

Introduction

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Issue 2

Dear reader,

When we posted an open call for submissions for this un-themed second issue of the *Teaching Practice Briefs* (TPB), we were not quite sure what briefs we would receive. We knew the briefs would be innovative; and, we knew they would be thoughtful. But, beyond those qualities, we were eager to receive the range of topics, suggestions, and groundbreaking ideas authors would submit. In time, we learned that contributing authors' briefs would not disappoint. The variety of teaching innovations submitted for the issue were more diverse and unique than we could have imagined.

While themed TPB issues focus instructional designs on a narrower subject matter area, our

open issues are designed to welcome entries on wide-ranging teaching innovations and instructional strategies in counselor education. With the essential support of TPB Editorial Board members, we are delighted to share the strongest briefs with you now. We believe they touch on imperative topics in counselor education, including Parker et al.'s brief on interprofessional collaboration and Walter et al.'s brief on student groupwork in online teaching. Inclusive syllabi, the topic of Briggs et al.'s brief, has been of special interest to many of our readers. Lastly, Hill & Delgado's brief infuses greater disability knowledge into counselor education and Messerschmitt-Coen's brief considers social justice competence through an essential classroom activity about advocacy. We believe the reader will take much away from the

diversity of ideas and range of instructional practices represented in this issue.

Our next issue will open our second volume of briefs with a focus on critical issues in doctoral counselor education. Doctoral education is core to the future of the profession. The TPB editorial team looks forward to elevating

critical and inclusive teaching innovations and instructional designs that advance social justice competence, improve disability justice knowledge, and scrutinize predominating epistemologies in counselor education.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to seeing your submissions to future calls for TPBs.

Sincerely,

Javier F. Casado Pérez & Clare Merlin-Knoblich

Co-Editors, *Teaching Practice Briefs**

* Are you interested in submitting your own evidence-based counselor education teaching innovation or instructional strategy to a future issue of the *Teaching Practice Briefs*? Visit acesonline.net/TeachingPractice-Briefs to view calls for briefs and corresponding deadlines.

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Structure for Success

Implementing Group Projects in Online Counselor Education Courses

The inclusion of opportunities for active learning is a crucial component in online course design in counselor education. Group project work is an effective pedagogical strategy that encourages student engagement and provides many benefits for student learning. However, students and instructors alike often have hesitations about group projects, especially in an online learning environment. This article (a) provides strategies for instructors to set up group projects in a manner that addresses common student concerns and maximizes student success and (b) discusses ethical, assessment, and technology considerations for the inclusion of group work in online counselor education courses.

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KEYWORDS

asynchronous online learning, collaborative learning, group work, counselor education, technology in education

Structure for Success: Implementing Group Projects in Online Counselor Education Courses

Group work is a widely used pedagogical strategy in higher education that is both well-supported by contemporary research and anecdotally reviled by students (Opdecam & Everaert, 2018; Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010; Thom 2020). Instructors who incorporate group work into their course design must reconcile this tension by devising proactive strategies to enhance student collaboration and mitigate potentially negative outcomes (Brannen et al., 2021; Cartwright et al., 2021; Davies, 2009; Kleinsasser & Hong, 2016; Thom, 2020; Williams et al., 2019). Careful, thoughtful structuring of collaborative learning experiences is particularly important in online courses due to the ease with which students can simply “disappear online” (Swan et al., 2006, p. 7). Additionally, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant shift in terms of counselor preparation, where programs moved to delivering online courses and increasing the integration of technology into course delivery (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2022). The trend for online counselor education programs continues to grow, with more than 100 online programs accredited by CACREP. Given the proliferation of students in online counselor education courses, coupled with the skepticism many faculty have regarding quality student outcomes in online courses (Snow et al., 2018), counselor educators may benefit from suggestions and resources for effectively structuring online group projects and implementing group projects in online counselor education courses.

Group Work in Counselor Education Courses

Utilized in both traditional and online classrooms, collaborative group learning has been linked to positive outcomes for students in several domains, including cognitive learning, academic success, career-related preparation, and social-emotional functioning. Unfortunately, student attitudes toward group work do not always align with the positive research findings (Chang & Brickman, 2018). Students’ concerns include (a) the time demands of group work (Hammar Chiriac, 2014; Healy et al., 2018); (b) “free riding,” which involves peers who fail to contribute equally to the task (Davies, 2009; Hall & Buzwell, 2013); (c) grading implications for individual group members when grades are based on group performance (Chang & Brickman, 2018); (d) difficulty coordinating schedules (Brown & Thomas, 2020; Gottschall & Garcia-Rayonas, 2008; McKinney & Sen, 2016); (e) reduced opportunities to learn directly from the instructor (Herrmann, 2013); and (f) fear of conflict (Hammar Chiriac, 2014). Challenges with group work are exacerbated for online students, which can lead to more negative perceptions and lower

satisfaction with collaborative learning than peers in traditional classrooms (Chang & Kang, 2016; Smith et al., 2011).

Despite student concerns related to group work, standard-bearers in online education and counselor education and supervision consider it an important pedagogical tool and a matter of best practice. The Quality Matters higher education rubric requires that online course instructors “provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning” (Quality Matters, 2020, standard 5.2). Similarly, the ACES Guidelines for Online Learning in Counselor Education and Supervision assert that online courses must “provide opportunities for student interaction and social construction of knowledge” (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES] Technology Interest Network, 2017, p. 6) that replicate face-to-face modalities. Counselor educators in online programs must not only rely on discussions boards to increase student interactions and collaboration but, instead, utilize additional strategies for peer-to-peer interaction in their course development (Wasik et al., 2019). Given that asynchronous collaboration is becoming increasingly common in the modern professional counseling workplace, group projects, especially in mostly asynchronous and online courses, constitute an authentic and relevant learning experience that includes building important technical and social skills (Robertson & Riggs, 2018). Fortunately, researchers have identified proactive strategies that instructors can employ in maximizing positive collaborative learning outcomes, while mitigating the issues of most concern to students.

Structure for Success

Project groups in counselor education courses can be described as task groups in that they “promote efficient and effective accomplishment of tasks by a group of people typically assembled to achieve a specific and time-limited goal” (Association for Specialists in Group Work [ASGW], 2021, p. 3). Thus, counselor educators should carefully attend to the structuring of project groups as they would in any group counseling situation. While the steps for setting up group projects are similar for online and face-to-face courses, online groups may require the instructor to provide more initial direction and structure (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Supporting students in the initial stages of the group project will help equip them for success as they progress and should include (a) explaining the purpose of group projects to students; (b) forming groups; and (c) creating group contracts.

EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF GROUP PROJECTS TO STUDENTS

Although there are multiple benefits associated with group projects, students may have reservations about group work, particularly in an online environment (Koh & Hill, 2009). Thus, it is helpful for instructors to inform students of the rationale behind the inclusion of a group project in the course and how the group work supports outcomes desirable for emerging counseling professionals, as knowing the pedagogical rationale for group work can increase student buy-in and motivation and address students' hesitancy or skepticism (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010). Instructors should also be explicit about how the group activity relates to the course learning objectives. For example, in an online school-based crisis course, project groups can mimic a school-based crisis response team, which supports specific CACREP (2024) standards (e.g., Standard 5.H.9). It may be especially beneficial to share the purpose of the group project in a synchronous online class meeting or a short video early in the course, as students often struggle to follow and comprehend lengthy written explanations (Darby & Lang, 2019).

FORMING GROUPS

Methods for Selecting Group Members

Group structure is considered a “crucial factor in performance” in group projects; thus, it is important for instructors to utilize a group formation method that aligns with the type and purpose of the project (Thom, 2020, p. 263). The ACES Guidelines for Online Learning in Counselor Education and Supervision (2017) assert that a group of three students is generally a good size for an online project. Larger groups tend to experience more conflict, free-riding, and member dissatisfaction (Aggarwal & O'Brien, 2008). In addition to the group size, it is also important to consider methods of group formation. Random group membership, such as is achieved by dividing the class into equal-sized groups based on an alphabetized class roster, is most appropriate for informal or short-term assignments (Barkley et al., 2014). Student-selected groups, which offer students greater agency, may be best suited for online classes in which students have had some prior experience with one another (e.g., through discussion forums) (Association of College and University Educators [ACUE], 2020). Student-selected groups can be created using sign up tools such as a Google Doc that has been labelled with a designated number of spots for certain topics. A third option for group formation involves instructors determining group membership based on student characteristics. Instructor-determined groups are often the most effective group membership selection method, as students are not always aware of all the factors that make a good team (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). At the beginning of the course, instructors can distribute an electronic survey—using a tool such as Qualtrics or Google Forms—to assess student information that is relevant for forming either homogenous or heterogenous groups. For example, instructors can include an item that solicits students' views, experiences, or opinions on a specific topic to create groups with diverse perspectives. Instructors can ask students about their learning and work styles, their knowledge and interest in certain topics, and their familiarity and comfort level

with technology. For asynchronous courses, it is also important to ask about students' time zones, work and family schedules, and when they are available for collaboration to form compatible groups.

Group Membership Diversity Considerations

Diversity Considerations in Group Formation. Project groups can be homogenous or heterogeneous in terms of group membership. It is important to emphasize that diversity among members of project groups includes not only culture and demographic diversity but also diversity in terms of members' values and background (e.g., education, work experience, and expertise) (Myers & Anderson, 2008). Research suggests that diverse groups may produce ideas of higher quality and solve problems more effectively by bringing various options and perspectives to the group (Kirchmeyer, 1993; Mannix & Neale, 2005; McLeod et al., 1996). These benefits are widely seen as "major educational values of collaborative learning" (Barkley et al., 2014, p. 78). However, distributing students from underrepresented groups to create heterogeneous project groups may isolate them and put them in the position of feeling solely responsible for representing their group, potentially resulting in them becoming further marginalized and stereotyped (Barkley et al., 2014; Offidani-Bertrand, 2020). While homogenous project groups may not provide students with a rich diversity of viewpoints, there are potential benefits associated with homogenous groups. These benefits may include a higher comfort level among group members in terms of discussing sensitive or personal topics, as well as possible higher levels of satisfaction that group members may feel when working with students similar to themselves (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; McLeod et al., 1996). Ultimately, instructors who choose to determine groups based on student characteristics should be aware of the implications associated with both types of group membership and form groups that align with the goals of the course and the objectives of the project (Barkley et al., 2014).

Impact on Group Dynamics. Group members' unexamined cultural beliefs and attitudes can negatively impact project group dynamics; ethnocentrism, assumptions, and expectations about other cultural groups are among the factors that can lead to misunderstandings and inhibit effective communication among group members (Okech et al., 2015). The Association for Specialists in Group Work (Singh et al., 2012) asserted that facilitators should be "aware of and sensitive to the multiple dimensions of the multicultural and multi-layered identities of group members" and "consider the impact of multicultural elements on the group dynamics such as cultural conceptions of time and differences in communication styles due to high context (primarily non-verbal) and low context (primarily verbal) communication" (pp. 315, 317). The framework of high- and low-context culture described by Hall (1989) may be especially applicable to understanding potential conflict and miscommunication in project groups in counselor education courses. Members of high context cultural groups may place more value on relationships over tasks and rely more heavily on non-verbal communication and the inward expression of emotions. Members of low-context cultural groups, on the other hand, tend to rely on explicit verbal or written communication and prioritize tasks over relationships (Hall, 1989). While no one cultural group can be described as high- or low-context in general, and

variations exist in all groups, counselor educators can help students to identify both high- and low-context cultures and groups to which they belong and pinpoint how these groups affect their own communication practices and approaches to work in task groups (Okech et al., 2015). An example of a specific approach to asking students to assess and share their communication styles may be through the use of a cultural mapping activity (e.g., [Mapping Your Cultural Orientation](#)). The cultural mapping activity asks students to assess themselves on a number of different cultural factors that directly impact task group dynamics. Counselor educators can ask students, as part of their initial group meeting, to complete the assessment and share their orientations with other project group members in order to heighten individual awareness and encourage growth-enhancing effects of valuing and respect for other group members (Anderson, 2007).

CREATING GROUP CONTRACTS

Students in online courses cite difficulties with communication and a lack of accountability as significant challenges in group projects (Koh & Hill, 2009). Requiring group members to complete and submit a group contract can prevent communication and group dynamic problems, reduce student anxiety, help members remain accountable to each other, and support them in producing the required project deliverables (Brannen et al., 2021; Cartwright et al., 2021). After groups have been formed, an instructor can require each group to hold a videoconference during which the members discuss and create a group contract for the project (Darby & Lang, 2019). Instructors may wish to provide a template or sample form that the group fills out together and that each individual member signs and submits as part of the overall project grade (Barkley et al., 2014). The contract template can include the names, roles, and responsibilities of each group member; how and when the group will meet; specific communication expectations; a timeline for project tasks; and a plan for how conflict or disagreement will be handled. Instructors who wish to provide additional structure in the group contract can include a list of incremental deadlines or checkpoints and required evidence of progress for the group to submit at various points in the project (Darby & Lang, 2019). Boettcher & Conrad (2016) recommended establishing a minimum of three checkpoints, such as a project proposal, a project blueprint or outline with resources, and a final deliverable. The clarity and structure provided by the contract will help make group expectations explicit and support students in holding themselves and each other accountable.

