Counselor Education and Universal Design
An Antiracist Approach Within Classrooms

Antiracist universal design for learning (AUDL) is an innovative approach that incorporates two complementary action-based ideas into counselor education classrooms. By creating inclusive environments that value the experiences and backgrounds of all students, AUDL pushes for a broader scope of learning which honors minoritized voices within the counseling canon and provides students with the opportunity to share their knowledge and understanding in more personally relevant ways (Fritzgerald, 2020; Washington et al., 2022). Instructors who mindfully consider how they provide information, what content is centered, and their expectations for the ways in which students relay their understanding of material, can transform their classrooms into safe, equitable environments. In this practice brief, authors integrate literature regarding both universal design for learning and antiracism to define AUDL and provide practical applications to counselor education courses.

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Counselors in training must engage in a deeper understanding of systemic racism and consider how such racism impacts the mental health of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). With its focus on individual control and bias, the psychological sciences have overlooked historical, structural, and intersectional racism (Trawalter et al., 2020). This oversight contributes to the ongoing perpetuation of such racism both in and outside of the counseling settings. As counselors are called to serve as advocates for their clients while helping them in their pursuit of mental wellness, what is needed are intentional training opportunities which not only broach racism but engage preservice and in-service counselors in antiracist teaching practices to foster both inclusive and antiracist counseling practice.

RELEVANT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE SUPPORT

With a large proportion of counselors identifying as White (ASCA, 2018; American Psychological Association Center for Workforce Studies, 2016), the need for self-reflection, education, and understanding of structural and intersectional racism during training for future counselors is amplified as the history of racism stems directly from White dominance. The premise of race as social identity and the creation and perpetuation of slavery stem from White Europeans in the 17th Century; and the idea of race as a differentiating factor persists today, despite evidence that race has no biological basis (Trawalter et al., 2020). As such, White supremacy often engages in the systemic subjugation of BIPOC in order to protect whiteness and preserve power and dominance (i.e., state-sanctioned violence and murder of Black individuals by police, economic and health disparities for BIPOC, continued underfunding for schools that primarily serve BIPOC students, etc., Anderson, 2016; Love 2019).

While the realities of racism are evident, preservice counseling programs often struggle with adequately addressing this as a part of training. Counselor education expectations often stem from the standards set by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The standards outline many facets of the learning experience for students, laying out the eight common core areas that counselor educators must address within curriculum. Although "social and cultural diversity" is listed as one of these core areas, and CACREP accreditation standards point to the necessity for multicultural competence and awareness (CACREP, 2015), no mandate exists to ensure that each counselor education program stems from an antiracist point of view.

Because multiculturalism and antiracism do not equate to the same thing it is important to understand the distinguishing factors. As stated by Lei and Guo (2022) "Multiculturalism tolerates cultural differences but does not challenge an unjust society premised on White supremacy... an antiracist model of education questions and decenters an exclusionary ideology of White supremacy in the social system and in political and public discourses" (p. 1). In other words, antiracism is an action-based approach that involves an intentionality to address and challenge the status-quo of White-centric culture.

RATIONALE OR KNOWLEDGE GAP

As a White dominant field, counselor educators need to incorporate ways for students to understand the role they play in maintaining systemic racism and confront how racism is propagated in the counseling profession. This understanding should include and move beyond foundational multicultural counseling practices which focus on the ways in which culture, a key component of psychological development and functioning, is a part of the counseling process, to specifically include antiracism (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022). As counselor identity is a developmental process, it then makes sense that developing multicultural counseling, social justice counseling and advocacy, as well as antiracist identities are also a developmental process that need continued nurturing as a part of preservice and in-service counselor training. In particular, Shand-Lubbers, (2022) looked at the antiracist identity development of White mental health counselors and their findings suggest that such development is a multifaceted, lifelong process, indicating that the process should begin as soon as possible. As such, a commitment to antiracist practice and training in preservice programs is critical for counselors' development.

Williams and colleagues (2021) looked at some of the challenges experienced by Black counselor educators whilst trying to incorporate antiracist practices in their respective programs. They noted the tug and pull between multiculturalism vs antiracism, with certain students and faculty feeling more comfortable with the former approach over the latter. They also experienced the conflict of "White Gaze" or the interpretation of experiences of White people by White people. Additionally, they often felt like outsiders within their own programs. These experiences indicate that if counselor education is this hostile for Black faculty members, it must also be equally if not more challenging for BIPOC counseling students trying to navigate the same system with very little power. Scholarly counseling literature is replete with examples that highlight the ways in which BIPOC preservice counseling students experience hostile counselor education programs which often hold deficit-lenses (see Basma et al., 2021; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2021; Seward, 2019). Taken together, this literature base helps to provide insight into what challenges antiracist activists may experience within their own training programs and schools. Some of these challenges can be addressed through a lens that aligns with antiracist ideology, the concept of antiracist universal design for learning (AUDL).

