

# Teaching Antiracism in a Research and Evaluation Counseling Course

Counseling research and evaluation is a foundational knowledge area where counselors in training learn to identify evidence-based practices, create ethical research, evaluate existing research for discernment of its use in practice, and engage in program evaluation. An antiracist approach to teaching this content can prepare students to engage in practice that makes them ready for social justice and advocacy. I provide examples of ways to engage in antiracist teaching of counseling research. Activities, readings, and sample assignments are provided as practical resources for the implementation of an antiracist andragogy to the core content area of research and evaluation.

**AWA G. JANGHA**

Department of Counselor Education,  
Seminary of the Southwest

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**Author Note:**

Awa G. Jangha <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0694-4948>  
There is no known conflict of interest to disclose.  
Correspondence concerning this practice brief should be addressed to Awa Jangha, Seminary of the Southwest, 501 E 32nd Street, Austin, TX, 78705. Email: [awa.jangha@ssw.edu](mailto:awa.jangha@ssw.edu)

**KEYWORDS**

*antiracism, research, evaluation,  
social justice, counselor education*

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Research is a core area of counselor education, preparing students to understand, critique, create, and evaluate research pertinent to the work of counseling (CACREP, 2015). Students are exposed to the ways in which research has been conducted over time, the lessons learned from past experiences that created ethics for research, and the major trends of counseling research. The trends in research reflect the societal issues of the time that impact counseling practice. Antiracism and social justice are present day considerations for the counseling field to embody, from preparation to implementation within the counseling room and within research practices. Yet to engage in these practices, it is important to have clear descriptions of these terms. Being antiracist has been described as engaging in, "...conscious efforts and actions to challenge and counter racism, inequalities, prejudices, and discrimination based on race" (Kailin, 2002 as cited by Williams et al., 2021, p. 255). Social justice has been defined as, "...a multifaceted approach in which counselors strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good through addressing challenges related to both individual and distributive justice" and includes equity, access, participation, and harmony (Crethar & Ratts, 2008, p.2). The focus of this teaching brief is on counselor training within a research and evaluation course from an antiracist lens.

Research on the teaching of research and evaluation is sparse in the field of counseling (Dalzell et al., 2010; Steele & Rawls, 2015). Dalzell et al. (2010) noted the lack of research on the pedagogy of research in counselor training and proposed the creative and effective approach of using collective biographies of students' experiences being 'counseling researchers.' Steele and Rawls (2015) also highlighted the rarity of publications in research training within their study of student perspectives on learning quantitative research. In a content analysis of 230 peer reviewed articles on counseling teaching and learning from 2001-2010, Barrio Minton et al. (2014) highlighted that while there has been an increase on articles focusing on multicultural competency in counselor training, there were few articles that focused on the content area of research (only four during that time span). This was still found to be true four years later in an updated content analysis of 133 peer reviewed articles from 2011-2015 (Barrio Minton et al., 2018) with only one article noted within the content area of research during this timeframe. There continues to be a wealth of information regarding diversity in counselor education (La Guardia, 2021), yet a dearth of literature focusing on adult learners in teaching research and evaluation within counselor education. While research literature is scant, literature within the broader scholarship of counselor education contributes to the instructional design of this brief through recent emphasis on practical ways to assess student learning and integrate culture. These areas reflect trends in articles published over the past two decades that provide counselor educators with the ability to apply innovative culturally relevant curriculum with tools to assess student learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum (Barrio Minton et al., 2018). Incorporation of these considerations are explored within subsequent sections of this brief.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) identifies research and evaluation as one of its eight core content areas and contains 10 standards within this area. Two of those standards are pertinent to the present day focus on infusing antiracism within counselor education (CACREP 2.F.8.a, j): “a) the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice... [and] j) ethical and culturally relevant strategies for conducting, interpreting, and reporting the results of research and/or program evaluation” (2015, p.12). La Guardia (2021) also identified an implication reflecting the current times from their annual review of articles on counselor education and supervision in 2019 that stated:

