 2010), and the comparison of such incidents across interview transcripts, affords the grounded researcher the opportunity to capture participants' experiences categorically and create an analytical framework around these phenomena (Charmaz, 2014).

While these initial codes served as a starting point, the second coding segment, referred to as focused (Charmaz, 2014) or intermediate (Birks & Mills, 2015) coding deepened the data analysis. This approach is standard in grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014) as an opportunity for the researcher to categorize the initial codes, to keep those that seem to signify a line of inquiry worth further pursuit, and to set aside those that appear to represent anomalies (Charmaz, 2014). Once again, the software tool Dedoose was employed for this task. Features of the tool include a code frequency indicator to see how often a particular code was used and a code tree which allowed for

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clustering and reordering of codes used. The end result of this focused coding technique was a more concise, categorical assessment of the phenomena under study. Success in this endeavor comes from the researcher's immersion in the data while setting aside preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2014). In this grounded theory study, the interview transcripts were visited and revisited while participants were asked for clarification, to allow the data to be continually revealed. These revelations, as part of the constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2014) informed the selection of additional participants as well as the re-coding and re-categorizing of data until a core set of categories emerged (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Unique to grounded theory research is a third, more advanced, coding technique called theoretical coding (Glaser, 2013). Theoretical codes are not created, but selected, by the researcher to demonstrate broader abstract ideas found within the research (Glaser, 2013). The application of theoretical codes to the data elevates a study from a description of a phenomenon to a "high level of conceptual abstraction" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 115). In other words, theoretical coding took a summary of career counselors' experiences and transformed it into a theory of career counseling grounded in the career counselors' experiences. Charmaz (2014) considers this technique controversial and perhaps beyond the skill of the novice grounded theory researcher, her argument being that the researcher's claim of theory *emerging* from the data may very well just be the researcher's desire to see in the data the application of codes, rendering the research muddied. Glaser (2013) however provides an outline for "staying open" (para. 1) to the emergence of codes and has published several books in which sets of established codes can be found. One such tome (Glaser, 2005) was used for the theoretical coding process

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in this study. The choice of this particular work was based on its relative recent publication among Glaser's (2005) theoretical coding books. Additionally, as this text served as an addendum to his previous works, it provided a short list from which to work as a first-time grounded theory researcher. To curb the tendency to force theoretical codes to emerge, this coding process did not occur until several memos had been written and data saturation had been reached.

Memo-Writing. Following – and perhaps even throughout – the process of coding interview transcripts, the grounded theory researcher needs a venue for analysis and sense-making of those data. Memo-writing provides that venue (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). For this study, two memo-writing activities were pursued: a methodological journal and a codes-to-categories evaluation. The former, a methodological journal, is a technique for reflection on the interviews, expressing possible themes emerging from the data, and checking the influence of personal bias on data collection – a common concern in a study like this in which the researcher conducts a study in his/her own professional field (Charmaz, 2014). The methodological journal was also the space in which the contents of the journaling activity and interview transcripts were examined in constant comparison with Knox and Hill's (2003) framework to look for patterns that might inform a theory of counselor self-disclosure in career counseling.

The second technique, referred to as codes-to-categories, was a deeper and broader examination of the coded interview transcripts. Memo-writing here was analytical in nature and sought to capture the essence of what participants were saying – or not saying and what connections, if any, could be made between participants' stories

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(Charmaz, 2014). At this stage of the memo-writing process, the demographic and career history data from the initial surveys were revisited for additional insights that would inform the selection of the next participant(s). These memos were recorded and saved in Dedoose as part of the data analysis process. As data collection and the constant comparative analysis continued, the categorized codes were more solidified and created a clearer outline for what became the formal conclusions of this research study.

Theory generation. As the methodology suggests, the outcome of a grounded theory study should be a theory based upon (grounded in) the researcher's analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2014). Birks and Mills (2015) describe this outcome as a storyline. Through the constructivist lens, which accounts for the individual realities created by each participant as well as by the researcher, (Charmaz, 2014; Ponterotto, 2005), the storyline that emerged from this study was one framed in the research participants' personal experiences as both first-generation college students and career counselors to students from similar academic circumstances today. The data yielded insights into their struggles and successes as students, the decision-making that led them to the career counseling profession, the influence of their backgrounds on their counseling practice, and the nature of the career counseling dynamic when those histories are shared with students.

Constructivist grounded theory is a series of reflections (Charmaz, 2014), and the theory realized through this study was one of interpretation (Charmaz, 2014). Each participant had a story to tell, and this study strove to make meaning of both their unique and collective experiences. Grounded theory methodology is largely individualistic, leaving its outcomes prone to criticism for a lack of generalizability (Charmaz, 2014).

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However, in his support of theoretical coding, Glaser (2005) notes that, "all substantive theories have general implications, that is fit many areas of social life" (p. 79). The emergence of theoretical codes within the data gathered provided the vehicle for extrapolating the findings of this particular study to a broader set of research on career and personal counseling, higher education, and the college student experience. Applying a "renewed emphasis on actions and processes" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 245) to the data analysis of these particular career counselors yielded a theory that could be contextually broadened beyond the scope of this study.

Trustworthiness

One of the most important steps in presenting the findings of a qualitative research study is demonstrating the trustworthiness of the data collected and the rigor of the analysis (Guba, 1981; Toma, 2006). Guba (1981) outlined four particular aspects of trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher should address: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. The first of these aspects, *truth value*, aligns with the more well-known quantitative term *internal reliability* (Guba, 1981). Here, the qualitative researcher must show credibility in claims made about the data, without having had a specific hypothesis to test nor one single reality constructed by the research participants. The general approach to making this so is to spend extensive time in the field and to invite others (e.g., trusted colleagues) into a review of the analysis. Next, the qualitative researcher must demonstrate *applicability* of the research, or the ability of a study's findings to be replicated in or transferred to another (Guba, 1981). This aspect is particularly challenging in qualitative research, whose very premise is that the phenomena are unique to the people and the setting of a given study (Guba, 1981). One

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can, however, take care to gather and present thick descriptions of the environment and participants, affording future researchers the opportunity to compare research done in similar contexts (Guba, 1981). The third aspect of trustworthiness to be addressed is *consistency*. In quantitative research, a reliable test or other instrument will produce consistent results every time it is used. In qualitative research, however, the researcher *is* the instrument, and human nature is not consistent. Addressing consistency in qualitative research does not mean going from researcher-to-robot, but acknowledging inconsistencies and their root causes (Guba, 1981). Lastly, one must attempt to show *neutrality*, or objectivity, in the presentation of research findings (Guba, 1981). Noting that qualitative research is inherently guided by the belief and value systems of the researcher and the researched, the key to this aspect of trustworthiness is the ability for one to confirm or verify the data generated in a qualitative study (Guba, 1981).

The techniques used to show trustworthiness in qualitative research differ significantly from those used in quantitative research, and are specially designed to account for the naturalistic inquiries and interpretive analyses that are central to a qualitative study (Toma, 2006). Grounded theory research has some of these techniques built in (constant comparison and member checking), and they, as well as an additional third qualitative research technique (peer debriefing) are described below to address questions of trustworthiness and rigor in this particular study.

Constant comparison. The constant comparative method of data analysis is central to grounded theory studies (Charmaz, 2014). In this approach, data are collected, coded, interpreted, and compared in a continuous cycle. Such an approach prompts the researcher to step away from data collection, assess what has been learned to that point,

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and use that assessment to refine and focus the direction of the study (Charmaz, 2014). The collection of rich, descriptive data and the use of memo-writing as a tool for this constant comparison documented the process of exploration and interpretation of participant responses. These steps lent credence to the credibility and applicability of this study. Additionally, the memos represented a written audit trail of the data analyses, a key component for establishing the neutrality of research and for addressing issues of consistency and dependability (Guba, 1981). As a constructivist grounded theory researcher, it was imperative to demonstrate how personal values and biases were kept in check when grounded theory at its core is a personal, reflective assessment of how participants make meaning of a phenomena (Charmaz, 2014).

Member checking. A second rigor technique used in qualitative research in general, and grounded theory research in particular, is that of member checking (Guba, 1981). The purpose of this technique is to verify that how a participant's response was interpreted was in fact how the participant intended it (Toma, 2006). This technique was employed to generate credibility or truth value (Guba, 1981), by sharing the transcripts of each interview with the respective participant and asking if there was anything they wished to clarify or restate. As Guba (1981) suggested, the original transcript, the record of inquiry, and documented changes were kept as part of an audit trail.

Peer debriefing. The third approach taken to ensure rigor and trustworthiness in the research was that of peer debriefing. The findings were shared with other researchers, in this case the members of a dissertation committee. The purpose of this approach was to seek the trusted opinion of ones familiar with, but not involved in, the research so as to ensure interpretations were accurate, supported, and appropriate (Guba, 1981; Yilmaz,

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2013). As with the member checking technique, requests for feedback, recommendations made, and changes to my research report as a result of said recommendations were documented to provide a record of credibility and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

Role of the Researcher

I have been a career advisor – and counselor – for nearly two decades, at both private, elite institutions and public liberal arts colleges. I have prepared students to interview with high-profile companies, have taught American job search practices to a global cohort of international students, and have guided undergraduates through the process of identifying potential career paths, and yet, in what can only be described as a great personal enlightenment, I came to realize that many of the assumptions I had made and approaches I had taken for almost 20 years have not effectively or equitably meet the needs of all my students.

A conversation with a student lamenting her parents' inability to understand her tuition bill awakened me to the special circumstances first-generation college students face in their pursuit of higher education. Until this moment, I had thought myself to have an open, globally-oriented mindset, yet this conversation clearly proved why Derald Sue (1993) cautioned that "White professionals must realize that multiculturalism deals not only with abstract, theoretical ideas but with real human conditions" (p. 247). Sharing this discovery with high-level administrative and several faculty colleagues yielded positive support for further research, but discussion of this topic with my fellow career advisors generated just the opposite reaction, ranging from an 'I was a first-gen and I figured it out' attitude to general indifference towards the needs of the institution's first-generation college students.

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In digesting my colleagues' differing viewpoints as I continued my doctoral coursework, I was – unknowingly, at the time – embarking on a course of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). What transforms in transformative learning is one's frame of reference, the perspective from which one sees the world (Mezirow, 1997). Personal experiences, beliefs, and assumptions form the core of one's framework, and transformative learning embraces not only an examination of one's own perspective (Mezirow, 1997) but an understanding of others' perspectives as well (Mezirow, 2003). To grasp an understanding of the first-generation college student experience beyond the literature, I spoke to first-gens I knew, including my father and my college roommate. I reflected on professional connections I had made in college, the ease with which I had sought help when needed, and the expectations of success that had been set and defined by my parents. The stark contrast of opinion among my own colleagues instilled in me an urgency to look outside my own institution and examine career counseling practices in a broader context.

As I embarked on this study, I recognized that I am partly of, but partly outside, my participants' space. Professionally, I engage in the same practices, but had to make sure I kept my 'researcher hat' on during the interviews and not devolve the conversation into a comparison of work environments. Academically, our experiences are different. I was not a first-generation college student, and was not even aware of the term until a year or so into my doctoral studies. While I did not anticipate this difference negatively impacting the interview dialogue, I needed to focus on letting my participants tell their stories without the injection of my preconceived notions.

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Ethical Considerations

The greatest imperative in conducting this research was the protection of the participants (Eikeland, 2006). The first step toward this goal was the completion of a training program through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, or CITI. Through a series of modules, users are certified to conduct research in a variety of settings; in this case, social, behavioral, and education research. Additionally, there were a number of steps inherent in the research process to protect the participants, such as asking each participant to select an alias so as to remain confidential (Mariska, 2015; Scarborough & Luke, 2008). The decision to use aliases as opposed to the more generic label of 'Participant 1', for example, stemmed from a personal belief that qualitative research, by nature a study of people's experiences, resonates more with readers when names are used as part of the storytelling. It was my responsibility to alert the participants that their aliases would be part of a published document, so they should be careful not to intentionally or subtly reveal their true identities. Additionally, since my research was focused on counselors' individual experiences and not the practices at a particular institution, I avoided referencing any given college or university by name. I had no vested interest in any particular story, only the collective theoretical concepts that emerge from the research.