HOW AUDL ADDRESSES THE NEED/KNOWLEDGE GAP

It is important to recognize that antiracist work is concerned with all forms of systemic racism – including intersectionality of racism, which can include classism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, etc. (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Love, 2019). Knowing this, consideration of accessibility should be at the forefront, which involves ensuring that every class is universally designed. In her book, which looks at the impact of universal design for learning (UDL) on Black and Brown students, Fritzgerald (2020) identifies why it's an appropriate and effective approach in education. The three main tenets include "...providing multiple means of engagement, multiple means, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression" (p. 49) within all classrooms. By implementing these tenets into the classroom Fritzgerald (2020)

argues that Black and brown students will benefit as they find space within the classrooms to be more authentically themselves because diversity of thought and expression are integrated in a more overt and conscious manner.

Although Fritzgerald's 2020 text A*ntiracism and Universal Design for Learning: Building Expressways to Learning* focuses on the work of K-12 educators, the tenets of UDL along with antiracism are applicable within the higher education environment. With particular attention to counselor education programs, the application of both antiracism and UDL through AUDL challenges faculty and students to actively engage in antiracist practice through multiple means of action and expression. It pushes both students and faculty alike to be action oriented as it relates to the field of counseling to challenge structures that perpetuate intersectional racism. This model, in particular, expands on previous work of multiculturalism, social justice and advocacy, and is intentionally intersectional in approach to ensure that the counselor education classroom engages in a developmental, accessible, antiracist learning environment in response to the current sociohistorical and sociopolitical context.

Description of Instructional Strategy

Antiracist universal design for learning (AUDL) involves the integration of two unique areas. Before integration, it is important to understand what each entail and contributes to AUDL. Holcomb-McCoy defines antiracism as, "...taking an active approach to dismantling racist practices, racial hatred, systemic racism, and the oppression of historically oppressed racial groups" (p.7). Because racism is systemic and perpetual, antiracism requires a systemic and daily approach that moves beyond the counseling session. As such, antiracist counselors are those who not only espouse a "not racist" stance but engage in actions every day that challenge racist policies and practices while also seeking to build coalitions towards the collective liberation, especially BIPOC individuals. It is important to note that antiracism is not critical race theory, emphasizes a critical consciousness that understands how racism is intersectional, systemic, and perpetual.

In counseling, an antiracist lens moves beyond what counselors do to also include how counselor educators disrupt the status quo in counseling (Washington et al., 2022). For example, using an antiracist lens as a part of pedagogy allows counselor educators to challenge what is taught (often content areas center whiteness in terms of theories and practices) to recenter BIPOC ways of knowing, including theory and practices (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Washington et al., 2022). Additionally, antiracist counselor educators readily integrate a strengths-based lens as a part of pedagogy which moves beyond only seeing BIPOC counseling students and community members for their pain but recognizes BIPOC joy and excellence as a part of their totality (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022).

It is important to note that despite greater conversation about antiracism in counselor education, there still exists great challenges in its integration as noted by Williams et al. (2021) and

Washington et al., (2022). There continues to be resistance to challenging the status quo regarding pedagogy and teaching despite the need for such a shift. Similarly, although counselor education focuses on molding future counselors into strong advocates who help clients address system barriers regarding equity and access, accreditation bodies such as CACREP does not specifically denote the importance of antiracism for preservice counselors within their own programs. Additionally, classrooms are not expected to be created within a universal design framework and tend to follow a more traditional hierarchical experience, where the instructor makes decisions, and the students are expected to comply with their choices.