The challenge now is to continue this work and build upon it by focusing on our role within the wider health care community. Counselor educators and supervisors are leaders in wellness, strengths-based, holistic approaches that will benefit our communities struggling with experiences of violence, racial unrest, derision of difference, and the fear and isolation many experience related to COVID-19. (p.14)

Antiracism as a foundational approach to understanding and teaching research speaks to the work La Guardia (2021) identified in caring for the wider community. In addition, Haskins and Singh (2015) encouraged counselor educators to go beyond developing multicultural competency that primarily focused on growth in White students (as some antiracist training has done; Pieterse, 2009; Pulliam et al., 2019) by providing an equitable approach through the use of critical race theory for the development of cultural competencies relevant to students of color. This inclusive approach provides access for students of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds to become self-aware and increase the depth of their cultural competency while being prepared to work with the wider community.

Historically counseling programs have focused more on culture than teaching antiracism. Williams et al. (2021) called for literature that provides guidelines on how to teach antiracism, stating that the benefit of this instruction leads to students who are more likely to engage in social justice. While culture and social justice have been emphasized in the field of counseling, there has been less literature published on the integration of antiracism within counselor education; this highlights an existing gap in the literature on the application of antiracism within counseling content areas such as research. The purpose of this teaching brief is to provide an antiracist approach that can be utilized as instructional practices in applying an antiracist framework to teaching a research and evaluation course. Responding to the need for more literature on andragogical approaches to teaching research in counselor education and to the need for more literature on practical applications of antiracist approaches to counselor content areas, I highlight activities, readings, and assignments that can be used in teaching research and evaluation.

# Description of an Antiracist Approach to Teaching Research and Evaluation

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I acknowledge that the research and evaluation course described in this brief has been taught within a departmental context where antiracism and social justice are central components across the curriculum. A variety of activities are utilized in the exploration of antiracism, social justice, and counseling research. The activities serve as a means of providing space for students to apply what they have learned from lectures and readings while at the same time expanding beyond expert information towards student formation. Through these activities, students are prompted to become self-aware of their own opinion and expand that understanding to a broadened antiracist lens of their personal engagement with research. Activities include brainstorming and operationalizing terms and small group discussions (e.g., on the history of unethical research, on culture within research articles, on Quantitative Critical Race Theory [QuantCrit], and on submitted assignments). This teaching brief includes a description of the use and purpose of these activities which incorporates readings and assignments.

## AN OVERVIEW OF ANTIRACIST ACTIVITIES

Within the first class, students are introduced to the term *antiracism* through a free association activity. The class brainstorms the words that come to mind for the term antiracism and do the same for the terms *social justice* and *research*. The instructor provides definitions of those terms from Crethar and Ratts (2008), Sheperis et al. (2017), and Williams et al. (2021) and a class discussion follows regarding the similarities and differences between scholars' definitions and students' free-associated terms. This activity allows students to become aware of how they personally understand the terms compared to their peers and compared to expert definitions.

Small group discussions can span an array of topics, including readings and assignments. The second class meeting is an ideal time to have students discuss past unethical research. Prior to class, students have read about Nazi medical war crimes, the Tuskegee syphilis study, and the Belmont report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1976; Sheperis et al., 2017). During class, students watch a video about the Milgram experiment (Greater Good Science Center, 2011). Within small groups students discuss their initial reactions about the Milgram experiment, their thoughts on the development of the researcher's interest in the topic, their thoughts on the ethics of the study, and their thoughts on the potential impact of previous unethical research on today's clients (i.e. Nazi Biomedical War Crimes, Tuskegee Syphilis Experiments, etc.). During the discussion, the instructor briefly visits each group, listening to student responses and answering questions that may arise. Groups later share highlights from their discussion with the entire class. The instructor may also contribute to the discussion some considerations

of modern-day events, such as the impact of history on the willingness or lack thereof to trust vaccinations for the pandemic and ways in which that decision impacts interpersonal relationships and mental health.