Eikeland (2006) notes that, "ethical dilemmas experienced depend very much on from what position the research is done" (p. 41). By this, he means the researcher must be aware of his/her role in relation to that of the study's participants. While addressing this in the context of action research methodology, the concept is equally applicable in grounded theory and other qualitative studies. In the conduct of my research, I did not

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anticipate any power imbalances between myself and my participants. Although I am a practitioner in the same field (career counseling), my sample excluded colleagues at my current or any former institutions. I was not serving on the committees or boards of any professional organizations, nullifying the chance that someone might feel compelled to participate because of my real or perceived authority in such roles.

Grounded theory research invites participants to share their stories, and with very little structured questioning, presents the potential for participants to share deeply personal, perhaps even previously undiscussed beliefs (Charmaz, 2014). Reassuring my participants that they could stop at any time was important for both gaining their trust and protecting their well-being. That protection also extended to the review of the interview transcripts. Krefting (1991) cautions that the positive benefits of member checking rigorous data analysis are countered by the researcher's potential of harming the client with an unexpected interpretation of the exchange.

The final step in preparing to enter the field to collect data was securing the approval of Rowan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB's role was to, "support the University's research enterprise by ensuring the protection of individuals who participate in research; ensuring compliance with all pertinent federal and state laws and regulations; [and] fostering the ethical conduct of human subjects research" (Rowan University, *n.d.*, para. 1). The process began with the defense of this proposal to, and subsequent approval by, my dissertation committee. Following receipt of said approval, I completed and submitted a formal research plan and protocol as set forth by the Institutional Review Board (Rowan University, *n.d.*).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the purpose of my research, my research questions, and a proposed methodology for finding the answers. After reviewing the general nature of qualitative research and establishing my constructive worldview, I provided a definition of and rationale for using grounded theory as the methodological approach to this study. I outlined the criteria for participation in my study and a plan for sourcing these participants. Additionally, I provided my intended methods of data collection, the specific instruments to be employed, and a thorough overview of how data would be analyzed in a rigorous and trustworthy manner. Lastly, I provided insight into my perspective as the researcher and steps to be taken to conduct a safe and ethical study with human subjects.

Chapter 4 is a summary of my findings. With the intent to submit a manuscript-style dissertation, Chapters 5 and 6 are written as journal articles for publication. The first is an empirical article describing the study in-depth, and the other is more practitioner-oriented, focused on the findings and suggestions for practice.

Chapter 4

Abridged Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how career counselors who had been the first in their families to go to college use their personal experiences to support their first-generation college student clients today, with the aim of informing a theory of career development practice grounded in the data collected. Shaping the context of this study was the self-disclosure framework developed by Knox and Hill (2003), which outlines seven types of counselor self-disclosures and how they manifest themselves in the counselor/client dialogue.

Field Pivots

A dynamic characteristic of grounded theory methodology is the data analysis technique of constant comparison, in which the researcher analyzes the data as it is collected and then uses emerging phenomena to inform the future direction of the study (Charmaz, 2014). To that end, there were four adjustments made in the course of this study explained in further detail below.

Sourcing participants. The initial recruitment strategy for this study was to reach prospective participants through professional organizations dedicated to the field of career development in higher education, but outreach to 12 such national and regional professional organizations, as well as multiple posts on higher education-specific Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter pages, yielded little response. The most effective technique was a more individualized approach, in which emails were sent to the career centers at 224 public, four-year institutions across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Priority was given to institutions identified as being supportive of first-generation college

students (Best Colleges, 2017; Center for Student Opportunity, *n.d.*) followed by those in targeted geographic regions, with the list being modified as more participants were enrolled in the study.

Interview protocol. After coding the first two transcripts, it became evident that the initial interview protocol focused more on participants' childhood upbringing than on their experiences as career counselors. As a remedy, an original broad question about participants' time as college students was expanded to ask specifically about how the participants learned to navigate college life, their use of their alma mater's career center, and how those experiences inform their career counseling practices today. A series of questions around self-disclosure – and students' responses to it – was followed by an additional question asking for a particular first-generation college student "success story" that might lend credence to the practice of career counselors sharing personal information with their students.

Revelations in further interviews suggested that the location of the institution, as well as regions of the state/country from which said institution drew its student body, factored into the educational and career planning experiences of first-generation college students. In response, a question about institutional demographics was built in to later protocols. As the coding process/constant comparison analysis continued, further refinements were made to the interview protocol to elicit more nuanced data addressing the separate research question topics of "relating to" and "supporting" first-generation college students.

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Participant journal activity. Once a prospective participant had agreed to be part of the study, the initial data collection plan called for scheduling an interview a week or two later, and providing the participant with a journal activity to complete in the interim. However, timing quickly emerged as a critical factor in participant availability. This study spanned the [common to higher education] busy months leading into the end of the academic year and participants' limited availability over the summer break. Additionally, the participant pool stretched across the United States, with time-zone differences anywhere from one to six hours between researcher and participant. As a result, participants preferred to schedule interviews within a few days – and in one case, a few hours – of confirming participation, and the pre-interview journal instead became a post-interview reflection. This switch, however, did not have a negative impact on the study. As the content of the interview transcripts show, participants stood at the ready to share their personal stories and their engagement with their students with little prompting.

Participants

Participants for this study were drawn from four-year, public institutions, as these two characteristics align specifically with the increased demand from employers for candidates with bachelor's degrees ("Moving the goalposts," 2014) and a higher percentage of first-generation college students pursuing bachelor's degrees being enrolled in public institutions than private (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Table 3 below and the text that follows outline salient information about each of the 14 participants in this study.

Table 3

Study Participants

Name	Gender Identity	Highest Level of Education	Race/ Ethnicity	U. S. Region	Years in Career Counseling
Alejandra	Female	Doctorate	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	21+
Amanda	Female	Master's	White	Midwest	11-20
Carol	Female	Doctorate	White	South Atlantic	11-20
Diego	Male	Doctorate	Hispanic/Latino	South	Less than 5
Jane	Female	Master's	White	Northeast	11-20
Jennifer	Female	Master's	White	South	11-20
Kevin	Male	Master's	2 or More Races	West	5-10
Leigh	Female	Master's	White	South Atlantic	11-20
Liz	Female	Master's	White	South Atlantic	Less than 5
Lolita	Female	Master's	Hispanic/Latino	South Atlantic	5-10
Rose	Female	Master's	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	Less than 5
Ruth	Female	Doctorate	White	West	21+
Tiffany	Female	Master's	White	West	5-10
Veronica	Female	Master's	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	Less than 5

Clearly this sample is made up of far more women than men, though this is reflective of the profession as a whole. Women make up more than 65% of the "education administrators" and more than 73% of the "counselors" workforce (USDOL, 2017). Career development practitioners are not required to hold advanced academic

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credentials (NCDA, 2016), however all participants in this study did. Care was taken to draw in participants from around the United States, and the participant pool demonstrates that breadth across the country. Additional, the sample consists primarily of well-seasoned professionals, with the majority working in the career development field for at least five years. During the interview process, it was revealed that the four participants with fewer than five years in the field of career development had at least three prior years of other professional experience. The most incongruous characteristic of this sample is the prevalence of White participants, given extensive literature indicating that most first-generation college students are students of color (D'Amico & Dika, 2013; Jehangir, 2010; Shelton, 2013). However, when taking into account the educational attainment of the sample, this breakdown becomes less surprising. Recent census data indicate that 12.1% of White college graduates hold an advanced degree, compared to 8.2% Black and 4.7 Hispanic (Ryan & Bauman, 2016).

This study was predicated on the participants' personal experiences as first-generation college students, experiences which were influenced by their upbringing. Below is a brief overview of each participant's childhood and motivation for pursuing a college degree. The effect of these experiences is explored further in the findings.

Alejandra. The youngest of several siblings, and the first born in the United States to immigrant parents. While her father was "dead set against the girls going to college," her mother set her up with a bank account at a young age to start saving. With sights set on moving up to the middle class, Alejandra was encouraged to study anything, because "education is never a waste."

Amanda. From a Midwestern, middle-class background with the expectation growing up that she would go to college. Set on a career in agriculture, college to her was a campus with "horse trailers and pickup trucks." Although she saw her degree through to completion, she found herself pursuing interests outside her academic field and notes that she thinks, "people could already tell I was a little confused."

Carol. With good grades in math and science, Carol liked the idea of studying the then-emerging field of computer engineering. However, with her mom gravely ill during her last years of high school and her step-father indifferent to her plans, she had little support and assistance. She only applied to one college, choosing the institution because a classmate was applying there.

Diego. Joining the military after high school, he was challenged by friends and family who suggested he would probably return divorced and in debt because "that's what they had seen many times over from other Hispanic men." Vowing to prove them wrong, he signed up for a class at the local community college, but took more than a year to realize that earning a degree would involve strategic planning, not just taking random classes when time and duty permitted.

Jane. Described her journey to college as "quite the battle," and "a form of rebellion." Her mother, with an eighth-grade education, believed women should stay home and raise children; her father was a "self-made businessman [who] felt that nobody needed college if they had any intellect." It took three colleges, a marriage, and close to 10 years to finish her bachelor's degree.

Jennifer. When neither of her older brothers enrolled in college as expected, her parents said she could go, but was on her own to make it happen. Jennifer's mother, now

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in her 90s, recently apologized for leaving her to figure it out because she and Jennifer's father "didn't know how to go to college."

Kevin. As a "product of a family whose surroundings were dictated by sugar plantations," college was presented as the way to get a better job – an indoor job, with air conditioning – back on the plantation after graduating. His story includes the quest to fit in at college in the Pacific Northwest, and the "lonely at the top" feeling of returning home with a college degree to a largely lesser-educated community.

Leigh. As the first in her family to go to college, what stood out most was how nonchalantly her classmates took their education, with the "liberty" to go out, to explore, to play. For her, "it wasn't something where, 'well everyone else in my family has done this and now it's just my turn'. It was, I was breaking the mold."

Liz. Parental support – and funding – for her college education came with a hefty price tag: stay in-state and choose a major which will lead to a job. Not even considering personal interests or academic strengths, her mother believed "that a business degree would be the answer to all of [her daughter's] problems." Such guidance led to academic struggles and a lack of enjoyment in the pursuit of a college degree.

Lolita. Her father graduated from high school; her mother did not. Both parents held blue-collar jobs and lacked substantial finances. Neither spoke much English, but, "were constantly looking at [her] report cards and celebrating [her] grades." College was an expectation they placed upon their daughter from an early age.

Rose. Raised with the expectation that she would go to college, find a job, and be able to support herself, Rose nevertheless had little guidance to make that happen. Coming from "a [cultural] background where you don't impose on other people,"

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gleaning information meant listening careful but not asking questions. If a friend did something as part of the college application process, she did it – and hoped for the best.

Ruth. The descendant of Italian immigrants-turned-grocers, and an only child raised by her parents and grandfather, she was neither encouraged nor discouraged from attending college. With little extended family however, she knew that she "didn't have a 'Plan B', in terms of people to rely on." Education, to her, was a "security blanket."

Tiffany. She "always knew [she] wanted to go to college, but…didn't know what progression to a degree would look like, what selecting a major meant." Her parents supported her decision to go to college, but left her to figure it out. In turn, she didn't talk to them much about her academic struggles because she "didn't want them to worry about what was going on."

Veronica. Eager to escape a crowded city and "overprotective Dominican parents," college was perceived as a welcome relief. Although she had help from a school counselor in applying to college, when it came to traveling to campus, applying for financial aid, or choosing a major, "every step of the way was frustrating," because she had to figure it out on her own.

Findings

A core element of grounded theory methodology is a multi-layer approach to coding data (Charmaz, 2014). As data are gathered, initial codes are applied and refined, a process repeated until themes, or focused codes (Charmaz, 2014) emerge. Upon reaching data saturation, theoretical codes (Glaser, 2013) may be applied. This third level of data analysis takes into consideration codes that have emerged within a variety of fields, "whether social psychology, sociology, philosophy…political science, history,

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bio-chemistry, etc. (Glaser, 2013). The application of these theoretical codes allows for the development of a grounded theory (Glaser, 2013). Appendix F is a code map that outlines the iterations of coding that led to a proposed theory of career counseling for first-generation college students.