Ethical Considerations in Group Work

Regardless of whether instruction occurs in person or online, issues of diversity must be considered to “support an inclusive and equitable learning community” (CACREP, 2024, Standard 1.1.). The American Counseling Association (ACA) echoes the importance of supporting a diverse

student body, instructing counselor educators to “provide appropriate accommodations that enhance and support diverse student well-being and academic performance” (ACA, 2014, F.11.b.). Similarly, the ACES Teaching Initiative Taskforce advised counselor educators of the importance of considering the needs of diverse learners in course development (ACES Teaching Initiative Taskforce, 2016).

Culturally-responsive teaching can be enhanced through group work and by providing various avenues of interacting with content (Wasik et al., 2019). However, special attention should be paid to “collaborative and individualistic strategies, role of stereotype threat in student performance, and cultural appropriateness of expectations for self-disclosure” (ACES Teaching Initiative Taskforce, 2016, p. 46). While online group work has been shown to encourage collaboration and mutual support, lack of a sense of community and communication difficulties in online learning can serve as a barrier for successful group work (Chang & Kang, 2016; Koh & Hill, 2009). To ease these challenges and foster inclusion, counselor educators can provide explicit instruction and support of student socialization prior to and during the group work (Wade et al., 2016). Darby and Lang (2019) recommended that instructors have students participate in a team building or icebreaker activity after groups are formed. A quick internet search can yield several websites (e.g., [Virtual Icebreakers](#)) that provide examples of quick, interactive activities that will help students get to know each other. Providing a clear definition of roles needing to be assigned within the group can also assist students in understanding expectations and ensure groups success (Wade et al., 2016).

Potential Impacts on the Class

Unbalanced skill sets and expectations of the course may impact how much students contribute and gain from the group experience (Chang & Kang, 2016). To meet the educational challenges faced by students, including those with disabilities, it is imperative that guidelines are clear, and students have multiple ways of accessing information (ACES, 2016). Having individualized grades based on mechanisms such as peer reviewing, and cooperative group work can mitigate negative effects. Lastly, the incorporation of video conferencing tools, especially to create the group contract, may serve to counter non-verbal communication limitations present in online group work (Chang & Kang, 2016).

SELECTING COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND PRESENTATION TOOLS

Instructors should carefully consider the implications of technology choices for online group projects, given that technology is not one-size-fits-all (Orlando & Attard, 2015). Considerations should be made to address students’ readiness, learning preferences, and technical skill, as well as the availability of technical and multimedia support (Kebritchi et al., 2017). It is

important to keep in mind that, while many students are comfortable using a wide array of technology, it causes others significant anxiety (Gillett-Swan, 2017; McKinney & Sen, 2016). Allowing students to choose the mode of communication they prefer can alleviate pressure and is often appreciated by students and faculty alike (Brown & Thomas, 2020; Gillett-Swan, 2017).

Synchronous tools are especially useful early in the project for initial team communication. Low-tech tools such as the telephone or online conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, allow group members to establish rapport and collaborate on the group contract. Instructors can also create group video meeting rooms for each project group within many commonly used learning management systems, such as Blackboard or Canvas. These meeting spaces may remain open and available for group members to meet at any time. Once the team has met and established its plan, asynchronous tools such as discussion board forums and Google Docs are useful for collaborative writing and sharing of resources (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Students can share final projects and receive comments from peers using tools such as Voice Thread or Padlet (Beltrán-Martín, 2019; Bickle & Rucker, 2018). Finally, it is important for instructors to consider the possible impacts of using technology outside of the course learning management system. Groups should be cautioned to choose technology that does not require an additional subscription fee and/or require group members to navigate in a public space (e.g., using social media) in a way that may make them uncomfortable (Darby & Lang, 2019).

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Utilizing Group Work

Specific cognitive learning benefits derived from student engagement in group work include the stimulation of creative thinking, greater retention of information, enhanced development of critical thinking skills, and learning that is considered both deeper and more active (Chiriac, 2014; Erdogan, 2019; Huff, 2014; Morgan et al., 2000; Swanson et al., 2017). Academic benefits of collaborative learning are reflected in academic achievement, including higher test scores and higher course grades (Sisk, 2011), as well as better performance on course outcomes (Allen et al., 2013; Gillies & Boyle, 2011; Sisk, 2011; Tsay & Brady, 2010). Additionally, group work is attributed to helping students develop job readiness and career-related skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, and time management (Cartwright et al., 2021; Davies, 2009). Thom (2020) suggests that, in fields like counseling that “demand high levels of communication” (p.257), group work may be particularly valuable to students’ professional success. Finally, documented social-emotional benefits include the development of intercultural skills, reduced anxiety, and increased sense of affiliation and belonging (Brannen et al., 2021; Cartwright et al., 2021; Hammar Chiriac, 2014; Daly et al., 2015). In asynchronous online courses in particular, the use of online discussion has been linked to enhanced social presence

and sense of community, which has, in turn, been linked to greater student satisfaction and success (Richardson & Swan, 2003; Swan, 2002).

ASSESSING ONLINE GROUP PROJECTS

Assessment of student learning outcomes in group work can be particularly challenging. Performance, participation, and engagement are often assessed rather than knowledge. Additionally, the instructor's role in group work assessment is often missing or is combined with the peer assessment (Forsell et al., 2020). Effective assessment of online group projects should include both an evaluation of the final product in the form of a group grade as well as the process of how the team worked in the form of an individual grade (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). Assigning a group grade, based on a project grading rubric, for the final product can enhance the quality of student work (Howell, 2011). Most learning management systems have built-in rubric tools that ease the burden of grading and allow students to review the rubric in advance. Placing responsibility of the final deliverable equally on all group members by assigning a group grade requires students to work interdependently and will help ensure that group members engage in a collaborative process throughout the project.

Requiring self- and peer-evaluations is an effective way to assess the group process and to assign an individual grade for each student's contributions to the group project. Basing part of the grade on self-evaluation may also alleviate student anxiety that may arise when grades are based on group performance (Chang and Brickman, 2018). When students know they will be evaluated by their peers, they may also be more motivated to contribute effectively to the project (Bowen & Watson, 2017). Nilson and Goodson (2018) recommend that the individual grade based on a peer evaluation be worth 5 to 20% of the group project grade, but no more than 30%. As part of the self-evaluation, students can provide narrative support of how they completed their role outlined in the project contract.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT

Crutchfield and Klamon (2014) developed an assessment instrument for peer assessment of team performance. These scholars suggested that peer evaluations should include an assessment of five major criteria, including contributing to the team's work; effective communication with teammates; attention to high quality work; "pulling his or her own weight" (p. 290); and engaging in effective problem solving or conflict resolution. Students can evaluate themselves as well as their project group members on each of these dimensions, using a Likert-type scale that can then be converted into a percentage for an individual grade. Additionally, McKinney and Sen (2016) utilized a reflective evaluation measure of where both group members' own behaviors and overall group process could be improved. The reflections also identified how communication issues were resolved. Finally, if students utilize Google Docs for collaboration on the final project, instructors may choose to evaluate student progress and individual

contributions in real time and use this method to assign individual grades (Brown & Thomas, 2020).