Counseling research is rich with topics that span a multitude of areas. Selecting readings, such as peer reviewed research articles that focus on antiracism/social justice and that are representative of researchers of color, is another means of expanding student knowledge of research through a wider lens. This is supported by a component of antiracist pedagogy where reading materials and activities intentionally include racial content (Williams et al., 2021). Small group discussions on readings create space for students to share their initial thoughts on the selected article, how culture was taken into consideration, and their personal takeaways. Readings span topics such as White privilege awareness (Hays et al. 2008), power within the professional identity development of African American female pastoral counselors in training (Jangha et al., 2018), Mexican American college students' cultural values and resilience (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013), the development of the *Antiracism Behavioral Inventory* (Pieterse et al., 2016), and spirituality and religion in research (Stewart-Sicking et al., 2020). These readings can be updated with other pertinent and emerging literature within the counseling field.

One major component of a course in counseling research is an overview of methodology. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are cornerstones of research methods. Group discussion allows students to go beyond the description of quantitative and qualitative methodology to consider the impact of the human element on the development and interpretation of methodology. An antiracist teaching approach includes an explicit naming and analyzing of racial oppression and power dynamics (Williams et al., 2021). One group discussion activity regarding quantitative methodology focuses on QuantCrit. Prior to class, students read Garcia et al.'s (2018) work on QuantCrit, which covers the application of critical race theory to quantitative research methods. Critical race theory involves the revealing, deconstructing, and transformation of oppressive approaches and practices and when applied to quantitative methods, there is an acknowledgement that numbers are not objective because they are planned and interpreted by human beings who inherently hold biases (Garcia et al., 2018). Students are also taught about Gillborn et al.'s (2018) five principles of QuantCrit: "1. Centrality of racism, 2. Numbers are not neutral, 3. Categories are neither 'natural' nor given: for 'race' read [as] 'racism,' 4. Voice and insight: data cannot 'speak for itself,' and 5. Using numbers for social justice" (p.169). Within small group discussions, students are asked to share their thoughts on these principles and to respond to the following questions: How might these principles be helpful in understanding the research you engage with? Would these principles be helpful in your own creation of a research proposal, and how? In a large class discussion, groups share the highlights of their discussions which broadens ideas of how they might utilize these principles in their final assignment (a research proposal on the topic and methodology of their choosing).

Group discussions regarding qualitative methodology has focused on considering two racial/ethnic epistemologies (one's way of gaining knowledge from a cultural lens). One assignment in this class consists of a mini-reflection post, where students provide a brief written reflection

(i.e., two paragraphs) on what they learned from one of the assigned readings within a discussion post. Students select one of two readings on qualitative research methodology: one focuses on an endarkened transnational feminist epistemology (Dillard & Okpaloaka, 2011) and the other focuses on Asian epistemologies (Liu, 2011). These readings speak to Hays' (2020) encouragement to teach students how to identify social location as they learn how to engage in social justice research (i.e., understanding how one's cultural background can impact one's research experience and reflecting on the diversity of the researchers whose work they read). The discussion post platform utilized for this assignment allows other students to read and learn from each other's gleanings from the readings. Students often consider the way their culture contributes to the way in which they understand the world and gain knowledge and how that might be similar or different from the epistemologies presented in the readings.

The day that this assignment is due, students form into small groups and discuss the following: describing the reading they selected for students in their group who did not read that article, what they learned, anything that surprised them, how they view their own epistemology, and anything that they did not agree with or were more curious about. This small group discussion occurs during the second half of the course, at a point where students have learned how to critique research articles and can practice their skills of critical thinking about the readings. This also occurs at a time where students are exploring their choice of methodology for their final assignment and can collaborate during the group discussion around how the understanding of their epistemology impacts how they are developing and planning to interpret their proposed research.