This study sought to answer five research questions, the first four of which focused on the conversations between career counselors and their student-clients, specifically clients who were first-generation college students. The fifth interview question was included to inform a theory of career counseling for first-generation college students grounded in the data yielded from the previous questions. Described below are the findings for each of the first four research questions. A separate section follows to speak directly to the formation of a career counseling theory.

Research Question 1: Relating to Students

The first research question asked, "How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?" Each participant had a personal story to tell about his/her experiences as a first-generation college student, as do each of their student-clients. However, three clear themes – sensing self in others, finding commonalities, and building trust – emerged when the participants described how they relate to their students.

As career counselors, participants invite their students to share their interests, their goals, their doubts, and their fears. Hearing what first-generation college students say conjures up memories for participants of their own experiences and prompts a level of understanding based on a common experience. This reference back to their own experience as the firsts in their families to go to college also makes the career counselors

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adept at recognizing what *isn't* being shared about the challenges of navigating college, choosing a major, and considering career options.

The career counselors' acts of self-recognition in their students does not organically work in reverse. Students meeting with a career counselor do not necessarily know anything about the professional's background and therefore do not "see themselves" in their career counselor. This perceived lack of connection may dissuade the student from revealing too much about their experiences. However, when the career counselor proactively self-discloses some personal trait, mistake made, or common experience, a trusting, open relationship develops between career counselor and student-client.

Research Question 2: The Act of Self-Disclosure

The second question in this study examined how career counselors disclosed their personal experiences to their first-generation college student clients, a question that can be answered in two ways: the context in which the self-disclosures were made and the content of those self-disclosures. The former addresses the physical settings in which conversations between career counselors and their students take place, described by the participants as primarily in one-on-one, private meetings, but also at times in workshops, classroom presentations, and the like. The latter way to understand how the career counselors self-disclose is by the content of what they share, described by participants in this study as happening in the form of sharing a story. These stories generally revolve around the themes of revealing personal struggles growing up, admitting mistakes made in college, and validating students' feelings.

Research Question 3: The Impetus to Self-Disclose

The third research question asked "What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose," and the answers are quite telling about how the participants respond to the needs of their students. A compelling prompt for self-disclosure by the career counselors was to establish credibility with their students. Multiple participants shared that their physical characteristics, such as light hair and skin, belie their cultural heritage; traits which have led students of color to assume the career counselors couldn't relate to their own experiences. Revealing the true nature of their heritage changes the conversation. Another career counselor, who works near the southern border of the United States, often finds himself meeting with students and their families from a predominately Spanish-speaking community. Using their native – but his second – language has helped him gain trust and show that he is there to help them.

Additionally, the career counselors were prompted to disclose personal experiences to their students as a way to help counter students' stated feelings of isolation and lack of confidence. In much of the same way the career counselors *relate* to their first-generation college students' descriptions of academic struggles, family challenges, and career planning concerns, they use that recognition to counter negative feelings by sharing that they, too, have felt them.

Research Question 4: Supporting First-Generation College Students

The fourth question asked, "How do they [the career counselors] use their past experiences to support first-generation college students?" Differentiating this from the first research question, which focused on recognizing common traits with students, this question sought to glean insights into actions career counselors take to improve their

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first-generation college students' experiences in career planning. Counseling with intentionality was the most prevalent theme to emerge from the data, with participants describing specific ways in which they engage their students in reflection and career self-exploration. Those whose roles include directing career center operations described their efforts to make their offices the opposite of the uninviting and unhelpful ones they had encountered as students.

The participants also make significant efforts to collaborate with other offices on campus, as a way to expand the reach of the career center and to let others know they can serve as a resource to first-generation college students. Further, participants also take into account the geographic region in which they work, including specific industry sectors found only in certain parts of the United States, higher-than-average immigrant populations, and the local, statewide, or national pool from which the institution enrolls its students. As career counselors, these participants consider these factors when engaging students in career planning.

Career Counseling for First-Generation College Students: A Grounded Theory

The final question in this study was "What insights emerge from their self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?" A multi-phased analysis of the participants' interview transcripts illuminated several key themes across the career counselors' practice of sharing personal experiences with their students. The creation of a theory, however, needs to be more than just a summary of those themes, but based on "advanced abstractions that provide a framework for enhancing the explanatory power" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 199) of those themes. That framework is formed by larger theoretical constructs or codes (Glaser, 2005) found in all

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fields of study, from the social sciences to the natural sciences, economics to politics, history to business. Described below are four themes and the theoretical codes that support their inclusion in a theory of counselor self-disclosure in career counseling.

The acknowledgement of being different. At its core, the central dynamic for first-generation college students is that their experiences set them apart. The distinction on campus is often apparent, as these students navigate around economic, cultural, and social barriers that simply don't exist for their wealthier, more knowledgeable classmates. Such distinctions are not new: the theoretical codes of *asymmetry,* the imbalance of some dimension (e.g., wealth and access to information) between two social units (here, college students) (Glaser, 2005), and *social constraints,* the very conditions that "provide the containment of social life" (Glaser, 2005, p. 23) highlight the well-established concept of haves and have-nots.

A theory of career development that promotes awareness of students' life circumstances and advocates for counselor self-disclosure has the power to mitigate these distinctions, breaking through the barriers and creating a more symmetrical balance among all college students regarding career exploration and planning.

Counselor/client relationships reframed. Several theoretical codes are at play when considering the dynamic of counselor and client. *Binary* (Glaser, 2005), a term often applied to mathematics, describes the relationship of parties to one another. *Frames* (Glaser, 2005) is a sociological term that captures individuals' mindsets, meaning how they interpret the world around them. *Balancing* (Glaser, 2005) addresses the response to those interpretations, from a simple yes/no to a more complex, analytical consideration of a multitude of variables.

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The decision of a career counselor to self-disclose is a complex one. Traditional counseling theories discourage it (Basescu, 1990; Farber, 2006), but theories do not always account for the realities or necessities of practice. Recognizing the frames (Glaser, 2005) which govern students' interpretations of career exploration and planning is imperative for ending a cycle of misinformation. In the act of self-disclosure, the career counselor engages in *binary retreat* (Glaser, 2005), stepping away from the traditional, authoritative counselor role to one of a partner with a shared history.

The impact of intervention. Glaser (2005) identifies a family of theoretical codes around *causation*, the examination of actions and resulting consequences. Career counselors who had been first-generation college students are well-versed in this cycle regarding their college experiences: Making costly mistakes, missing out on opportunities, and harboring fears resulted in dissatisfaction with school, a lack of guidance, and early career struggles. Their attunement to these same actions in their students poises them to recognize the potential for the same results, named by Glaser (2005) as *equifinality*. Stepping in to interrupt this cause-and-effect is described in a second theoretical code, *moment capture* (Glaser, 2005). An intervention by a career counselor, suggested by Glaser (2005) as a "teachable moment" (p. 25), can change the course – and the outcomes – for their first-generation college student clients. Participants in this study shared a stream of success stories, students whose career trajectories changed as a result of meeting with a career counselor who understood where they were coming from and used that knowledge to redirect where they were heading to.

Career centers as conduits. The theoretical code, *social arena* (Glaser, 2005) refers to the physical and conceptual space occupied by "people with a common concern

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but different aspirations and perspectives (Weiner, as cited in Glaser, p. 22). *Autopoiesis* (Glaser, 2005) is used to describe how a complex system adapts and changes while maintaining its integrity and historical mission. Institutions of higher education are complex systems, with career counselors being just one small segment of professionals that students may encounter over the course of their academic study.

Improving career exploration and planning among first-generation college students means responding to regional need and advocating for a campus- and community-wide support system that goes beyond receipt of a diploma. Institutional structures that already promote enrollment, persistence, and degree completion need to consider the 'what's next?' for its graduates. The coordination of such efforts can begin with well-informed career counselors whose roles, by nature, span both the internal arena of the college campus and the external ones occupied by employers who seek to hire their institution's graduates.

Conclusions

This study examined how career counselors who had been the first in their families to go to college use their personal experiences to support first-generation college students today in career exploration and planning. The findings of this study suggest that first-generation college students benefit from hearing their career counselors share their own stories, particularly in the context of choosing a major and planning for a career. Through their own experiences as first-generation college students, the participants see themselves in their students, recognizing the fears and mistrust those students bring to a career counseling conversation. By encouraging students to share those misgivings and responding to them with their own stories of mistakes made and lessons learned, the

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participants establish credibility with their students, instill confidence, and counter feelings of isolation.

Through an extensive data analysis process with increasingly focused levels of coding, several themes emerged. In examining these findings within the perspective of broader social theoretical constructs (Glaser, 2005), the themes that emerged from the data have the potential to inform a theory of career development that places counselor self-disclosure at its core.

Chapter 5 is an empirical article drafted for submission to *The Journal of Career Development* (Journal of Career Development [JCD], 2017). This particular publication "provides professionals in counseling, psychology, education…with the most up-to-date concepts, ideas, and methodology in career development theory, research, and practice" (JCD, 2017, "Description", para 1). Among the topics considered for inclusion are those focus on the application and generation of emerging theories, career development for diverse populations, and workplace/workforce issues, making this journal a logical choice for a detailed presentation of my study's methodology and findings.

Chapter 6 is a practitioner-oriented article drafted for submission to the *NACE Journal* (NACE, 2018). This publication, distributed quarterly, "covers the entire scope of career planning, development, recruitment, and employment of college-educated persons" (M. Collins, personal communication, January 5, 2018). The article briefly outlines the details of the study and then specifically focus on the findings and suggestions for practice.

Chapter 5

Manuscript One: Self-Disclosure in Career Counseling of First-Generation College Students: A Grounded Theory Study

The employment landscape in the United States is rapidly changing, with an ever-increasing emphasis on earning a college degree as a criterion for hire (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Cappelli, 2015; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012; Gunderson, 2005). Close to 60% of job postings for roles in which less than half the current workforce is college educated list a bachelor's degree among the application requirements ("Moving the goalposts," 2014). Consequently, university enrollment figures show that a quarter (Redford & Hoyer, 2017) of today's college student body is composed of first-generation college students (FGCS), students whose parents did not go to college (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Shelton, 2011).

First-generation college students (FGCS) are often unprepared for the academic rigor and financial cost of college (Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). Pressured to support themselves and frequently lacking role models who understand the demands of higher education (Martinez et al., 2009), FGCS are more likely to drop out of school (Ishitani, 2006) and be unemployed at higher rates (Perna, 2000) than their non-first-generation peers. To that end, research on this population has focused extensively on admission and retention (e.g., Ishitani, 2006; Shelton, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011), but little attention has been paid to career planning (National Association of College and Employers [NACE], 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012). While financial security and career growth are cited among reasons why FGCS pursue higher education (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Brooks-Terry, 1988; Shelton, 2011;

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Walpole, 2003), the emphasis on perceived value of a bachelor's degree fails to account for the importance of career planning during those college years (NACE, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012), leaving FGCS to often proceed through college ill-prepared to transition into the professional workforce (Brooks-Terry, 1998).

As a step towards informing a theory of career development that meets the needs of FGCS, this qualitative, constructivist grounded theory study examined how career counselors who had been the firsts in their families to go to college use their personal experiences to support their FGCS clients. The study was inspired by Knox and Hill's (2003) therapist self-disclosure types and the use of self-disclosure in the counselor/client discourse, supported by evidence indicating that clients appreciate knowing their counselors' personal and professional backgrounds (Cashwell, Shcherbakova, & Cashwell, 2003). The findings of the study suggest that career counselors who recognize and acknowledge common characteristics of FGCS and share personal, relevant stories from their own college experiences can counter students' feelings of isolation and confusion regarding career exploration and planning. Further, findings demonstrate that career counselors who actively partner with academic and student life colleagues on their campuses help their students form a network of contacts, subsequently creating equitable social capital acquisition for all students.

Background of the Study

The lack of college readiness and high likelihood of dropping out (Horn et al., 2000; Ishitani, 2006; Martinez et al., 2009) among FGCS has been the subject of a great deal of literature focused on the steps teachers, guidance counselors, admissions officers, and others can take to improve this population's college admission, retention, and

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graduation rates. However, while the impetus behind FGCS' decision to enroll in college is the desire for greater career success (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Brooks-Terry, 1998; Shelton, 2011; Walpole, 2003), there is a dearth of literature specifically addressing these students' career development needs.