Implications for Counselor Education

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

There are several unanswered questions that need to be addressed in group work in the online environment, which merit additional research. One challenge is how best to be intentional in deciding to create homogenous or heterogeneous groups in the case of instructor-determined online project groups, especially with small group sizes. An additional limitation is addressing challenging group members, including those who want to complete a project early, who are not participating regularly, who are resistant to using technology, or whose personality conflicts with the group. This brief has tried to address some of these concerns through group contracts and the formation of groups, but more research is needed to determine their effectiveness.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

More research is needed in online group work, with a specific focus on its application in asynchronous courses. Issues that instructors confront in the formation and implementation of face-to-face group assignments, such as monitoring group composition, encouraging student engagement, navigating potential conflicts, and individual versus collective assessment practices, should be studied in the specific context of asynchronous learning to determine where similarities and differences exist. Additional areas for further research include exploring the instructor's role in the assessment process, the establishment of guidelines for individual student learning objectives), and development and implementation of surveys related to group formation (Forsell et al., 2020). While questions and hesitation on the part of students and faculty may still exist, instructors should feel confident in the potential benefits of group work for students in online counselor education courses. Counselor educators who structure group projects carefully and intentionally will maximize the chances for student success.

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Incorporating Disability Knowledge and Content into the Counselor Education Curriculum

Disability awareness and content is a necessary part of any counselor's training, yet most counselors are not exposed to any disability content in their training program. This training deficit results in counselors that feel unsure or incompetent when working with individuals with a disability. With a growing number of individuals in the United States living with a disability, it is vital for all counselors to increase their knowledge, awareness, and skills related to disabilities. Therefore, this teaching practice brief will provide specific strategies for educators to infuse more disability-related content into the counselor education curriculum.

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KEYWORDS

disability, chronic illness, counselor education

Author Note:

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Julie C. Hill, 100 Graduate Education Building, Fayetteville, AR 72701. Email: jch029@uark.edu

Introduction

As of 2020, approximately 61 million (26%) adults in the United States live with a disability (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act defines disability as “(1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) a record (or past history) of such an impairment; or (3) being regarded as having a disability” (U.S. Department of Justice, para. 2). Within the definition of disability, there are four broad categories: physical, intellectual, cognitive, and psychiatric (Smart, 2009). For educators, counselors, and other professionals working in the public school system, there are 13 categories of disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): specific learning disability (SLD); other health impairment; autism spectrum disorder; emotional disturbance; speech or language impairment; visual impairment, including blindness; deafness; hearing impairment; deaf-blindness; orthopedic impairment; intellectual disability; traumatic brain injury; and multiple disabilities (Hill & Glade, 2019). Clinical rehabilitation counselors are trained to work with individuals with disabilities, but they should not be the only counseling professionals who are competent to work with this population. Due to the prevalence of and diverse range of disabilities, clinical mental health counselors and school counselors will encounter individuals with disabilities in their professional work and must be able to work competently with them as well.

RELEVANT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE SUPPORT

A limited awareness and knowledge of disability-related issues among mental health professionals has been highlighted in relevant literature. Strike et. al (2004) investigated mental health professionals’ disabilities competencies and discovered a significant lack of self-awareness and perceived knowledge for mental health professionals with less disability-related experience than their colleagues with more disability-related experience. The mental health professionals with less disability-related experience also had a lower level of disability competence than their more experienced counterparts. Researchers have also emphasized this limited awareness for counselors may stem from the absence or limited amount of disability content for counselors-in-training (Feather & Carlson, 2019; Rivas & Hill, 2018; Stuntzer & Hartley, 2014

Rivas and Hill (2018) conducted a phenomenological study exploring the experiences of master-level counseling students in a CACREP-accredited program, who were providing services to people with disabilities in their clinical internship. Participants reported receiving no information or limited information on disabilities. The limited information on disabilities was provided only in isolated events. As a result, participants expressed guilt when not knowing how to respond or assist their clients with disabilities. Participants also reported that their feelings of guilt also contributed to their frustration with their program and their perceived lack of preparation to effectively meet the mental health needs of client with disabilities.

Similarly, Bialka and Havlik (2020) conducted a qualitative study examining elementary and middle school counselors' experiences with disability awareness and advocacy. They found a need for increased disability-related training within programs that prepare future counselors. The authors recommended that disability issues be included within the framework of multicultural competence in counselor education programs. Lastly, Feather and Carlson (2019) explored the disability competencies of counselor educators and the integration of disability-related content across counseling specialties. Through the 141 survey responses from faculty members of CACREP-accredited institutions, Feather and Carlson (2019) discovered over half of participants believed not enough time is spent on disability-related issues and guidelines in training programs. One third of participants also believed their program did not effectively cover disability-related needs and concerns of adults with disabilities.

KNOWLEDGE GAP

As research shows, there is a knowledge gap around disability/disabilities and working with clients with disabilities for counselors and counselor educators (Bialka & Havlik, 2020; Feather & Carlson, 2019; Rivas & Hill, 2018; Strike et al., 2004). Future counselors do not receive adequate training or resources to work with children and adults with disabilities in their training programs and therefore may not be effective in serving this population when they work with them in a professional setting (Bialka & Havlik, 2020; Rivas, 2020). Counselor education programs must incorporate more disability awareness, knowledge, and skills that are needed to effectively work with individuals with disabilities into counselor education curriculum.

This teaching brief will provide suggestions for incorporating disability content into various classes and content areas across the counselor education curriculum. The authors will also provide information about an assessment that can be used to test student's perceived level of competence to work with people with disabilities. Additionally, the authors will discuss the use and incorporation of the disability-related counseling competencies from the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) (Chapin et al., 2018).

Description of Instructional Strategy

There are several simple ways to incorporate more disability content and knowledge into the counselor education curriculum. In the opinion of the authors, the best way to address this would be to with a class that addresses disability content and knowledge, but the authors recognize that this is most likely not possible for many programs.

APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC TO COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Disability content and knowledge can be easily woven into the content of many core classes within the counselor education curriculum.