As described above, group discussions are a productive activity for students to share about their assignments. Based on a previous iteration of this course (G. St. David, personal communication, January 14, 2021), the assignments are cumulative and build up to the final project. Initially students engage in an assignment where they critique a journal article. The journal article critique begins to build the skillset of critical thinking for the use of understanding and discerning what research to utilize in practice. Students complete this assignment individually but discuss their findings in small groups and receive additional perspective and feedback from their peers (as well as from the instructor through constructive feedback within grading). The journal article critique prepares students in the selection of articles for the second assignment, a literature review on a topic of their choice. The literature review is shared in small groups and later graded by the instructor (providing additional feedback and perspective to the student as they prepare for the final assignment). The mini-reflection post assignment on racial/ethnic epistemologies, helps students think from a broader cultural context about being intentional in the method and procedures chosen for the final assignment. Finally, the research proposal allows for a cumulative application of what students have learned throughout the semester. Students give brief presentations to the class on their research proposal for feedback before submitting their completed assignment and this serves as the last opportunity for class discussion.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE APPLICATION OF AN ANTIRACIST LENS TO TEACHING RESEARCH**

Acknowledging the ethical codes that the field of counseling has pertaining to research provides a foundation for an antiracist approach to teaching this course. The American Counseling Association's (ACA) *Code of Ethics* (2014) stresses the importance of protecting participants and engaging in respectful and responsible practice. Understanding the rationale for these ethical codes by learning about previous unethical practices, the function of an Institutional Review Board, and the content within the Belmont report provides a solid foundation towards widening the narrative to include racial equity and cultural context in the teaching, learning, and application of counseling research. The activities within this brief can sharpen critical thinking around the use of research can also broaden student willingness to embrace research as a part of practice (as it pertains to selecting evidence-based practices, program evaluation, and case conceptualization).

## **REFLECTIONS OF THE INSTRUCTOR**

I recognize the importance of self-awareness and of holding space for students' readiness or resistance to engage in an antiracist approach (Pieterse, 2009). Not every student will be in the same place in their journey of understanding themselves, their beliefs around racism and antiracism, and the impact of both on research and counseling. It is common to have students at varying places in their journey of broadening their lens to include antiracism (i.e. one student may have done in depth work on their experience of White privilege and another may just be learning that term for the first time). As a Black woman, it has been important to engage in regular check-ins with colleagues around holding and creating space for open questions from students and for their exploration of content as they shift towards a broader understanding of research. Recognizing a need for personal patience and modeling that patience for students who are further along in their journey is essential (especially as it provides an example of holding space for differing viewpoints). Being aware of my own countertransference is also vital and having the support of colleagues doing similar work in other counseling content areas is extremely beneficial. I also recognize that my position as a Black counselor educator informs my commitment to antiracism throughout the courses that I teach. My goal is to prepare students to be aware of their own perspectives on race and how systemic racism has impacted research conducted in the field and the current experiences of clients that will be the focus of future research.

## **SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Activities reviewed in this brief were supported by assigned readings that went beyond the Western counseling canon (Williams et al., 2021) of traditional materials such as the textbook utilized (Sheperis et al., 2017) and the APA Style Manual (APA, 2020). Further readings included resources for the activity on definitions of antiracism (Williams et al., 2021), social justice

(Crethar & Ratts, 2008), and research, (Sheperis et al. 2017) for the discussions on unethical research (Greater Good Science Center, 2011; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1976; Sheperis et al., 2017), QuantCrit (Garcia et al., 2018; Gillborn et al., 2018), and the mini-post reflection assignment (Dillard & Okpaloaka, 2011; Liu, 2011). Additional required readings included Hays et al.'s (2008) article on White privilege, Jangha et al.'s (2018) article on power and counselor identity development, Morgan Consoli and Llamas' (2013) article on researching Mexican cultural values, Pieterse et al.'s (2016) article on the development of an antiracist assessment, and Stewart-Sicking et al.'s (2020) chapter on spirituality in research. In addition, having access to a library database from your institution assists students as they work on their cumulative assignments (e.g, the journal article critique, literature review, and research proposal).