The overall concept of universal design has application opportunities within many fields, including within higher education. Burgstahler (2008) outlines the areas in which universal design can be applied at this level- instruction, services, technology, and physical spaces. The main goal within each of these areas is that students do not have to utilize accommodations to help students be successful, because the instructor is responsible for creating accessible and appropriate atmospheres for everyone. UDL focuses on utilizing a diversity of teaching strategies and offering choices for how learning could occur within a classroom. The guidelines for UDL are broken into the three main areas: engagement, representation, and action/expression, and further divided under each of those categories to highlight where options for students need to be considered (CAST, 2018). The guidelines recommend providing options in the following areas for students: recruiting interest (choice and autonomy), sustaining effort and persistence, self-regulation, perception, language and symbols, comprehension, physical action, expression and communication, and executive functions. By considering each of these areas, instructors examine the variety of details that creates a learning experience that is more holistic, valuable, and responsive for students.

ANTIRACIST UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (AUDL)

The integration of antiracism and universal design for learning is a well-suited match as the two concepts value the same core elements of increasing access for all students, incorporating proactive approaches to address inequity, and valuing the learner for who they are and what they bring into a classroom. There is action involved with UDL and antiracism as they require thoughtful and reflective understanding of the variety of students who are served within the classroom. The antiracist nature of universal design is an overt process as the instructor needs to integrate culturally relevant material and honor the voices and experiences of students who are often silenced by the more traditional modalities and expectations of learning. However, if done well, AUDL is a powerful concept that is well suited for counselor education.

APPLYING AUDL TO COUNSELOR EDUCATION

To ensure that the tenets of AUDL occur within counselor education coursework, certain criteria and expectations for courses must be set. A guidebook could be utilized which instructors would reference when designing their courses. The guidebook will serve to help instructors evaluate how the course is set up and include questions such as:

1. Which authors are being highlighted in the readings? Are BIPOC stories and points of view centered (Fritzgerald, 2020; Washington et al., 2022)?

2. What choices are students offered for assignments? Is there more than one modality for expression (that goes beyond the tradition of writing) (Fritzgerald, 2020)?

3. What expectations are set? Will students have a clear understanding of how they will be evaluated (Fritzgerald, 2020)?

4. What types of communication are utilized? Is there variety in the methods of teaching incorporated (Washington et al., 2022)?

By starting with such questions, instructors can begin to analyze what facets of the syllabi, course layout, assignments, and teaching methods will require adjustment. In addition to these broad questions, looking at the application of some of the questions within specific classes can help counselor educators identify blind spots and consider how to proactively address typical concerns within the counseling field. The following sections highlight how to utilize these questions as a reflection and application tool within a counselor education curriculum. For example, within a counseling theories course, the authors and points of view are often limited in scope. By asking about representation of voices, counselor educators will recognize that multiple means of representation involve the incorporation of theories that go beyond the traditional counseling canon (Washington et al., 2022). To intentionally infuse AUDL, instead of starting with the traditionally touted and well-known theories of counseling (e.g., psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, humanistic, etc.), instructors can shift to first sharing those based in feminism/womanism, Black psychology, African-centered psychology, Latinx psychology ,the multicultural lens and social constructivism and those that go beyond psychological models, such as critical race theory, critical disability studies, and Latinx critical theory, etc. (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022; Singh et al., 2020). One of the authors of this brief does this in her counseling theories course, organizing it such a way that highlights critical theories first and talking about critical consciousness, antiracism, and social justice. Then, each week students are asked to take on a theory with an extension or critique of the said theory, purposefully centering minoritized voices again. Additionally, the students are asked to "try on" a range of theories and then partake in self-reflection exercises that has them consider if it reflects their critical consciousness. She also intentionally incorporates minoritized authors' works and highlights them in pink in the syllabus as a signal of their value.

Lifespan development courses provide another example of when critical evaluation of what and who is centered is imperative as many developmental theorists were White, cisgender men, e.g., Erik Erickson, Sigmund Freud, etc. Additionally, their theories are based upon the experiences of White, often well-educated children, and cultural or social interaction factors were not considered- a clear lack of representation in experiences. In an AUDL development course, critiques of these theories and their failings will be incorporated, in addition to the incorporation of theories which specifically center BIPOC children and adolescents which offer new insights and counter the assumptions of these early theorists. It is important to examine how counselor education programs are empowering students' critical consciousness as future counselors and their role in advocacy from the onset of a program. The AUDL perspective

involves the incorporation of foundational counseling course that examines the base and history of counseling as it would serve all students most effectively in the first semester.