Theories Course

In a counseling theories course, the suitability of each counseling theory for individuals with disabilities can be discussed and applied. For example, Adlerian, motivational interviewing, brief solution-focused therapy (BSFT), rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), behavioral therapy, gestalt, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) have been shown to be effective when working with clients with disabilities and chronic illness (Livneh & Sherwood, 1991; Millington, 2018). Specifically, motivational interviewing and BSFT are considered evidence-based practices for success when working with clients with disabilities in the rehabilitation counseling field (Olney et al., 2009). Adlerian counseling is also useful when working with clients with disabilities because of its case for community inclusion and the idea that many individuals have an unfulfilled need to belong (Millington, 2018). Behavioral therapy and the concepts of removing maladaptive behaviors, shaping, prompting, reinforcing, and chaining may be especially appropriate when working with clients with developmental or intellectual disabilities (Millington, 2018). In addition, CBT may be especially useful when working with clients with chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome in helping deal with depression, anxiety, stress, medical compliance, and self-defeating behaviors (Millington, 2018). REBT can be useful in many ways: reframing negative or irrational thoughts and beliefs about the disability, focusing on beliefs that mediate coping, adjustment, and help-seeking behaviors, assisting with accepting changing realities, and building new, constructive beliefs (Millington, 2018).

Another way to incorporate people with disabilities/chronic illness into a counseling theories course is through case studies and having students decide what theory might be best to use with a sample client. Sample case studies are included in the next section that could be used for this purpose. An additional assignment that can be used in this course is to have students interview a counselor who works with clients with disabilities and chronic illness and ask them what theories and techniques they use. Alternatively, an instructor can have a counselor whose practice focuses on this population come to class and deliver a guest lecture. In both instances, students can write a brief reflection paper about what they learned and how they can apply that knowledge in their future practice.

Counseling Skills Course

In a counseling skills or techniques course, instructors can incorporate clients with disabilities into case studies and role plays when practicing skill sets. An instructor could also show one or more of the movies or TV shows that feature characters with both visible and invisible disabilities and discuss how students would work with one or more of the characters as clients. A visible disability could be a character that uses a wheelchair or a character with Down Syndrome, and an invisible disability could be a character with autism or a learning disability like dyslexia. Suggestions for shows with these types of characters are listed in the

resources section. For example, an instructor could show one or two episodes of the television show *Speechless* or *Atypical* and put the class in small groups and have each group counsel one of the characters from the show. Each group could decide on a presenting concern, treatment goals and interventions for each character. Another option is to use the example case studies and have the students pair up and role play counseling one of the clients. Case studies should feature clients from various ethnic backgrounds with a variety of disabilities and chronic illnesses, both visible and invisible. Some example case studies are included below.

Maria is a 22-year-old Latina female with cerebral palsy. She uses a walker as a mobility aid. She recently graduated from college with a degree in marketing and has landed a great job. She currently lives at home with her parents and two younger sisters. Maria feels ready to move out on her own and has even found an apartment that is accessible to her needs and that she can afford. However, she is struggling with talking to her parents about wanting to move out. She is afraid they won't be supportive of her decision and will want her to keep living at home with them.

Jane is a 28-year-old White female who was recently diagnosed with fibromyalgia. She decided to leave her dream job of teaching preschool special education because the pain was interfering with her ability to do her job. Since leaving her job, Jane has been feeling depressed and hopeless and has no idea what she wants to do next in her life.

Terrence is a 35-year-old Black male who uses a wheelchair after a spinal cord injury from a car accident almost one year ago. Since the car accident, he has struggled with an extreme phobia of getting in a car and has panic attacks every time he even thinks about getting in a car. He has worked with vocational rehabilitation to modify a vehicle to suit his needs, so he is able to drive. But he can't bring himself to get in the car.

Kimmy is a 14-year-old Asian-American female with an intellectual disability who recently transferred to your school. She comes across as very quiet and shy. She is doing fine academically in her classes but has struggled to make friends and tells her parents that she is lonely at school. Her parents have asked you, the school counselor, to meet with her to see if you can help her with making friends.

Group Counseling Course

In a group counseling course, instructors can discuss group counseling for individuals with disabilities and how modifications may need to be made for certain types of disabilities when conducting groups. Groups for individuals with disabilities and chronic illness are typically homogenous based on type disability or chronic illness. The length of time of a group session may vary, and students may benefit from knowing that for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the length of group sessions may need to be shorter than average due to a limited attention span (Hill et al., 2023).

Most group counseling courses involve students participating in a group counseling experience, as well as participating in a role play or mock group counseling experience. Instructors should consider partnering with agencies or organizations in their communities that provide group counseling for individuals with disabilities or chronic illness and see if students would be

allowed to observe one or two group sessions to get an understanding of how those types of groups are run. Additionally, in the classroom, the mock counseling groups could be set up to function as a support group or psychoeducational group for individuals with different chronic illnesses, and the students could role play the group members and group leader. This experience would allow students to gain empathy for the experiences of individuals with chronic illness by having to research what it is like to live with a chronic illness to be able to accurately role play the person and also to understand what it would be like to lead this type of group as a counselor. Bauman and Shaw's (2016) book, "Group work with Persons with Disabilities," is a practical resource for working with groups composed of individuals with disabilities and provides guidance for group work for different disability types.

Lifespan/Human Development Course

In a lifespan or human development course, instructors can incorporate information about the differences between congenital and acquired disabilities and the impact they may have on development. Information can also be included about families coping with disabilities, either congenital or acquired. One assignment that can be used to understand and discuss the different ways families approach supporting children with disabilities is to show the movie, *Temple Grandin*, and then show the first episode of the TV series, *Speechless*. This assignment/activity can either be done in class or outside of class. Next, students can participate in a class discussion or online discussion board or submit a short, written assignment comparing and contrasting the ways each family approached having a child with a disability.

If human sexuality is included in this course, instructors can include information about myths and stereotypes about sex and sexuality for individuals with disabilities and proper methods of sexuality and relationship education for individuals with different types of disabilities. People with disabilities are often left out of the conversation about sex and sexuality, and many are not included in sexuality- and relationship-education classes in schools. One way to address this concern is to educate and empower counselors to be prepared to address issues related to sexuality, sex, and relationships with clients with disabilities and chronic illness. One assignment that can prepare students for this is to have students create a presentation (or school counseling classroom lesson) on a topic related to sexuality and relationship education for young adults with disabilities or chronic illness. This assignment/activity can be done individually or in small groups. First, students should choose a specific population (e.g., people with intellectual disabilities, people with spinal cord injuries) Second, students should choose a topic related to sexuality and relationship education (e.g., dating, birth control options, medical exams, sexual identities and orientations). Third, students should create their presentation with their target population in mind and make any adjustments to the presentation that would be necessary given the needs of the target population. Presentations can either be given in class, or they can be recorded and uploaded to a discussion board on a learning management system and viewed and commented on by classmates there.