## Evaluation of Antiracist Activities in a Counseling Research Course

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Evaluation of the effectiveness of antiracist research activities has been demonstrated within course evaluations and the use of a student feedback form. Course evaluations at my institution are anonymously completed by students at the end of the semester and cannot be accessed by the instructor until all final grades are submitted. The course evaluation allows students to share the readings they found most and least helpful as well as what could be improved in the course, what was most surprising and most challenging in the course, and a self-rating on their meeting learning objectives for the course. Within this course there is one specific learning objective dedicated to an antiracist approach and states: Student will be able to explore and reflect on their understanding of antiracism and social justice as it relates to research and evaluation. The majority of students self-rated that they 'achieved' this objective with only 15% stating they 'mostly achieved' it. Comments within the course evaluation have highlighted an appreciation for the content (especially the readings) and for the teaching approach where research was found to be exciting and engaging.

In addition, during the first five weeks of the semester, students anonymously complete a student feedback form based on Brookfield's 2017 *Critical Incident Questionnaire* which allows students to share how the course is going, things they want to change, and things that they found helpful or challenging. The responses from this form are reviewed in class each week and the class discusses how to proceed based on feedback (i.e. if any changes need to be made to pacing or structure of content). So far, students have not commented directly on the antiracist content of the course, but have shared that the structure of activities and review of material have been helpful. The student feedback form could be modified to include specific evaluation questions on the antiracist activities that occurred in class that week. For example, students could be asked to include a takeaway or highlight of what they learned from the activity.



# Assessment of Antiracist Activities in a Counseling Research Course

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The use of antiracist activities within class creates opportunities for informal evaluation of students to occur that is not graded (i.e., peer feedback, sharing of takeaways, etc.). Informal evaluation of students within the brainstorming of varying definitions activities (i.e., antiracism, social justice, and research) occurs when the ideas from the class are later compared with definitions of those same terms from the field. Informal evaluation of student learning within small group discussion activities (pertaining to readings, methodology, and review of assignments) can be completed by having groups share their lingering questions and takeaways from the content and experience within their group reporting to the whole class. This would encourage students to go beyond solely sharing highlights from their discussions and could be completed in a written or verbal format depending on the size of the class. Regarding assignments, peer feedback is obtained within the small group discussions of the literature review assignment and the research proposal assignment. Students are required to bring a first draft (that is not graded) to class one week prior to the deadline for the literature review and three weeks prior to the deadline for the research proposal to obtain questions and comments from their group. The research proposal assignment also includes a 5-minute presentation given to the class. Presentations occur during the two weeks in between the sharing of the first draft and submission of the final paper. Students receive peer feedback from the entire class with strengths and lingering questions to help strengthen their final proposal through the use of shared Google document.

Activities within the class foster critical thinking that can be applied to student assignments. Rubrics are created for each assignment: the journal article critique, mini-reflection post, literature review, and research proposal. Rubrics clearly state the maximum amount of points that students can earn for each portion of the assignment (see the Table 1). Each rubric includes criteria for timeliness and the use of APA formatting and writing style. The journal article critique rubric contains additional criteria stating that students provide an introduction (of the topic and key findings) and describe the following: a) statement and explanation of the type of research design, b) rationale or purpose for the study, c) research question, d) independent and dependent variables (if applicable), e) instrument/type of interview, f) results and discussion (sharing how the results are relevant to the counseling field and what they liked or disliked of the study), and g) limitations and call for future research (stating what the authors identified for these two areas as well as sharing their own thoughts around advocacy and/or diversity considerations that they would add to future research). The additional criteria within the mini-reflection post rubric, beyond timeliness and APA style, included students' response to the following prompt: After identifying the chapter selected, state what you learned from the reading you selected. This prompt creates space for individual reflection on the racial/ethnic epistemology readings.

**Table 1***Literature Review Assignment Rubric*

Literature Review	Grading Criteria	Maximum Points That Can Be Earned
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides an adequate overview of current research pertaining to topic</li> <li>-Articulates how race and culture has been addressed within the literature on the topic</li> <li>-States limitations observed from reviewing the literature</li> <li>-Provides a strong rationale for further study/research</li> <li>-Articulates a clear research question</li> <li>-Completes all sections indicated in the instructions</li> </ul>	35
Writing and Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Includes relevant headings organized in a logical manner<sup>10</sup></li> <li>-Adheres to APA style in front matter, format, content, references, punctuation, and writing style</li> <li>-Stays within the page limit</li> </ul>	
References and Citations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Includes at least 10 peer reviewed journal articles as references of resources</li> <li>-References are in APA format</li> <li>-Citations are in APA format</li> </ul>	5
Timeliness	-Submits assignment on time	10
<b>Total Potential Points (60)</b>		