Career counseling. An emerging concern in the field of career development is "the shortage of…professionally trained counseling staff to deliver career services to individuals who need them" (Hartung, 2005). This sentiment, expressed by a multinational panel of career counselors, has been echoed by counselors-in-training who, despite enrollment in a career counseling course, did not feel competent to actually engage in the practice of career counseling (Lara, Kline, & Paulson, 2011). The assumptions underlying traditional career development theories like Parsons (1909), Holland (1959), and Super (1953) do not account for the nature of the FGCS experience (Horn et al., 2000; Martinez et al., 2009; Tym et al., 2004), which may help explain why emerging career counselors perceive a disconnect between theory and practice. A qualitative study (Scholl, Gibson, Despres, & Boyarinova, 2014), in which theory was taught using a film from popular culture, noted that 90% of students agreed that "using the film helped them to understand how to apply career development theories to people's lives," (p. 16) yet also revealed that half the students misunderstood at least one of the theories studied.

With plenty of evidence showing that FGCS hail from a multitude of cultural backgrounds (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Jehangir, 2010; Parks-Yancy, 2012), a closer look at the literature on multicultural counseling is warranted. Much of this work is credited to Derald Sue (cf, Sue, 1977; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), recognized

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for his expertise in bringing attention to the disparity between traditional counseling approaches and the lived experiences of non-White clients (Romero & Chan, 2005; Sue, 1977). Similarly, Kiselica (1998), who cites much of Sue's work, offers recommendations, based on his own experience, for how Anglo – defined as "non-Hispanic, White, and of European ancestry" (p. 6) – counseling psychologists should prepare for, engage in, and train others on multicultural practice. While Sue (1977) and Kiselica (1998) write extensively of multicultural counseling in general counseling psychology terms, however, neither speaks directly to it in the context of career counseling.

Multicultural career counseling. The case for multicultural *career* counseling (NCDA, 2009) is made clear by Flores & Heppner (2002) who place importance on "career counselors' knowledge of how the world of work operates for individuals from various racial/ethnic groups" (p. 184). Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) stresses the dynamic, reciprocal influence of behavior on environment and of environment on person. This focus has made SCCT a popular framework in a number of multicultural studies (Gainor & Lent, 1998; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999; Flores & O'Brien, 2002). A more current career counseling theory, happenstance learning (Krumboltz, 2009), posits that clients should embrace the genetic and social circumstances of their upbringing and learn from parental and peer influences (Krumboltz, 2009). On the surface, HLT seems to be a valuable approach for a multicultural student body, though little empirical evidence exists to substantiate that claim. A single study (Kim, Jung, Jang, Lee, Rhee, Cho, & Lee, 2014) conducted in Korea has measured (and attested to) the reliability and validity of HLT.

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Despite broad attempts at accounting for multicultural perspectives in career counseling, FGCS are not well addressed within the literature. Two notable exceptions are Olson (2014) and Tate et al. (2015), although only the latter is an actual research study. While Olson's (2014) work contributes a comprehensive overview of the FGCS experience and an extensive history of SCCT, the "case studies" (p.199) included provide little information about the academic context in which these stories take place, making comparisons to other literature challenging. Tate et al.'s (2015) exploratory qualitative study used focus groups at a large, public institution to examine FGCS' thoughts on choosing a career path and on post-college careers. This sample of 15 students repeatedly stated their understanding that a successful career plan includes developing a network of knowledgeable professional contacts, and also their frustration with the "assumption made by university staff and faculty that they [the students] had access to a professional network" (Tate et al., p. 9).

Counselor self-disclosure. While works on counselor self-disclosure date back decades (see Doster & Brooks, 1974), Stricker & Fischer's 1990 edited volume, *Self-Disclosure in the Therapeutic Relationship*, serves as a seminal work on the revelations that emerge in a counseling relationship. Just one chapter in this volume addresses *counselor* self-disclosure (Jackson, 1990), but significant interest in this topic is evident in later literature (e.g., Audet & Everall, 2010; Cashwell et al., 2003; Farber, 2006; Knox & Hill, 2003).

A number of studies (Audet & Everall, 2010; Cashwell et al., 2003; Cherbosque, 1987; Dowd & Borotto, 1982) set out to gauge the benefits and disadvantages of counselor self-disclosure on clients. Noteworthy within these studies is that while the

phenomenon under examination is one of human interaction, nearly all of the research is quantitative; even more discouraging, these data were gathered from non-clients observing hypothetical counseling situations. The studies conducted by both Dowd & Borotto (1982) and Cherbosque (1987) involved participants watching video clips of counseling sessions and answering a series of survey questions. In both cases, counselors who self-disclosed were perceived as unprofessional and untrustworthy (Cherbosque, 1987; Dowd & Borotto, 1982).

One of the few studies to assess the value and effectiveness of counselor self-disclosure from actual clients is the work of Audet & Everall (2010). In this qualitative study, the sample was composed of participants who had experienced counselor self-disclosure in a therapy-type setting. Participants were interviewed by the researcher for feedback on the experience, and contrary to the quantitative studies that showed counselor self-disclosure to be a negative technique, participants in Audet & Everall's (2010) study overwhelmingly found counselor self-disclosure inviting and egalitarian. Clients reported feeling "a sense of relief" (Audet & Everall, 2010, p. 333) and experiencing "a human dimension to the therapy" (p. 334).

In the practice of counseling, the intended outcome is the "growth and development of the individual [client] to enable him or her to live more freely, unencumbered by the myriad maladaptive patterns that tend to restrict, confine, and limit one's potential" (Healey, 1990, p. 21). Traditional counseling techniques, such as those developed by Sigmund Freud around the turn of the twentieth century (Farber, 2006), place the counselor in the role of mirror, reflecting and rephrasing the client's words without offering opinion or judgement (Basescu, 1990). A more contemporary view

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suggests the counseling process should involve the perspective of both counselor and client (Gill, 1983), leading to an increase in counselors disclosing personal information so that "patients come to know their analysts through the shared experience of the therapeutic relationship" (Basescu, 1990, p. 52). Professional career counseling guidelines, such as those put forth by NCDA (2016) and NACE (2015), state that career services professionals, "without imposing personal values or biases, will assist individuals in developing a career plan or making a career decision" (NACE, 2012, "Principles for Career Services", para. 1), though those guidelines do not propose specific techniques by which to provide such assistance.

In *Therapist Self-Disclosure: Research-Based Suggestions for Practitioners,* Knox and Hill (2003) outline specific types of self-disclosures and how they might be used in the therapeutic relationship (Table 4).

Table 4

Types of Therapist Self-Disclosures

Type	Example
Disclosure of facts	"I have a Ph.D.in counseling psychology and work primarily with college students."
Disclosures of feeling	"When I have been in situations similar to yours, I felt scared because I didn't know how things would turn out for me."
Disclosures of insight	"When I was having a similar conflict with my male colleague, I realized that I shut down because I was afraid that he would reject me like my father did."

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Table 4 (continued)

Type	Example
Disclosures of reassurance/support	"I understand your anxiety because I also have a difficult time when I have to give a talk."
Disclosures of challenge	"I don't know if you are aware that I, too, am divorced, and have had to think hard about my contributions to the failure of the marriage."
Disclosures of immediacy	"As you describe the cold relationships in your family now, I am aware that I am feeling very distant and closed off from you. I wonder if that is similar to how you felt with your family?"

Note. Adapted from Therapist self-disclosure: Research-based suggestions for practitioners. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 59*(5), p. 530, by S. Knox & C. E. Hill, 2003.

Knox and Hill's (2003) work has been cited extensively in clinical-oriented research (e.g., Bitar, Kimball, Bermudez, & Drew, 2014; Farber, Feldman, & Wright, 2014; Lee, 2014), but only once – and even then, just briefly – in a piece focused on career counseling (Dik & Stenger, 2008). Dik & Stenger's (2008) work was a quantitative study measuring student satisfaction with a range of practices, including counselor self-disclosure. Although the findings support career counselor self-disclosure, a number of factors – the testing of several practices collectively, the context being group workshops not individual appointments, a predominately White sample, and the study site being a single Catholic university (Dik & Stenger, 2008) – lacks applicability to the known characteristics and needs of first-generation college students. The study described

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in detail below, therefore, takes the opportunity to connect multicultural career counseling with the implementation of counselor self-disclosure.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to examine how career counselors who, themselves, had been the firsts in their families to go to college use that personal experience to support their first-generation college student clients. This study was inspired by the self-disclosure framework developed by Knox and Hill (2003) in which seven types of disclosure are identified, and how these disclosures manifest themselves in student/counselor career counseling discourse. Grounded theory was appropriate for this type of study in that it, "serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). The grounded theory researcher is constructivist in nature, focused on the interactions between parties and the social, cultural, and historical contexts that drive those interactions (Creswell, 2014). This approach, rooted in sociology, is designed, in part, to "be usable in practical applications" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3), and in the case of this study, to inform those who are engaged in the practice of career counseling. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?

2. What factors provide the impetus to disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?

3. What insights emerge from their self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?

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Participants. Prospective participants took a brief survey to provide demographic details, educational background, parent educational history, and confirmation of employment at a public, four-year institution. The survey was used only to identify potential participants. With no standard definition of career counselor or universal application of job titles in the career development field (Kuhn, Gordon, and Webber, 2006; NCDA, 2016), prospects were asked to select the frequency in which they engage in a series of career counseling activities, based in part on the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (O'Brien, Heppner, Flores, & Bikos, 1997). To be selected for the study, a participant had to answer 'always' or 'often' to the activities of "Assists [students] in understanding how their non-work life (e.g., family, leisure, interests, etc.) affects career decision-making" (O'Brien et al., 1997), encourages students to share career planning expectations, perspectives, and needs; is aware (by referral, inquiry, or student disclosure) that a client is a FGCS, and shares personal information with students to develop rapport and/or provide support.

Participants for this study were drawn from four-year colleges and universities, as this characteristic aligns with the increased demand from employers for candidates with bachelor's degrees ("Moving the goalposts," 2014). The sample was further narrowed to public institutions because a higher percentage of FGCS pursuing bachelor's degrees are enrolled in public institutions than private (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Table 5 outlines salient information about each of the fourteen participants in this study.

Table 5

Study Participants

Name	Gender Identity	Highest Level of Education	Race/ Ethnicity	U. S. Region	Years in Career Counseling
Alejandra	Female	Doctorate	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	21+
Amanda	Female	Master's Degree	White	Midwest	11-20
Carol	Female	Doctorate	White	South Atlantic	11-20
Diego	Male	Doctorate	Hispanic/Latino	South	Less than 5
Jane	Female	Master's Degree	White	Northeast	11-20
Jennifer	Female	Master's Degree	White	South	11-20
Kevin	Male	Master's Degree	2+ Races	West	5-10
Leigh	Female	Master's Degree	White	South Atlantic	11-20
Liz	Female	Master's Degree	White	South Atlantic	Less than 5
Lolita	Female	Master's Degree	Hispanic/Latino	South Atlantic	5-10
Rose	Female	Master's Degree	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	Less than 5
Ruth	Female	Doctorate	White	West	21+
Tiffany	Female	Master's Degree	White	West	5-10
Veronica	Female	Master's Degree	Hispanic/Latino	Northeast	Less than 5

The sample consists primarily of those who have worked in the career development field for at least five years. This sample is composed predominately of women, which reflects the profession as a whole. Women make up more than 65% of the "education administrators" and more than 73% of the "counselors" workforce (USDOL, 2017). Career development practitioners are not required to hold advanced academic credentials (NCDA, 2016), however, all participants in this study did. Care was taken to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds, however, most participants were White,

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which reflects the racial and ethnic make-up of the counseling field (DataUSA, "Diversity", 2015), but diverges from that of FGCS (D'Amico & Dika, 2013; Jehangir, 2010; Shelton, 2013) who are predominantly students of color (Redford & Hoyer, 2017).