Career Course

In a career course, instructors can include information related to disability and career development, career theories specific to disabilities, rights under the law for job accommodations, and how to request and use job accommodations. There are several career theories that are especially applicable to those living with disability and chronic illness: Super's lifespan career theory, Krumboltz's social learning theory, and Hershenson's model of work adjustment (Szymanski & Hershenson, 1998). Super's career model is often referred to as a life-career rainbow and is composed of five life stages. These life stages are "growth (birth-14), exploration (15-24), establishment (25-44), maintenance (45-64), and decline (65+)" (Szymanski & Hershenson, 1998, p. 330). In relation to people with a disability and chronic illness, Szymanski and Hershenson (1998) stated that "Super's concept of career maturity has considerable utility with persons ... who have acquired disabilities early in their career development. For people with acquired disabilities, career development can be destabilized and result in the need for reexploration and reestablishment" (p. 332). Krumboltz's social learning theory "suggests that four factors influence career decisions: genetic endowment and special abilities, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills" (Szymanski & Hershenson, 1998, p. 341). This theory is considered applicable to people with disabilities and chronic illness because it places an emphasis on providing learning experiences and opportunities to try different work experiences through job shadowing, internships, etc. Hershenson's model of work adjustment combines career development and work adjustment theories and is meant to apply to people with both congenital and acquired disabilities. This theory proposes that there are three domains within a person: work personality, work competencies, and work goals, and these domains work together.

For persons with acquired disabilities, this means that the initial impact of disability on work adjustment results from the interaction of established work competencies with the functional limitations resulting from the disability, the specific job tasks of the current or desired position, and the possibilities for job modification. (Szymanski & Hershenson, 1998, p. 347) Some of the books listed in the resources list are especially helpful for use in the career course.

There are many ways to incorporate disability knowledge and activities into the career course. One way would be to have the person who handles job accommodation requests at the university speak about the accommodation process and what is involved in requesting and receiving job accommodations. Along with this activity, students can review the website, Job Accommodation Network, (www.askjan.org) to learn more information about the law and accommodations. Another option would be to have students interview a person with a disability or chronic illness about their life and how their disability or chronic illness has impacted their career path and career decision making and then write a paper summarizing the person's experiences and what they learned.

Diversity/Multicultural Course

The diversity/multicultural course may be the easiest course for incorporating disability content, given that this course focuses on different aspects of identity and ability level is a part of a person's identity. In this course, instructors can include a whole unit on disability.

Some concepts that instructors can incorporate include: the history of the disability rights movement, person-first versus disability-first language, models of disability, ableism, ableist microaggressions, recognizing and avoiding ableism, and inspiration porn. The instructor could use a movie or TV show that features authentic characters with disabilities, both visible and invisible, as a foundation for a discussion about different disability types portrayed and also have a discussion or unit about how disability is portrayed in the media. Examples of these types of movies and TV shows are listed in the resources section.

To learn more about the history of disability rights, students can watch the documentary, *Crip Camp*, and/or Judy Heumann's TED Talk (listed in resources) and discuss what they learned. Alternatively, they can read a book about the history of disability rights (suggestions are listed in the resources) and write a report. Another assignment option is to have students pick a movie or TV show to watch that features a character with a disability and write a reflection about how disability stereotypes were either reinforced or broken by that character. The instructor can give a lesson on inspiration porn and ableism, what those concepts are, how they exist in society, and have the class watch Stella Young's TED Talk (listed in resources).

Practicum/Internship

In the practicum and internship courses, instructors should discuss the accessibility of students' sites for individuals with disabilities. For example, they can explore with students: Does the site intake form ask about disability status? Is the technology used at the site accessible? Is the office location accessible? Does the office use scented candles or air freshener that may bother someone with allergies? Do the counselors-in-training and other counselors at the site assume the person is coming in for a disability-related issue if they indicate they have a disability on the intake paperwork? When looking at the evaluation tool used to evaluate practicum and internship students, is there a component to evaluate competence in working with individuals with disabilities?

Students should also be encouraged to seek out experiences working with individuals with disabilities during their practicum and internship experiences. If the university has an inclusive post-secondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities or a program for students with autism, instructors can consider developing a partnership with those programs and setting up group counseling for those students that can be led by practicum or internship students and supervised by a faculty member. If these programs do not exist at the university, instructors can consider reaching out to the disability services office and see if they have noticed a need for a specific type of group and offer that type of group with practicum/internship students leading and being supervised by a faculty member.

Disability-Related Counseling Competencies

The American Rehabilitation Counseling Association Task Force on Competencies for Counseling Persons with Disabilities released the Disability-Related Counseling Competencies in 2018. Counselor educators can use the guidance in this document to incorporate the suggestions and competencies into their curriculum where appropriate and as they see fit. This guide

contains five sections with competencies that cover a variety of contexts and activities that fall within the work of a counselor. The five sections are: Understanding and Accommodating the Disability Experience; Advocacy for PWDs and Support of their Self-Advocacy; The Counseling Process and Relationship; Testing and Assessment; and Working with or Supervising PWDs in School, Employment, Community, and Clinical Settings.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND FOSTERING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

When making a concerted effort to include education on counseling individuals with disabilities, a traditionally marginalized group, into the counselor education curriculum, this effort for inclusion sends the message that the program values preparing counselors to work with all types of clients. Additionally, including education on counseling individuals with disabilities also sends the message that all types of students are valued in the program and may help students with disabilities, especially those with invisible disabilities, feel respected and comfortable in the program. Oftentimes diversity is presented in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, gender, and social class, and while these types of diversity are certainly important, it is also critical to include other types of diversity, such as ability types.

It is also important to discuss the intersectionality of multiple diverse identities in counseling coursework, including the intersection of identities like disability, socioeconomic status (SES), and racial/ethnic diversity that are often present. It is important to acknowledge that there is an intersection between certain disability types, such as intellectual and developmental disabilities and lower SES, often due to lower paying wages and lack of competitive integrated employment opportunities (Wehman et al., 2018). Furthermore, some cultures view the concept of disability differently than the traditional Western/American idea of disability, and it is important to take these views into consideration when working with individuals and families (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012; Goodrich, 2014; Zhang, 2017). Certain disabilities or chronic illnesses are more prevalent in White/ European-American communities and other disabilities are more prevalent in Black/African-American or other racial or ethnic groups, and this racial disparity impacts the types of attention and treatments that are given to those disabilities or conditions (Shaw et al., 2012). Scholars who study intersectionality have debated whether people with memberships in multiple marginalized identities experience more discrimination than those with one marginalized identity, and thus they may experience proportionately more discrimination the more marginalized identities they hold (Shaw et al., 2012). For example, Black women living with a chronic pain condition are often significantly neglected and underserved in the medical community (Chinn et al., 2021), which may reflect their multiple intersecting and marginalized identities.