In addition to timeliness and use of APA formatting and writing style (including citations), the literature review rubric included criteria stating that students provide: a) a title page, b) abstract, c) introduction and review of current literature (where students include an overview of current research pertaining to topic), d) cultural considerations (where students articulate how culture has been addressed within the literature on the topic), e) limitations (where students state limitations observed from reviewing the literature), f) call for future research (where students provide a strong rationale for further research and conclude with a clear articulation the gap in the field and their research question), and g) references.

The rubric for the final cumulative assignment, the research proposal, included timeliness, the use of APA formatting and writing style, required content, references and citations, and a presentation (where students needed to show preparedness, give an overview of their topic, and utilize professionalism in responding to questions). Required content for this assignment stated that students include a revised version of their literature review based on graded

feedback from that assignment and that students provide the following sections: method, participants, instruments or type of interview, procedures (including how their study would ethically engage culture), implications of results (including how their study could benefit the field of counseling), and an appendix (that includes a copy of the instrument or interview protocol).

Students have shared their surprise of how much they enjoyed the cumulative assignments. Creating their own research on a topic of their choice that they were passionate about provided motivation to explore current literature and creatively imagine how they would plan their own future research. Students also shared how the creation of a research proposal contributed to their understanding and application of content learned throughout the course. Antiracist requirements within each assignment also prompted additional depth of researching their chosen topics.

An antiracist approach also takes into consideration the way that assignments are created and assessed. The point value for APA style writing is intentionally less than the point value for the content delivered. While recognizing that students need to learn the skillset of writing in APA style, it is also important to acknowledge the diverse means of articulating one's voice in writing; this helps to avoid what Savini (2021) describes as linguistic bias. Ample constructive feedback is given over and above the scores allotted within the rubric and consists of stating student's strengths and areas of improvement in their writing and content.

## Limitations and Implications

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Limitations for this approach include the context and commitment of the instructor. The context in which this course was offered is one where there is department-wide support and implementation of antiracism and social justice in every counseling course. This provides built-in support from colleagues infusing antiracism in different content areas and provides an openness to sharing of resources, lessons learned from mistakes, and celebration of successes. I recognize that this context is rare, as is the commitment of an entire department towards this work. Applying the activities without the same amount of built-in support may require the instructor to seek outside support when needed.

The commitment of the instructor can be a limitation in that time is needed for training in antiracist andragogy prior to implementing it. Time is a precious resource and that not all counselor educators can make the time necessary for a solid understanding of antiracism prior to teaching it. The work of antiracist teaching also calls for the instructor to hold space for tension and difference of opinion which as Williams et al. (2021) recognizes may not be in sync with the typical counselor way of being that can be conflict-avoidant as it pertains to race. Being willing to navigate tension in the work of antiracist teaching is an ongoing commitment that should be carefully considered. Counselor educators are encouraged to focus

some of their continuing education towards the endeavors of increasing their understanding of antiracism and ability to hold tension pertaining to racial content.

Future directions for antiracist practices in teaching research can include utilizing additional creative activities for application, such as role plays on engaging in antiracist semi-structured interviews. Researchers suggest that additional research could also include student involvement in action-oriented research (Hurt-Avila et al., 2021; Steele & Rawls, 2015) and that having a foundational learning of antiracist research could provide greater depth in learning. Lastly, La Guardia (2021) identified the need for increased empirical research on counselor education. Future research that empirically evaluates the use of antiracist activities in teaching research would be informative.

This teaching brief provides an antiracist perspective to teaching a counseling research and evaluation course. Activities, readings, and assignments shared in this brief have provided counselor educators practical examples of how to implement antiracist andragogy in training graduate students to be scholar practitioners of research. Preparing students to understand, create, and evaluate research from an antiracist foundational knowledge base will help to better serve our greater community.

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