Data collection. Data about participants' upbringing, their paths to their current roles, how and when they disclosed personal information to students, and how students responded to the counselor self-disclosures were collected through participant interviews. The inquiry technique was intensive interviewing, which minimizes interview questions to let participants tell their stories without strict content borders set by the researcher (Charmaz, 2014). Most participants were interviewed by phone or Internet-video, a practice accepted in distance-affected research studies (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The initial interview protocol was pilot-tested with career counselors not eligible for the formal study, and in addition to signing a consent agreement, participants selected an alias by which they were referred to throughout the study.

Data analysis. Following each interview, the audio file was sent to a service for transcription. After the first two transcripts were returned, they were analyzed through an initial coding process. Emergent themes were noted, and this constant comparative (Charmaz, 2014) process continued through to data saturation, at which point theoretical codes (Glaser, 2013) were examined and applied as appropriate. The first stage of coding was an initial identification of incidents, clues of something happening (Holton, 2010). Codes were manually created to capture participants' experiences in navigating college, serving as career counselors, relating to students, and supporting the career development of first-generation college students. The second coding segment deepened the data analysis. A manual approach was again employed, to categorize the initial codes and

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ascertain lines of inquiry worth further pursuit (Charmaz, 2014). This level of coding influenced the direction of the study, both in terms of soliciting participants from ever-broader geographic regions of the country and reframing the interview protocol to better capture the counselor-client dynamic. The end result of this focused coding technique was a more concise assessment of the phenomena under study.

Unique to grounded theory research is the analysis technique called theoretical coding (Glaser, 2013). These codes are a compilation of descriptors that have emerged from a variety of social and natural sciences, business, and humanities fields (Glaser, 2013) and when applicable, create a "high level of conceptual abstraction" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 115). In this study, theoretical codes transformed a summary of career counselors' experiences into insights that could inform a theory of career counseling grounded in counselor self-disclosure. To avoid forcing theoretical codes to emerge, this coding process did not occur until data saturation had been reached. An excerpt from the researchers' code map (Table 6), demonstrates the analytical process that led to the application of theoretical codes.

Table 6

Code Map

Fourth Iteration: Statement of Insights for a Grounded Theory of Self-Disclosure in Career Counseling
RQ3: What insights emerge from career counselors' self-disclosure to first-generation college students that could inform a theory grounded in the data?
Career counselors who recognize and acknowledge common characteristics of first-generation college students and share personal, relevant stories from their own college experiences can counter students' feelings of isolation and confusion regarding career exploration and planning.

Table 6 (continued)

Fourth Iteration: Statement of Insights for a Grounded Theory of Self-Disclosure in Career Counseling	
RQ1: How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?	RQ2: What factors provide the impetus to disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?
Emergent Themes	
Sensing Self in Students Finding Commonalities Recognizing Mistrust	Responding to Students Telling a Story Admitting Mistakes
Third Iteration: Theoretical Coding (Glaser, 2005)	
Asymmetry Social Constraints	Casual Family/Equifinality Moment Capture
Second Iteration: Focused Coding (codes-to-categories/Charmaz, 2014)	
Defying expectations Self-navigating Sensing self in others	Recognizing common traits Establishing credibility Instilling confidence
First Iteration: Initial Coding (incident-by-incident/Holton, 2010)	
Responding to parents' beliefs about college Acquiring social capital Being a self-navigator Learning by leading Finding commonalities	Broadening students' perspective Challenging student to pursue interests Establishing credibility Ending cycle of misinformation Instilling confidence

Note. Adapted from Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher; 31*(7), p. 32, by V. A. Anfara, K. M. Brown, & T. L. Mangione, 2002.

Theory generation. Through the constructivist lens, which accounts for the individual realities created by each participant as well as by the researcher (Charmaz, 2014; Ponterotto, 2005), the storyline that emerged from this study was one framed in the participants' personal experiences being FGCS and serving as career counselors to students from similar circumstances today. Grounded theory methodology is largely

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individualistic, leaving its outcomes prone to criticism for lack of generalizability (Charmaz, 2014). However, Glaser (2005) notes that, "all substantive theories have general implications…" (p. 79), and the emergence of theoretical codes within the data gathered provide the vehicle for extrapolating the findings beyond the confines of this study. The specific theoretical codes that surfaced in this study's data, noted in the code map, are described in depth in the discussion section below.

Findings

This study aimed to investigate how career counselors relate to their FGCS clients, what prompts them to disclose personal information, and how these data might inform a theory of career counseling for FGCS. The findings suggest that FGCS benefit from hearing their career counselors' stories, particularly in the context of choosing a major and planning for a career. Further, in examining the findings through the lens of broader social theoretical constructs (Glaser, 2005), three themes – the acknowledgement of being different, counselor/client relationship reframed, and the impact of intervention – emerged from the data that have the potential to inform a theory of career development that places counselor self-disclosure at its core.

The acknowledgement of being different. Providing effective career counseling for FGCS means recognizing that their lived experiences are distinctive, often requiring navigation around economic, cultural, and social barriers that don't exist for their wealthier, more informed classmates. For Alejandra, these barriers manifested themselves in decisions about money:

It was a huge shock. To find people who went out to eat. Period. They went out to eat. They didn't eat beans and rice in their rooms by themselves…. People were

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different, way different about money. Like, there were girls walking around

wearing pearl necklaces…worth as much as my father makes in a year!

For others, the very decision to pursue a degree can be contentious. Jane described her journey to college as "a form of rebellion" against her father, a "self-made businessman [who] felt that nobody needed college if they had any intellect." Diego, entering college via the military, was challenged by friends and family who suggested he would probably return divorced and in debt because "that's what they had seen many times over from other Hispanic men."

Without an understanding of higher education, the college experience can be daunting. Tiffany "always knew [she] wanted to go to college, but…didn't know what progression to a degree would look like." Alejandra had a similar experience, noting, "Nobody said to me, if you're undecided about your major, here are some steps you can take." It took Diego more than a year to realize earning a degree requires planning: "Early on, I didn't know how to strategically take courses towards a degree. I was taking courses because I was excited to be in college but there was no real strategy… a waste of time and money." Liz's experience most significantly highlights what can happen without career planning:

I was very fortunate in that [my parents] paid for my college…but with that, was

the expectation that I was going to do something that would get me a job, and I

think the belief my mom had was that a business degree would be the answer to

all of my problems…I didn't even consider the value of a degree that would

actually be interesting to me rather than something that I really wasn't good at…. I

got through it…so that's great, but I always look back and think, "What if I had

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given myself the opportunity to explore and see some other things that I could've been good at or really actually just enjoy learning?"

The concept of haves and have-nots is well-established in the United States. A theory of career development that promotes practitioners' verbally expressing their understanding of FGCS' life circumstances has the power to mitigate these distinctions, creating balance among all college students regarding career exploration and planning.

Counselor/client relationships reframed. The decision to self-disclose is a complex one. Traditional counseling theories discourage the act (Basescu, 1990; Farber, 2006), but these theories don't always account for the realities or necessities of practice. Carol's experience with her students exemplifies this complexity:

> I realized that they looked at me and saw this White woman and assumed I came from a privileged background. And I knew in my practice that it was in their educational best interest for me to tell them [I had been an FGCS]. Earlier, as a younger professional, I wrestled a lot. I was trained that you don't self-disclose…. [However], I started to see...for them to trust the advice I was giving them, that it had to come not from a place of, "You have to do this because I'm telling you and I'm the authority," but from a place of, "I know how hard this is, I know that this can be lonely."

Rose, like Carol, has also self-disclosed to counter students' preconceived notions about her background: "A lot of them become very surprised because my married name doesn't carry [my] nationality…. I don't look it, according to what the stereotype is, either." These findings suggest that counselors' efforts to demonstrate commonalities can establish credibility and trust.

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Counselor self-disclosure can also motivate students. Jane relies on it to put her students at ease. "Explaining to them that I was also a first-generation student is really helpful…. They're intimidated by the process, they're intimidated by the language. They feel more comfortable when I am able to explain that I totally understand what that feels like." Veronica uses it to remind her students how far they've come: "I always look up the statistics of how many people of a certain under-represented group they are and I tell them, 'You're in that percentage point. The fact that you even got here, makes you extraordinary.' It's a lot of confidence building."

In the act of self-disclosure, a career counselor steps away from a traditional, authoritative role to one of a partner with a shared history. The participants in this study were strong advocates for taking that step, positing that counselor self-disclosure serves to inspire students and ends cycles of misinformation around career exploration and planning.

The impact of intervention. Throughout this study, participants' stories were peppered with commentary about missed opportunities: "My parents were immigrants [navigating] through life here…. They just didn't have that inclination…to look at other services or find out more about resources" (Lolita); "If I have a regret it would be that I didn't apply for more scholarships" (Amanda); "[My parents] didn't know what support to offer me, and they just assumed that I knew and if I didn't know, I would figure it out." (Tiffany). Recognizing themselves – and their inadvertent lack of knowledge – in their students today often serves as the catalyst to interrupt this cause-and-effect. Veronica uses her experience to reassure students that it's ok for them to change their minds:

The switching from the business major to English is usually one of the top stories that I share, because I tell them all the time, "Things are not linear. You can go in different directions and still make it work."

Leigh's insights corroborate the suggestion that FGCS hesitate to question their initial interests or explore something new:

I was super involved [on campus]…and through those different experiences, I learned that I really had an appreciation for higher education…so I try to use that as an example to encourage them to try out different things…. A lot of times, after they think about it… they'll come back and see me again and they'll be like "Y'know, that really made me think, so I've started to get involved," or "I went to a club meeting the other night", or, "I've decided I want to look for an internship, can you help me?" so then they actually see me as someone that they can relate to, but they also know that I'm a resource for them.

Implied in the stories shared by participants about their own experiences or that of their students is that FGCS believe once they are on a particular academic path, there is no straying from it, despite possible signs (e.g., poor grades, broadening interests) that indicate a change might be for the best. Career counselors who intervene to provide students other options as well as demonstrable proof (via their own successful academic and career evolutions) that change can be good, do well by their students who might otherwise suffer and struggle through their studies, fail to develop the skills needed to translate their degree into a viable career post-graduation, or leave the institution without completing a degree at all.

Another area of insight is helping students understand the financial impact of their decisions. With the cost of college continually on the rise, Liz sympathizes when her students ask, "Will I make enough money?" She notes:

 I remember being there…. but I try really hard when I talk to them to then say, "Well, what do you really need? What does a lot of money look like to you…?" because that's changed for me. I remember being younger and thinking, "Oh, I need to make X number of dollars," and now I know… you can live on quite less…[so I try] to have that conversation and reality with them because I understand that belief of like, "Oh, I have to have this amount of money to be successful."

Kevin, who returned to his hometown of few college graduates, is perceived by his community as an "image of this great local story," but, he continues, "I don't think students understand the magnitude of loan payments." With his own financial struggles in mind, Kevin is a staunch advocate for including conversations about finances into the career development narrative:

I tell you, being a first-generation college student myself, one of the big things that decorates my advising is around financial aid…. Because these are very real conversations in terms of if you got student loan payments coming up, and you're in an active job search, how does that affect you, you know? What are things you're gonna probably have to face?

There are many hidden costs and lasting consequences of poor financial management. Adding conversations about complex financial terms like loans, deferred interest, retirement savings, and cost of living into the career counselor/ first-generation college

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student discourse can help these students make more informed decisions that will have positive short- and long-term impact.

When a career counselor recognizes a "teachable moment" (Glaser, 2005, p. 25), it can change the course – and outcome – for their FGCS clients. Jennifer describes a student interested in medical school: "We worked together for two semesters…. She did volunteer work, informational interviews, shadowing," and when the student was admitted, "I cried, and she said, 'I couldn't have done it without you.'" Ruth also advocates for programs that encourage internships, recalling an FGCS "from a small farming town in the southwest. [Now] he's up there, like a grade 13 in the federal payroll system. But it all started out as him being an intern." Rose, who as a student was instructed by her parents to pursue nothing but her studies, faced, as a career counselor, a marketing major in the same predicament:

> She was fighting the battle of, "Getting an internship is something that you're expected to do..." But she was [also] fighting the "No, you're supposed to be going to school and not wasting your time doing all these other things." So, completely understanding that she cannot go against her family…we came up with a way where maybe, instead of her being part of a club, maybe she could do their social media…. She came to see me the next semester. Had a bunch of clubs and organizations that she had started doing that with, and that was a way to get something on her resume…

The stream of success stories shared by the participants exemplifies the positive impact of meeting with a career counselor who understands where students are coming from and uses that knowledge to redirect where they are heading.