AUTHOR REFLEXIVITY

It is the hope of the authors that by including instruction on disability in counseling courses and teach counselors-in-training how to appropriately and competently counsel individuals with disabilities, the inclusion of this type of content in the counselor education curriculum will create a more welcoming and inclusive classroom environment. However, the authors recognize that some students will be uncomfortable with some topics, especially those topics that are unfamiliar or that bring up their privilege in a way that causes them to examine and confront it. Ableism can be uncomfortable for many people as can inspiration porn (Brooks, 2019; Harder et al., 2019) Additionally, many counselors-in-training may believe that they will not encounter clients with disabilities or feel uncomfortable working with these types of clients, and confronting this belief can be difficult for some (Alvarado Parkway Institute, 2019). Counselor educators need to be aware of and prepared that these types of resistance may come up from counselors-in-training. This type of resistance should be discussed, examined, and confronted just as any other type of resistance towards working with a particular client population or discussing sensitive topics would be, but it should be addressed and not ignored.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

There are many resources available to help instructors and faculty incorporate disability content and knowledge into their curriculum and classes. Some resources recommended by the authors are provided here in this resource list. This list is not meant to be all inclusive.

- Crip Camp [Movie] (use in Lifespan/Diversity course)
- *Temple Grandin* [Movie] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- CODA [Movie] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- *The Peanut Butter Falcon* [Movie] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- *Atypical* [TV series] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- *Love on the Spectrum* [TV series] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- *Wonder* [Movie] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- *Speechless* [TV series] (use in Lifespan/Skills course)
- “I’m Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much” [TED Talk] by Stella Young <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K9Gg164Bsw>
- “Our Fight for Disability Rights and Why We’re Not Done Yet” [TED Talk] by Judy Heumann <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABFpTRIJUuc>
- *Group Work with Persons with Disabilities* by Bauman and Shaw [Book] (use in group counseling course)

- Understanding psychosocial adjustment to chronic illness and disability: A handbook for evidence-based practitioners in rehabilitation by Chan, DaSilva Cardoso, and Chronister [Book] (use in Lifespan/Diversity course)
- Chapin, M., McCarthy, H., Shaw, L., Bradham-Cousar, M., Chapman, R., Nosek, M., Peterson, S., Yilmaz, Z., & Ysasi, N. (2018). Disability-related counseling competencies. American Rehabilitation Counseling Association.
- No pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement by Shapiro [Book] (use in Diversity course)
- *Disability, Society, and the Individual*. (3rd ed.) by Smart [Book] (use in Lifespan/Diversity course)
- Career development, employment, and disability in rehabilitation: From theory to practice by Strauser [Book] (use in career class)
- Work and disability: Contexts, issues, and strategies for enhancing employment outcomes for people with disabilities (3rd ed.) by Szymanski and Parker [Book] (use in career class)

EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of instructional strategies should be an ongoing process. A variety of methods can be used to assess or evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used in the classes to assess student learning. If allowed at the institution, modify formal course evaluations to include a component about disability content-specific instruction and its usefulness for students. Conduct informal evaluations through anonymous check-ins and informal focus groups conducted mid-semester in courses to assess the interest and engagement of students, as well as desire for new learning for the remainder of the semester. During a counseling skills course, use of clients with disabilities in role plays and case studies can assist in evaluating students' skill level and preparedness in working with this type of client. In practicum and internship, include disability knowledge in evaluations and observations of skills. These are simply some suggestions for evaluation of effectiveness of the instructional strategy; counselor educators are encouraged to examine their own programs and find evaluation strategies that work within the structure of their programs.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS/METHODS USED

Counselor educators can use a specific assessment to assess students' self-perceived level of competence to work with people with disabilities. The Counseling Clients with Disabilities Survey (CCDS) (Strike et al., 2004) is a 60-item scale that "measures self-perceived competence in the areas of self-awareness, knowledge, and skills, and it is based on the premise that disability is an aspect of diversity" (Deroche et al., 2020, p. 190). A higher score equates

higher levels of perceived self-competence. Instructors can give this assessment to students at the beginning of the program and repeated at the end of each semester or as often as the program sees fit to measure improvement in competence of students to work with individuals with disabilities. Ideally, scores would improve on the CCDS each semester or each time it is taken after the initial time it is taken.

Implications

There is still much more work to be done to prepare future counselors and counselors-in-training to be better prepared to work with individuals with disabilities while they are in practicum and internship and after they graduate from their counselor education programs. Ideally, counselor educators will foster a sense of lifelong learning in students so that they continue to engage in professional development and training after they graduate and become professional counselors. Most licensing boards require continuing education to maintain counselor licensure, so counselor educators can encourage students to seek out trainings and professional development opportunities that can provide additional knowledge, skills, and ideas for working with individuals with disabilities.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Existing research focuses on the deficits in training counselors to work with individuals with disabilities, as well as counselor educators feeling that their programs do not spend enough time on disability-related content and issues (Feather & Carlson, 2019; Rivas & Hill, 2018; Strike et al., 2004; Stuntzer & Hartley, 2014). However, there is a lack of research that gives guidance on how to better train counseling students on how to work with individuals with disabilities. A study conducted by Deroche and colleagues (2020) found that disability-related life experience and completion of a multicultural counseling course with the integration of disability content predicted disability competence. The results from this study suggest that these two components could impact disability competence in a positive way. Counselor education programs could consider how to integrate exposure to individuals with disabilities in a positive, natural way into their program, as well as how to integrate more disability-related content into their multicultural course in a way that feels natural to their individual program.

There are certainly limitations to the recommendations in this teaching brief. The ideas and suggestions contained in this brief come from the authors' own experiences, both personal and professional, but are not yet fully grounded in research. The authors hope that they and others will conduct studies in the future that test their ideas in practice and allow future publications grounded in research. Additionally, the authors recognize that there may be many other ideas and suggestions about incorporating disability into counselor education that others may think of that are not included here.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

As stated previously, there is a significant need for research that provides evidence-based or research-based practices to support disability knowledge and competence for counselors in counselor education training programs. Future research needs to be conducted to evaluate how to best integrate this type of knowledge into the existing counselor education curriculum and standards. The 2024 CACREP standards have more disability-related content required in the standards than in previous iterations, but there is still room for improvement. Counselor educators have an ethical obligation to prepare counselors-in-training to work with individuals with disabilities. The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics provides guidance in this area. Section F.7.c, titled *Infusing Multicultural Issues/Diversity*, states that “counselor educators infuse material related to multiculturalism and diversity into all courses...for the development of professional counselors” (p. 14). Disability is one component of diversity and multiculturalism and therefore, counselor educators must follow this instruction to include material on this topic into courses. Section C.5, *Nondiscrimination*, states that “counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination against prospective or current clients...based on...disability...” (p. 9). Counselor educators must prepare future counselors to follow the code of ethics for the profession, including this component of nondiscrimination, by educating counselors-in-training on how to appropriately work with clients with disabilities so they will feel prepared when a client with a disability comes to them seeking services. The disability population is ever-growing and is the only minority group one can join at any time (Davis, 2022). Because of this fact, all counselors need to be prepared to work with this population confidently and competently.