The next question involves how students present their work with the goal of providing power and autonomy to preservice counselors. Various classes can incorporate assignments that allow and encourage students to showcase their knowledge with a variety of mediums. This can serve students who, having to communicate solely with the written word, often with writing mechanics and grammar which center Whiteness, (i.e., APA, MLA) have been marginalized (Fritzgerald, 2020). Creating assignments that allow students to reflect their learning through video recordings, slide decks, or other audio or visual modes of expression highlights to students that the typical tradition steeped within education is not necessary or expected. One of the coauthors has created assignments to engage in learning beyond the traditional read/write expectations in graduate school to include the use of photo voice, social media, multicultural children's literature, and student led process groups as a part of a multicultural counseling course. These assignments and activities allowed for deeper processing while engaging multiple communication styles and ways of knowing. Instructors must be cognizant of providing some clarity of expectations, so students do not feel overwhelmed with ambiguity; however, it is important that instructors also encourage some dissonance as this process is in rebuke of the stress, pressure, and rigidity often associated with education which are reflections of white-centric ideologies.

When considering counselor educators' expectations of students, the layout of each course can be examined. Faculty should consider when asynchronous or hybrid courses may be appropriate and helpful for students. For students who have many responsibilities outside of school, this flexibility provides opportunities for learning and engagement that would otherwise not be possible. When properly executed, asynchronous and hybrid coursework can be one of the safest ways for students who have traditionally lacked support to feel safe within a classroom setting. Not having the pressure to speak up or speak out can help students find ways to process and provide their understanding in a manner that is potentially more comfortable and accessible for them. The expectations within an asynchronous course are that the work will be completed, but the time for execution falls back to the student, giving them more power. Towards this end, one of the coauthors offered course flexibility in both formal and informal ways. First, courses may be intentionally scheduled such that there is an asynchronous section of courses that allow for an optional meeting (in person or live online time) and students can willingly opt in or out of meeting times.

Feedback within education is one of the most valuable aspects of the learning process; however, evaluation does not always include such feedback. Knowing this, within counselor education programs, syllabi should outline the ways in which feedback may occur. Although rubrics can provide consistency in the way feedback is provided, they can also perpetuate practices that do not allow for non-traditional modes of expression. Many evaluative practices, including the introduction and continual use of a formalized grading system stem from a White-centric history (Schinske & Tanner, 2014). Instead, power and choice can be redistributed to students, providing them an opportunity to feel part of the process and taking away the notion that only the professor is an expert in the room (Fritzgerald, 2020; Inoue, 2015). Inou (2015) goes as far

as recommending abolishment of grades and rubrics and recommending grading contracts that reflect effort expended and amount of time on projects. Instead of focusing on outcomes alone, antiracist evaluation practices can focus on process and reward reflection and introspection. Instructors can provide an opportunity for students to turn in low stakes' assignments, where completion is sufficient for the grade. If rubrics are utilized, involve the students in their creation and incorporate narrative feedback as part of the evaluation process (Safir et al., 2021).

Finally, the last question asks about what teaching and communication looks like within counselor education programs. Although those topics appear to address different things, they are about the same needs- how do students receive information from their professors both within and outside of the classroom? An expectation within an AUDL framework is that there are consistent, reliable, and culturally responsive interactions between faculty and students. Instructors should be approachable and responsive to students, cognizant of the student's need for clarity and kindness. Similarly, within the classroom the way in which the material is presented should be multifaceted, providing students with a range of opportunities for engagement and understanding. Within an ethics course for example, counselor educators can provide real examples of ethical scenarios in more than one medium. For example, they can allow students to watch videos, read examples, or listen to podcasts to obtain the information.

The depth and breadth of counselor education curriculum is an asset for the incorporation of a multitude of learning modalities. Counseling skills courses often involve active learning as students are asked to practice their skills in-person or via video recording, they also complete on site practicum and internships where the diversity of experiences is practical and purposeful. Furthermore, students experience group therapy as part of their experiential group courses. Ethical Considerations

AUDL is innately equitable; with a focus on adjusting and working for anyone (Burgstahler,2008; Fritzgerald, 2020). It considers the benefits of creating a classroom that is accessible and open to all. It is a method of empowerment because it recognizes the experiences of each student, noting individual's unique contributions as valuable. In turn, students feel more comfortable and confident in bringing their full selves into the classroom. Indeed, when done well, students can be successful because they are provided multiple avenues for showcasing what they are learning, feeling confident asking questions, and leaving a program with the belief that they will be able to go into the world and be successful.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE CLASSROOM

When incorporating AUDL into a classroom, instructors should be cognizant of how they implement the practices. AUDL involves both how information is provided (i.e., how material is presented, etc.), what type of information is provided (the authors/creators of the content), and how instructors expect knowledge to be conveyed back to them. For some students providing such a variety of methods in these areas may challenge their ideas of learning. With proper execution, this can help students feel empowered and honored within their counselor education experience.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

When considering this approach within a program, instructors can look at professional development opportunities that focus on universal design within higher education. Counselor educators may find resources within their own campuses, such as with offices of instruction and assessment or disability resource centers. Similarly, efforts to engage in one's own personal antiracist work is a good first step in more successfully incorporating the tenets of AUDL into coursework. Book and curriculum studies could produce productive self-reflection. Internal departmental accountability such as syllabus sharing, and co-teaching could help to create sustainable models of AUDL in counselor education programs.

EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF AUDL

To evaluate the effectiveness of AUDL, student feedback to the instructor is imperative. Although the authors have not utilized student feedback to assess the impact of AUDL practices, a coauthor has used a midterm evaluation strategy to garner feedback about course content, structure, and effectiveness which could be mirrored to evaluate the effectiveness of AUDL strategies in the future. The coauthor utilized surveys which included four open ended questions inviting student reflection on the course content and structure as well as each student's respective role and contributions to the course as a whole. Surveys were completed at the end of class without instructor and small group facilitators present. One salient theme was student appreciation of creative assignments that allowed for demonstration of knowledge and reflection that were not focused on writing papers (e.g., photovoice and mixed media projects). Students also shared that there was some tension with wanting to share more in the large group while feeling more nervous in that setting as opposed to the process groups. Feedback was shared both with students and small group facilitators along with changes that were to be made based on feedback.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

The authors have not utilized specific assessment strategies to determine how well the AUDL changes impacted student learning outcomes, but we believe the following idea could be beneficial toward this end. If the instructor has taught a course both with and without AUDL components, it would be helpful to do a comparison of students' mastery of material before and after the shift. This mastery may be represented in the quality of students' materials and assignments, in the depth of understanding conveyed in student reflections, or in the feedback received at the end of semester from student course evaluations. By looking at these components, an instructor can determine how the differences of AUDL has influenced student learning.

Implications

Fritzgerald (2020) argues that universal design and culturally-responsive practices go together; one cannot occur with the other. She notes then that many of the foundational aspects of creating b an antiracist and universally-designed class entail an environment of respect and honor between student and teacher. Thus, many of these recommendations stem from the universal design approach, and emphasize improving representation of voices not often heard, incorporating a variety of methodologies for teaching, and f asking students to showcase their learning in whatever means best represents their knowledge; in addition to putting the onus on the instructor to create a classroom environment that encourages students to voice their opinions because they feel safe enough to do so. Within a counselor education environment, this type of learning should be the expectation not the exception as students need to feel supported and empowered to actively incorporate how they learn into their counseling environments.

LIMITATIONS

It is important for AUDL to stay flexible and responsive to community needs as the basis of this approach involves co-creation with students. Although there are underlying strategies to begin the implementation process, it cannot be a prescriptive approach because it may be executed in drastically different ways from one program to another. Furthermore, if faculty and staff are not engaged in both aspects of the process, aspects of AUDL may not be fully realized, making it a less comprehensive approach. Although the authors have utilized AUDL within their classrooms, no formal assessment or evaluation has occurred to measure students' impression of the AUDL practices specifically.

DIRECTIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Future research should explore how AUDL can be applied within typical CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, with a specific focus on the eight CACREP domains. However, such research needs to include an investigation into the ways that AUDL overlays or diverges from accreditation standards and practices. Concerns regarding accreditation practices continue to be noted as some requirements may not align with accessibility, access, or the overall call to action required in antiracist work. As one antiracist counselor laments, "… two specific realities come to mind regarding this battle between choosing to teach content that will likely appear on standard certification and licensing exam (i.e., reflective of the counselor canon that is valued) versus scholarship that infuses a critical lens" (Williams et al. 2021, p. 264). The licensure requirements associated with counseling practice pose an overt challenge as students must pass specific exams which focus on content that does not align with the social justice work of anti-racism practices. It is up to the instructors to consider how to infuse

AUDL while also recognizing the disconnection between what is necessary to know to be in the field and what is ethically imperative for counselors-in-training to learn and understand to be culturally responsive practitioners.

More research is needed that can examine how the concepts of universal design and antiracism work tangentially within the counselor education field. It is important to understand how such an incorporation may impact engagement and sense of belonging amongst students, particularly those from traditionally marginalized populations.

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