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Discussion & Implications

This study focused on the conversations between career counselors and their FGCS student-clients, seeking to elicit insights from their self-disclosure that could inform a theory of career development grounded in the data. The findings align with much of the existing literature on multicultural counseling and counselor self-disclosure, yet also confirm significant gaps in both research of and practice for those who counsel first-generation college students.

Relating to students. The first research question asked participants to reflect on how they used their own experiences to relate to the FGCS they serve today. Each participant's experience as a FGCS was deeply personal, and as career counselors, sparks a natural recognition of others like them. Being sensitive to those commonalities - and using them to build trust with their clients – emerged when they described how they relate to their students. As career counselors, participants invite their students to share their interests, goals, and fears. The students' responses conjure up memories of participants' own lives, and prompt a level of understanding based on this common experience. This intimate reflection also makes the career counselors adept at recognizing what *isn't* being shared about the challenges of navigating college, choosing a major, and considering career options.

The practices described by the participants reflect the approaches of emerging multicultural career counseling methodologies. Both SCCT (Lent, et al., 1994) and HLT (Krumboltz, 2009) emphasize the impact of hereditary, personal, and social characteristics on career development, and participants consistently noted factors like their neighborhoods, secondary schools, parents' beliefs, and peers' actions as influential

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in their approach to higher education. Subsequently, the participants demonstrated that they ask their FGCS about these same factors in the career counseling discourse. The participants' descriptions of these conversations encompass SCCT concepts like self-efficacy, outcomes expectations, and goal setting (Lent et al., 1994) as well as HLT's focus on long-term career planning (Krumboltz, 2009), but none of the participants referred to these – or any other – career development theories by name during the study. The interview protocol for this study did not directly ask a question about counseling theories, but future studies might be wise to include one. The literature suggests that traditional theories still dominate career counseling education (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2005; Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Zunker, 2002) and emerging career counselors struggle to connect theory to practice (Lara et al, 2011).

The impetus to self-disclose. The second question asked what factors provide the impetus for participants to disclose their personal experiences to their first-generation college student clients. A compelling prompt for self-disclosure by the career counselors was to establish credibility with students. This skill is supported in the literature as critical to working with non-White clients, specifically the ability to "conceptualize [the client's] problem in a way that is compatible with the client's belief system and helps the client work towards goals and new ways of responding that are compatible with the client's culture" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 120).

Multiple participants shared that physical characteristics, such as light hair and skin, belie their cultural heritage; traits which have led students of color to assume the career counselors couldn't relate to their experiences. These participants found that revealing their heritage to their FGCS clients changed the conversation. Bridging clients'

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perceptions of a racial divide, particularly when the counselor is White and the client is not, has proven to be a persuasive reason for counselors to self-disclose (Burkard, Knox, Groen, Perez, & Hess, 2006). Further exploration of this topic is needed, however, as Burkard et al.'s (2006) work is a rarity among counselor self-disclosure studies in that it one of the few that focus on counselor motivation rather than client response (Bitar et al., 2014; Cashwell et al., 2003; Cherbosque, 1987).

In the current study, participants described being prompted to disclose personal experiences to their students as a way to help counter stated feelings of isolation and lack of confidence. In much of the same way the career counselors *relate* to their FGCS' descriptions of academic struggles, family challenges, and career planning concerns, they use that recognition to counter negative feelings by sharing that they, too, have felt them.

Proponents of counselor self-disclosure identify aloneness as a concern effectively addressed through the technique. Knox and Hill's (2003) analysis concludes that counselor self-disclosure "helped clients feel normal and reassured" (p. 532). Menaker (1990), a psychotherapist, in disclosing to a client a change in her personal life, notes that the client's response, "Then there's hope for me" (p. 105), "…confirms the effectiveness of my self-disclosure" (p. 106). Such findings in therapeutic settings have been echoed in higher education. Carnegie's (2004) assessment of counselor self-disclosure in academic advising yields that "the sharing of personal struggles and experiences when relevant…becomes a parable for growth and development [and] a reminder that education is attainable despite hardships" (para. 6).

Insights to support a theory of career counseling for FGCS. The final research question in this study sought to identify insights from participants' self-disclosures to

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FGCS that could inform a career counseling theory grounded in the data. Two key insights, upheld by established social theoretical constructs (Glaser, 2005), support the theory that career counselors who recognize and acknowledge common characteristics of first-generation college students and share personal, relevant stories from their own college experiences can counter students' feelings of isolation and confusion regarding career exploration and planning. These insights and respective theoretical codes are detailed below.

Acknowledging distinctive needs. Two pivotal theoretical codes reflect the life circumstances of first-generation college students: *asymmetry,* the imbalance of some dimension (e.g., wealth and access to information) between two social units (in this case, college students) (Glaser, 2005), and *social constraints,* the very conditions that "provide the containment of social life" (Glaser, 2005, p. 23) which highlight the well-established concept of haves and have-nots. The findings of this study demonstrate that career counselors who recognize the distinctive needs of first-generation college students are able to address inequities in preparedness for career exploration and planning.

Ending cycles of misinformation. Glaser (2005) identifies one's recognition of repeated actions and consequences as *equifinality*. Stepping in to interrupt this cause-and-effect is described in a second theoretical code, *moment capture* (Glaser, 2005). Career counselors who had been FGCS are skilled in recognizing a repeating cycle of costly mistakes, missed opportunities, and harbored fears among their FGCS clients. The findings of the study suggest that by extending this knowledge more broadly across the career counseling profession, practitioners might be more attuned to the common actions and predictable consequences of FGCS, and stand at the ready to share "teachable

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moments" (Glaser (2005) p. 25) which can in turn effect stronger career outcomes for their students.

Implications. As universities see increased FGCS enrollment (IHEP, 2012) and employers continue to seek candidates with college degrees (Brown & Thakur, 2006; Cappelli, 2015; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2012), greater attention must be paid to career planning for FGCS through practice, policy, and further research.

Practice. The evolution of the career development field is at a critical junction. While most college campuses across the United States have offices dedicated to career development (NACE, 2015), the specific needs of FGCS are generally not part of practitioners' discourse (NACE, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012). The findings of this study reveal professional touch-points throughout a student's college education, indicating a wealth of opportunity for not only career counselors, but faculty, academic advisors, and other administrators to keep these students focused on post-graduation career success and poised to share their positive associations with career planning with future generations of college graduates.

Policy. The value of the college credential is evident: "On virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment—from personal earnings to job satisfaction to the share employed full time—young college graduates are outperforming their peers with less education" (Pew Research Center, 2014). The focus on the "return on investment" of earning a college degree (Adams, 2013; Singletary, 2013) can – and should – spotlight university career centers as the central hub between academic studies and professional practice. Honing in on the value of career development may generate policies at the state and national level that improve the accessibility and quality of career

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counseling. An example of this policy in action in New Jersey [the researchers' home state] is a recommendation put forth by the State of New Jersey Governor's Council on Higher Education to "strengthen links between employers and colleges" (State of New Jersey, 2015, p.3), through action-oriented college/business task forces, comprised of representatives from corporations, academia, and the government.

Research. While this study focuses on the approaches and actions of career counselors, it is equally worthwhile to examine the impact of those factors on students. A large-scale quantitative study could measure FGCS' level of engagement and satisfaction with their college career center, and compare those levels with career outcomes. A researcher might choose a qualitative approach to explore how FGCS respond to the personal stories shared by their career counselors. Case study research investigating institutions that demonstrate excellence in FGCS engagement in career planning would be beneficial for practitioners throughout the field of career development. An action research study might take place in a career center where the technique has not been tried.

Conclusions

This study examined how career counselors who had been the first in their families to go to college use their personal experiences to support FGCS today in career exploration and planning. Differences among the participants in this study were notable, from region of the country to years of practitioner experience, but many of the stories – and the struggles – were the same. It is evident that no matter where first-generation college students come from, where they attend college, or what the generations before them did, the career planning needs of these students remain largely unmet in the standard practices of career counseling. The findings of this study suggest that the

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incorporation of career counselors' self-disclosure of their own stories, particularly in the context of choosing a major and planning for a career, into the practitioner-student discourse, are a potential remedy to this challenge.

Chapter 6

Manuscript Two: Diplomas with Direction: A Qualitative Study of Career Counseling Support for First-Generation College Students

One quarter of today's college enrollment is comprised of first-generation college students (FGCS) (Redford & Hoyer, 2017). These students, the firsts in their families to go to college, often lack sufficient role models to guide them through their higher education experience (Martinez, Sher, Krull, & Wood, 2009). As a result, many FGCS graduate ill-prepared to transition from college into the professional workforce (Parks-Yancy, 2012), despite having pursued higher education for the financial mobility a college degree is expected to provide (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Shelton, 2011).

An individual's personal connections – what is commonly referred to as their "social capital" (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) – are often considered key to career advancement (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Mehta et al., 2011). Without a network of well-informed family, friends, or colleagues with collective career planning expertise, FGCS graduate at lower rates and remain un- and underemployed longer than their non-first-generation peers (Parks-Yancy, 2012). Career development practitioners, sitting at the intersection of academic and career decision-making, are therefore primed to help students fill in this social capital void, helping FGCS feel less isolated from – and more informed about the career planning process. This article explores how career counselors who had been first-generation college students themselves use their own college-to-career experiences to support their FGCS clients today. Below is a brief overview of the study followed by key findings and implications for career development practitioners.

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Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how career counselors who, themselves, had been the firsts in their families to go to college use their personal experiences to support their first-generation college student clients. Participants were recruited from four-year institutions, as this characteristic aligns with the increasing employment demand for a bachelor's degree ("Moving the goalposts," 2014). With higher enrollment of FGCS at public institutions than private (Engle & Tinto, 2008), the sample for this study concentrated on participants at the former. Participants were recruited through national and regional professional organizations, posts on personal and professional social media sites, and through individual emails to the career centers at more than 200 institutions across all 50 states and DC.

Fourteen career counselors from across the United States participated in the study. The sample consists primarily of well-seasoned professionals, most having worked in the field of career development for at least five years. The four newer career development practitioners shared during the course of the study that they'd had at least three prior years of other professional experience. Although career development practitioners are not required to hold advanced degrees (Pritchard & Maze, 2016), all participants in this study did: 10 held master's degrees and 4 held doctorates. The sample was composed predominately of women, reflecting the national composition of the "education administrators" and "counselors" workforce (65% and 73% respectively, U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). Despite efforts to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds, most participants were White, which, while reflective of the racial and ethnic make-up of the counseling field (DataUSA: Counselors, "Diversity", 2015), is

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incongruous with that of FGCS, who are predominantly students of color (Redford & Hoyer, 2017).

Through individual interviews, data were collected about participants' experiences enrolling in and graduating from college, their early career development, and their roles as career counselors. The audio files were transcribed and the contents subjected to a multi-level coding process (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 2013). Specific attention was paid to the question of how the participants use their personal experiences to support their FGCS clients.

Findings

The findings from the study indicate that FGCS face a number of career exploration and planning challenges that might not be readily identified or recognized. A second key theme that emerged from the data is that FGCS especially benefit from career counselors' efforts to tie career planning into other aspects of campus life (e.g., choosing a major, getting involved in campus activities). Lastly, the findings show that participants advocate for practices that normalize career self-management for first-generation college students.

Recognizing FGCS career planning challenges. Participants' stories about their students highlight a number of career planning obstacles that warrant special consideration. Choosing a major and identifying a career path are among the most common struggles identified by the career counselors. Lolita often encounters students who "don't know what to do with their majors" or only know of one possibility and aren't interested, like the students who, "don't want to be a police officer, and they just

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majored in criminal justice." Jennifer's FGCS clients fear the consequences of changing their minds:

> They don't know how to explain it to their parents. I had a student who wanted to change his major, [but] he was going, "I've been telling everybody that I was gonna be X since I was ten years old…. So now if I change my major, it'll be embarrassing for me and my parents."

Leigh similarly sees students who are "afraid to try [something] because they think if they fail they're back to square one." She actively works to counter those feelings by "giving them the license [to explore], the support to say 'No one is going to think less of you if this particular experience doesn't work out.'" Imperative to helping FGCS is understanding the hesitation they may have in admitting they're not happy with or doing well in their major, and recognizing that students may have limited perspective connecting academic studies to a range of career paths.

Geography is also a significant factor in both how FGCS approach their studies as well as their longer-term career plans. Amanda works in the Midwest, where there are many FGCS in the College of Agriculture who "only know the farm and come here for an opportunity to supplement the income of the farm." As their career counselor, she strives to "help them realize… they can have a job off the farm, and [still] add value to their family." Kevin, who works in a part of the United States will few industry options, assists many frustrated recent graduates whose only job offer is in retail sales. He encourages them to be the best at whatever they're doing, because "[This region] is a small place…. People know who you are. So, when that job in the state sector or federal sector comes

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available, so-and-so's gonna call [the store and] you want them to say good things about you."

Despite the career development field's active encouragement of experiential education (Crain, 2016; Stack & Fede, 2017), geography can impede access to internships or networking opportunities. Veronica, a career counselor in a suburban town more than two hours away from the big city, the source for most of the college's enrollment. She notes, "Unfortunately when you come up here, transportation's not the same, and if you're from the city, you usually don't have a car or a license. Getting around here is really hard [and] there's not much to do." A key takeaway from these findings is the importance of career development practitioners taking into consideration the factors of campus location as well as the geography from which the institution draws its students when providing career guidance.

Career centers as conduits. Improving career planning among FGCS means advocating for a campus-wide support system that goes beyond receipt of a diploma. Ruth demonstrates how partnerships with the offices that see students first are key to early engagement:

> I would say the number one thing is just making sure we have visibility…working very closely with academic advisors, using every partnership we can come up with to build relationships - housing and residence life, military and veteran's programs, campus activities, Greek life, anything where there is a population of students, [we do] the best we can to work with their leadership, so that we can be invited into meetings, and classes, and things that allow us to provide that exposure.

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Kevin concurs: "by the time we get to a point where we're doing a resume or talking about an application process or an interview that's coming up, this comes with almost three or four years with having a really good relation already." These acts exemplify the power of early engagement with FGCS, sometimes as early as their first semester of college. By inserting themselves in other areas of campus life, career counselors demonstrate that career planning should not be seen as an independent task, but an ongoing process embedded in all aspects of degree pursuit.

Career counselors can also be the link that connects students to others across campus. Lolita talks with her students about the importance of having a "cheerleader, somebody [to] support you as you're looking for an internship, or somebody that kind of keeps you in balance, in check about [career planning]." Recognizing that such a person may not exist at home, Lolita acts more strategically:

> With [some] students, I find that they may not have the support at home…. so that's when I have them…talk about where can [they] find the support, and what's the type of support that they need? So, do they need to maybe find one of their professors? Do they have a professor that they admire or look up to? Is there an academic advisor or other advisor that they look up to? That's how I begin those conversations with them.

Institutions of higher education are complex systems, with a career counselor being just one professional students may encounter over the course of their academic study. Institutional structures that already promote enrollment, persistence, and degree completion need to consider the 'what's next?' for its graduates, particularly those who are the firsts in their families to graduate. The coordination of such efforts can begin with

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well-informed career development practitioners whose roles afford them the opportunity to enlighten their colleagues in both the academic and student spheres of campus life.

Normalizing career self-management. Engaging FGCS in career planning means making the process meaningful and accessible. Alejandra emphasizes the importance of reflection when meeting with a student:

Let's talk about what that work-study job is teaching you. And what your major is teaching you. And what really calls to you. What are the themes that run through all [these experiences] …and let's try to think about what you can do here on campus, and post-graduation that relate to those themes?

As the director of her career center, she avoids the practice of just "… teach[ing] people to write their resumes and giv[ing] them tests to tell them what they should be for the rest of their lives," but instead leads her staff in "trying to normalize a level of self-knowledge and career self-management that every student can apply for the long term." These practices aim to encourage FGCS to recognize that there are valuable connections between their college experiences and their future careers that may not be evident at first glance.

Jane, who provides guidance to students across several campuses, has "designed the career services program for multiple points of access so that wherever a student [is] in their path, or geographically, they always have access to me" Serving a largely non-traditional student population, Jane also designed and teaches "a two-credit general elective online class…so [students] who are working so much, or who have kids at home and who are working, and can't really make time to do individualized appointments can take that class." This extraordinary step of offering a range of career service modalities is

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an indication of the value Jane places on making career planning accessible to her students.

Similarly, Liz makes sure her office is a place where FGCS feel welcome, an action she describes as an "overarching theme" in her practice, based on her own experiences as a student.

> [I strive to] be a positive influence for my students because…I heard negative messages all the time, and [the career center] felt like this inner club. I never want a student to feel like they have to be a certain type of student to be able to use career services and to feel like they're not going to succeed or that they don't have options. I never want to be someone who sends that message to a student.

Recognizing that FGCS may not inherently know or value the services a career center provides, may be hesitant to seek them out, or may have personal complications that make visiting the career center a struggle, these counselors demonstrate a number of ways to make career planning meaningful and the resources accessible.

Discussion & Implications

The question this study sought to address is how career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their own personal experiences to support their FGCS students today. A core element of the participants' practice was taking the time to get to know their students. By encouraging students to share their insecurities as well as their interests, both the odyssey they seek and the obstacles they potentially face, career development practitioners can help their FGCS clients define self-success and provide concrete ways in which the career center can help. The literature supports this approach. Flores & Heppner (2002) identify knowing "…how the world of work operates for

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individuals from various racial/ethnic groups" (p. 184) as a crucial skill for multicultural career counselors, and other researchers (Hughes, Gibbons, and Mynatt, 2013; Schlesinger et al., 2016) advocate for the narrative theory career development model which, "provides a platform for exploring issues affecting students now and that may later affect their career decisions." (Hughes et al., 2013).

The findings also demonstrate that first-generation college students may not be actively encouraged in their academic endeavors. This topic is present in other FGCS literature as well, indicating that students whose parents did not attend college sometimes face parental pressure to, "contribute to the family or move out and start their own family…just as the parents had to do when they completed their secondary education" (Mehta et al., 2011, p. 21). Even those who are supported by their parents may still lack an effective support system. The participants in this study described significant efforts they make to collaborate with other offices on campus, as a way to expand the career center's reach and to let others know they can serve as a FGCS resource. Such actions are encouraged in the practice of career development, with much emphasis on the building of social capital (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Further, participants also take into account the geographic region in which they work, including specific industry sectors found only in certain parts of the United States, higher-than-average immigrant populations, and the local, statewide, or national pool from which the institution enrolls its students. Such a practice seems aligned with multicultural career counseling. For example, Flores & Heppner (2002) note that, "Culturally competent career counselors must be aware of the people who live in their communities" (p. 183). However, there is a lack of literature examining geography as a

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specific factor in students' career decision making, leaving an opening for further exploration.

The practices described above need not be limited to those who work under the auspices of a career services office. The findings of this study bring to light the many professional touch-points a student likely encounters throughout their college education, indicating a wealth of opportunity for not only career counselors, but faculty, academic advisors, and other administrators to keep these students focused on post-graduation career success and poised to share their positive associations with career planning with future generations of college graduates.

Recommendations for Practice

The participants in this study had very clear and direct connections with their students, but the findings suggest that their practices – namely, getting to know their students, sharing information about themselves, and ensuring each student has a support system – are adaptable for all career development professionals who serve first-generation college student clients.

Getting to know students. This practice begins with encouraging students to share. While some typical career services, like resume reviews and mock interviews, are largely transactional, extra effort is encouraged to inquire about students and the circumstances that have led them to the career center. Learning about students' interests, goals, and fears, asking them to define what success looks like, and providing concrete ways in which the career center can help can be of great benefit to first-generation college students.

Sharing personal information. As a career counselor, offering particular details such as college major, career path, and struggles faced as a student may reassure FGCS that they are not alone. Students may know little about professional staff and fail to see any connections between the career development practitioner's life circumstances and their own. Used sparingly, storytelling in response to a student's words or actions has the power to encourage deeper discourse and longer-term engagement in career planning.

Ensuring a support system. Helping FGCS find a guide who will hold them accountable to themselves and their goals is a crucial approach to supporting this population. An effective technique is to ask students who they consider to be their role models, or which professors and staff members they respond to best. Suggesting campus and community organizations that provide either formal or informal mentorship can serve to broaden students' networks. Additionally, consider colleagues known to be sensitive to the needs of first-generation college students and proactively making the introduction increases the chances that students will follow through on a future meeting.

Conclusions

This study specifically examined the ways in which career counselors who had been first-generation college students support first-generation college students today. The parameters of the study, while limited in scope, yielded findings that indicate applicability beyond the framework of first-generation to first-generation. Ultimately, the findings of the study suggest that there are a number of steps all career development practitioners can take to positively impact FGCS' experiences throughout and beyond college by instilling confidence and informing options around career exploration and planning.

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Appendix A

Permission to Reprint Table 1

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Introductory Email Message

Greetings! My name is Pamela Krieger Cohen and I am a candidate for the degree of
Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. For my
dissertation research, I am conducting a study on career development practitioners and
first-generation college students [defined as a student whose parents did not attend
college].

I am seeking study participants who meet the following minimum criteria:
- Were the first member of their immediate families to go to college;
- Currently work at a 4-year, public higher education institution;
- Have knowingly met with at least two first-generation college students

If you fit this profile and would like to be considered for participation in this study,
please click the link below to take a brief survey and provide your contact information.
Completion of this survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

Thank you!

PARTICIPANT SURVEY: [link to Qualtrics Survey]

Survey Content

Thank you for your interest in participating in a doctoral dissertation research study on
career development practitioners and first-generation college students. Selected
participants will be asked to commit approximately 90 minutes of their time (a 60-minute
interview with a 30-minute pre-interview activity) and be available to answer brief
follow-up/clarification questions. Interviews can be conducted in person (preferred) or
via Skype. All other communication will be by email or phone.

First, please confirm you meet the following basic eligibility criteria:

Yes/No: I was the first member of my immediate family to go to college.
Yes/No: I currently work at a 4-year, public higher education institution.
Yes/No: I have knowingly met with at least two first-generation college students.

Please tell me a bit about yourself:

Gender Identity: Female; Male; Prefer Not to Disclose
Highest Level of Education: Bachelor's Degree; Master's Degree; Doctorate

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Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; White; Asian; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Two or more races; Race and/or ethnicity unknown

Geographic Region: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, West, Southwest

Length of Time with Current Employer: <1 year   1-5   5-10   11-20 21+

Years of Experience in Career Development: <5   5-10   11-20 21+

This study will focus on individual practices, not those of a particular office or institution. Additionally, while the study will use the term "career counselor", eligibility for participation is not based on education, training, or official job title. With that in mind, please read through each of the activity statements below and select the response that most closely describes the extent to which you individually perform these activities in your practice:

Career Counseling Activity Statement	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
Regularly meets or communicates by phone or video chat with a student beyond an initial intake meeting.					
Encourages students to share career planning expectations, perspectives, and needs.					
Administers and interprets career self-assessment instruments to aid students in making career decisions.					
Assists students in understanding how their non-work life (e.g. family, interests, values, personality) affects career decision-making.					
Responds to immediate needs while also promoting long-term developmental and preventive interventions.					
Conducts outreach to underrepresented or marginalized students to initiate or increase participation in career planning process.					
Knowingly counsels (by referral or student self-disclosure) first-generation college students in his/her practice.					
Shares personal information about him/herself with students to develop trust and rapport.					

In the space below, please provide your name, phone number, and email address. If selected to participate in the study, your name and other identifiers will be protected by the researcher.

The principal investigator in this study, Pamela Krieger Cohen, will be in touch to confirm your participation. Should you have any questions or concerns throughout this process, please contact the chair of Pamela's dissertation committee, Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, johnsona@rowan.edu / 856-256-4000.

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<center>**Appendix C**</center>

<center>**Informed Consent**</center>

What Career Development Practitioners Share with First-Generation College Students: A Grounded Theory Study of Self-Disclosure in Career Counseling

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

You are invited to participate in a research study about understanding how career counselors who had been the first in their families to go to college use that experience to counsel first-generation college student clients. This study is being conducted by researchers in the Department of Educational Services and Leadership at Rowan University. The Principal Investigator is Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D. The Co-Investigator is Pamela E. Krieger Cohen, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.).

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you would be interviewed for about 1 hour. The number of participants in the study is no more than 25. Participation involves a pre-interview written journal activity, verbally answering questions during the interview, and verifying content of interview transcript.

There is little risk participating in this study; after the interview, you may have questions about your experience, which may be directed to the Principal Investigator. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned an alias of your choosing unique to this study. No one other than the researchers would know whether you participated in the study. Study findings will be presented only in summary form and your real name will not be used in any report or publications.

Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help us learn how career development practitioners provide guidance to first-generation college students. *Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in this study.* You may skip any questions you don't want to answer and withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Ane Turner Johnson, johnsona@rowan.edu or 856-256-4000. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the **Rowan University SOM IRB Office** at (856) 566-2712 or Rowan University Glassboro/CMSRU IRB at 856-256-5150 or 856-256-4058.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

<div align="right">[cont.]</div>

<center>153</center>

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Ane Turner Johnson, Ph.D. and Pamela E. Krieger Cohen, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape (sound) record as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study. If you choose not to be recorded, the interviewer will take notes on a password protected personal computer.

The recording(s) and/or interviewer notes will be used for analysis by the research team to develop an understanding of how career counselors who had been the first in their families to go to college use that experience to counsel first-generation college student clients.

The recording(s) and/or interviewer notes will include participant's chosen alias. The recording(s) and/or interviewer notes may include the names of colleges and universities the participant attended or worked in if disclosed by the participant. Any such references will be reassigned an alias (e.g., "Public Midwestern University") by the researchers in the written analysis and any published work.

The recording(s) and/or interviewer notes will be stored on a password protected personal computer labeled via code to subject's identify. The recording(s) will be retained for 6 years as is standard practice for Rowan University.

Your signature on this form grants or denies the investigators named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) and/or interviewer notes for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

I have read the procedure described above and have received a copy of this description.

I   agree   decline to be recorded as part of my voluntary participation in this study.

Name (Printed) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix D

Journal Activity

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please take some time to reflect on previous career counseling sessions you have had with first-generation college students. In particular, think about what information you have shared, what prompted the disclosure(s), and how your student(s) reacted. Two examples are provided below. You are encouraged to write at least three of your own, and may add additional pages as desired.

Please keep this journal separate from your professional work and have it available for our meeting. We will refer to this journal during our interview, and I will collect it afterwards.

STATEMENT: *I was a history major before I went into career counseling.*

PROMPT: *Workshop for 'undeclared' sophomores on choosing a major.*

REACTION: *A student made appointment w/me to discuss careers w/history degree.*

STATEMENT: *I understand, because my parents expected the same of me.*

PROMPT: *Student distressed by parental pressure to contribute to family income.*

REACTION: *Student asked how I convinced them that graduating from college would be more helpful in the long run.*

STATEMENT:

PROMPT:

REACTION:

STATEMENT:

PROMPT:

REACTION:

STATEMENT:

PROMPT:

REACTION:

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Appendix E

Interview Protocol

RESEARCHER: The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study is to examine how career counselors who, themselves, had been the first in their families to go to college use that personal experience to establish rapport and trust with their first-generation college student ("first-gen") clients. I want to thank you for your participation, and ask if you have any questions for me before we begin. [Allow for questions]

1. Let's start with some background information about your career counseling role, like how long you've been a career counselor and how you got into the field.

2. If I may, let's go back to your college days. Can you tell me about your experience being the first in your family to go to college?

3. Thinking about the first-gens who come in to see you now, in what ways do you find their experience to be like yours? What's different for them?

4. Let's talk a bit more about how some of your shared experiences come to light when you're meeting with a first-gen in the career center. Take a look at your journal, and talk broadly about the kinds of things you've shared with students [labeled "Statements"].

5. Still thinking in broad terms, can you describe how these disclosures come about? Meaning, what prompts have led you to share something personal with your students?

6. What is your sense of how students respond? What is their "reaction" to you?

7. Could you tell me of a particular disclosure (that we've discussed already or something else) that had yielded the greatest response from students?

8. Perhaps you could also describe an example or two of how the revelation of a shared "first-gen experience" changed the relationship between you and the student.

9. Before we wrap up, I'd like to invite you to share any additional thoughts about your experience as a first-generation college student and how that experience plays into your practice as a career counselor.

Thank you again for providing insight into your journey from first-gen to career counselor and how your personal experiences play a role in your professional work. Are there questions you have for me?

Code Map

Fourth Iteration: Statement of Insights for a Grounded Theory of Self-Disclosure in Career Counseling			
Emergent insights that can inform a theory of career counseling for first-generation college students based on career development practitioner self-disclosure			
Career counselors who recognize and acknowledge common characteristics of first-generation college students and share personal, relevant stories from their own college experiences can counter students' feelings of isolation and confusion regarding career exploration and planning. Further, career counselors who actively partner with academic and student life colleagues across campus form a network of contacts that subsequently creates equitable social capital acquisition for first-generation college students.			
RQ1: How do career counselors who had been first-generation college students use their past experiences to relate to current first-generation college students?	RQ2: How do they disclose these experiences to their first-generation college student clients?	RQ3: What factors provide the impetus to self-disclose?	RQ4: How do they use their past experiences to support first-generation college students?
Emergent Themes			
Sensing Self in Students Finding Commonalities Recognizing Mistrust	Responding to Students Telling a Story Admitting Mistakes	Establishing Credibility Countering Feelings of Isolation Instilling Confidence	Counseling with Intentionality Collaborating with Campus Partners Responding to Regional Need
Third Iteration: Theoretical Coding (Glaser, 2005)			
Asymmetry Social Constraints	Binary Frames Balancing	Equifinality Moment Capture Frames	Social Arena Autopoiesis (p. 26)
Second Iteration: Focused Coding (codes-to-categories/Charmaz, 2014)			
Associating who I am with where I'm from Suffering consequences Meeting/defying parents' expectations Blending in not to stand out Learning by leading Self-navigating	Responding to what student says/does Telling a story Admitting mistakes Validating students' feelings Presenting to classes and student groups	Recognizing common traits among first-gens Establishing credibility Instilling confidence Countering feelings of isolation	Counseling with intentionality Advocating for support system Providing space to be seen and heard Challenging stereotypes Finding and filling gaps Responding to

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	Meeting with students individually		regional needs
Sensing self in others			Normalizing career self-management
Building trust			Empowering students through lessons learned

First Iteration: Initial Coding (incident-by-incident/Holton, 2010)			
Key: 1A. Counselor Upbringing; 1B. Counselor at College; 1C. Counselor's Career Development; 1D. Relating to students; 1E. Counselor's role	*Key: 2A. What counselors share; 2B. How counselors share*	*Key 3A. CSD Prompt from student; 3B. CSD Counselor initiated*	*Key: 4A. Student response to CSD; 4B. Counselor support; 4C. Institutional support; 4D. Community support*
1A. Being supported by parents	2A. CSD - Revealing personal struggles	3A. CSD - broadening students' perspective	4A. CSD Student Response - more relaxed
1A. Facing stereotypes and familiar norms	2A. CSD - sharing lessons learned	3A. CSD - challenging student to pursue interests	4A. CSD Student Response - accepting assistance
1A. Intersecting identities	2A. CSD - Stating own career path	3A. CSD - establishing credibility	4A. CSD Student Response - comfort in finding someone like me
1A. Lacking quality secondary education	2A. CSD - Telling own story in response to indecision	3A. CSD - helping student develop sense of self	4A. CSD Student Response - Expressing surprise at possible future
1A. Letting finances dictate career decisions	2A. CSD - admitting own mistakes	3A. CSD - reassuring student not alone	4A. CSD Student Response - feel seen and heard
1A. Linking culture and geography	2B. Being invited in to classroom	3A. CSD - responding to student inquiry	4A. CSD Student Response - Sense of belonging
1A. Linking economy and geography	2B. Being regarded as a resource	3A. CSD - teaching financial literacy	4A. CSD Student Response - Sense of gratitude
1A. Linking education and geography	2B. Calling up "go to" story for common student concern	3A. Student fears parents reaction	4A. CSD Student Response - Sense of relief
1A. Participants' Parents	2B. Frequently sharing stories	3A. Student reveals self as first-gen	4A. CSD Student Response - stay in meeting
1A. Responding to parents'	2B. Validating student's	3B. CSD - encouraging	4A. CSD Student

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beliefs about college	feelings	revelations	Response - Stereotypes challenged
1A. Taking advantage of an opportunity		3B. CSD - ending cycle of misinformation	4B. Addressing realities of being undocumented
1A. Wanting to do better than parents		3B. CSD - serving as a resource	4B. Advocating for support system
1B. Acquiring social capital informally		3B. Lifting burden of self-doubt	4B. Being a mentor
1B. Acquiring social capital through formal program		3B. CSD - instilling confidence	4B. Brainstorming and role playing
1B. Awareness of being different		3B. CSD - wanting to serve as a liaison	4B. CSD - demonstrating importance of building network
1B. Being a self-navigator		3B. Inferring student is first-gen	4B. CSD - forging relationships
1B. Being dissuaded from campus involvement		3B. Recognizing common traits among first-gens	4B. Demonstrating impact of economy on HED
1B. Blending in to not stand out		3B. Sensing desperation	4B. Demonstrating value of social capital
1B. Defying expectations			4B. Demonstrating value of support system
1B. Experiencing indecision			4B. Establishing practice that supports first-gens
1B. Lacking access to information			4B. Extending relationship beyond college years
1B. Lacking educational or career plan			4B. Informing student career choices
1B. Lacking institutional knowledge			4B. Knowing what's best for students
1B. Lacking parental understanding about college			4B. Linking education and politics
1B. Making costly mistakes			4B. Meeting students where they are
1B. Rationalizing pursuit of college degree			4B. Meeting with students long-term
1B. Recognizing moment not prepared for college			4B. Normalizing career self-

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			management
1B. Rewarded for being poor			4B. Offering alternate path
1B. Seeking out like-minded peers			4B. Promoting HED as investment in self
1C. Becoming a career counselor			4B. Promoting need for resources
1C. Being considered well-informed because of looks			4B. Providing sources of social capital
1C. Emerging from career center more informed			4B. Questioning traditional practices
1C. Expressing indifference to career center			4B. Recognizing student hardship
1C. Feeling financially insecure			4B. Serving as a knowledgeable guide
1C. Having an "exaggerated trust" in institutional professionals			4B. Teaching students importance of social capital
1C. Lacking college-educated peers			4B. Uplifting students
1C. Learning by leading			4C. Advocating early engagement with first-gens
1C. Expanding worldview beyond hometown			4C. Collaborating with campus partners
1C. Receiving ineffective career guidance			4C. Creating place for first-gens to access info
1C. Reflecting on what might have been			4C. Finding gap in institutional support
1C. Seeking help and not getting it			4C. Institutional outreach
1C. Redirecting career plans after reality check			4C. Knowing of institutional first-gen support
1D. Highlighting challenges today's first-gens face			4C. Lacking knowledge of institutional first-gen support
1D. Seeing own exper. in today's first-gens			4C. Positing that poverty is key to HED access

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1D. CSD - building trust			4C. Receiving info on incoming students
1D. CSD - finding commonalities			4C. Responding to institutional culture
1D. Keeping students engaged and motivated			4C. Responding to regional need
1D. Letting first-gens self-identify			4D. Broadening family influence beyond parents
1D. Linking culture and economy			4D. Noting link between institution and community
1D. Perceiving advantages for today's first-gens			
1D. Pinpointing family pressure to succeed			
1D. Understanding environment students come from			
1D. Using own experience to help others			
1E. Describing large caseload			
1E. Gauging career readiness			
1E. Noting evolution of career services			
1E. Participant job function			
1E. Reframing a struggle as a strength			
1E. Valuing technology as tool for information			

Note. Adapted from Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher; 31*(7), p. 32, by V. A. Anfara, K. M. Brown, & T. L. Mangione, 2002.