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“Is It Advocacy?” Developing Students’ Social Justice Competence In The Classroom

Social justice competence is a necessary skill for counselors to develop early in their training. Guides exist to better understand what multicultural and social justice competencies are (Ratts et al., 2016), however these guides tend to be vague and do not explicitly note several common behaviors (e.g., movements, social media use) as acts of advocacy. Social justice can be an abstract topic with little clarity on how to put it into practice (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). “Is it Advocacy?” challenges students to critically consider various social justice-related behaviors and determine if they could be considered advocacy.

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“Is it advocacy?” Developing students’ social justice competence in the classroom

Researchers, scholars, and counselor educators have conceptually defined social justice in multiple ways. Within counseling, social justice can refer to actions a counselor takes to assist clients by participating with the client’s environments through empowerment, advocacy, and social action (Toporek & Liu, 2001). Advocacy can take the form of self-advocacy, individual advocacy, and systems advocacy. Self-advocacy occurs when one advocates in defense of oneself by effectively communicating to others who can change circumstances that contribute to a problem or inequity (Clemens et al., 2011). For instance, a school counselor can clearly and assertively communicate their role to a principal if they are requiring the school counselor to conduct work outside the scope of their professional identity.

Individual advocacy, or client/student advocacy, occurs on an individual basis, such as through direct counseling, but not on behalf of oneself (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2020). This type of advocacy could be a counselor educator helping a student identify systemic barriers to their lived experience, as well as advocating with the student or on their behalf to relevant others who can change circumstances associated with the inequitable experience. Finally, systems advocacy involves advocacy at the community, organizational, or societal level on behalf of or with clients or groups that experience injustice (ACA, 2020). This type of advocacy could be a counselor educator advocating on behalf of counseling students who experience inequitable treatment from university administration by communicating directly with the administration of the negative effects of their inequitable acts. In this paper, *self-advocacy* refers to social justice acts on behalf of the self, while *other-advocacy* is an encompassing term for advocacy with or on behalf of others, either for or with an individual (client/student advocacy) or groups (systems advocacy). All forms of advocacy are required in the work of a counselor educator.

Counselors’ multicultural and social justice competence is an ethical imperative of the profession (ACA, 2014). Social justice competence requires counselors to understand client problems within the context of social oppression and to intervene with oppressive societies contextually and systemically (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018). The Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development charged a group of scholars to revise the multicultural competencies (Sue et al., 1992) to include social justice competencies as well (Ratts et al., 2016). This revised model, titled the *Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies* (MSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016), offers a framework that defines multicultural and social justice competencies as attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action. These competencies are further understood through various developmental domains, beginning with counselor self-awareness, and ending with advocacy interventions. Given the breadth and depth the authors of this model offer in their work, counselor educators oftentimes include the MSJCC in their pedagogy when fostering students’ counseling competence development. Social justice competence is seen to be

aspirational rather than a definitive, achievable goal to be met (Ratts et al., 2016), therefore continued education in social justice advocacy is crucial.

SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Counselor educators are called to incorporate advocacy training into their pedagogy (ACA, 2014, F.7.c; Field & Baker, 2004; Havlik et al., 2019; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018; Ratts et al., 2016). These efforts can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Some counselor educators report that they use active learning approaches with students, such as requiring students to enact advocacy actions with real-life stakeholders or through role-playing in the classroom, with the belief that students learn best by doing (Havlik et al., 2019). Some counselor educators reported that these pedagogical approaches are effective in their work of developing advocacy competencies for students (Havlik et al., 2019). Still, more considerations for fostering students' development of advocacy competencies, both conceptually and operationally, can be done. Counselor educators are charged with the challenging task of increasing students' awareness of the breadth of advocacy-related behaviors required to address these various instances (Ratts et al., 2016). The MSJCC offers a foundation for conceptually defining multiculturalism and social justice; yet counselor educators must also challenge students to use the information gleaned from the MSJCC to operationalize advocacy and consider tangible advocacy efforts to enact social change.

Challenge of Defining Advocacy in Counselor Education

Experts note that social justice can be an abstract, philosophical, or theoretical concept in counseling with little clarity on how to tangibly put advocacy into practice (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). The ACA's *Advocacy Competencies*, initially developed in 2003 (Lewis et al., 2003) and updated in 2018 by Toporek and Daniels (ACA, 2020), provided more concrete guidance to counselors by operationalizing the implementation of social justice advocacy at the client/student, school/community, and public levels. The authors offer strategies using a case study where students are tasked to consider various ways to empower the clients in the case (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). This guide offers more tangible examples of advocacy compared to other resources, however the example given in the *Advocacy Competencies* is potentially limited in fostering students' social justice competence development in that it focuses on a practicing counselor rather than the various acts a non-practicing counselor (e.g., counselor-in-training, student) may engage with that constitute effective advocacy. This offers an opportunity for counselor educators to challenge their students to consider ways to advocate without working directly with clients as practitioners. Additionally, the *Advocacy Competencies*, while offering more direct ideas of advocacy-related behaviors, are still broad in scope, suggesting ideas such as understanding one's own cultural identity and participating with or facilitating community partners in setting goals (ACA, 2020). Students may still be curious whether other particular behaviors (e.g., taking a social justice course, protesting) are considered acts of advocacy.

Researchers have also considered the ways that students define and operationalize advocacy. For instance, in a qualitative study, researchers asked school counselors to define advocacy

and consider their own beliefs about advocacy. Researchers identified that school counselors conceptually define advocacy as an act that goes over and above typical student needs. Additionally, school counselors operationalized advocacy in a variety of ways, such as letter writing, making phone calls, having conversations with those who can affect students, and “finding ways around the red tape” (Field & Baker, 2004, p. 58). School counselors also noted that the most important social justice behaviors require flexibility or a broad range of skills to deal with different situations, which may elicit a variety of advocacy acts (Field & Baker, 2004). Ultimately, the authors suggest that school counselors must balance self- and other-advocacy, which may result in the “...inability to name specific advocacy behaviors due to a lack of advocacy dialog within their... professional circles” (Field & Baker, 2004, p. 60). With this in mind, counselor educators have an opportunity to challenge students to consider various tangible behaviors in a professional, academic setting.

Counselors and counselor educators understand the importance of advocacy to promote social change, however research is less clear regarding what behaviors constitute self- or other-advocacy. The MSJCC notes that counselors gain insight into what approaches to advocacy are necessary once they are attuned to their own values and beliefs, when they are mindful of their clients’ worldviews, and when they understand social implications of power, privilege, and oppression (Ratts et al., 2016). Students who are beginning or in the process of their graduate training may not yet fully understand these facets, particularly client worldviews without direct practice yet, therefore with this rationale, this insight may not be easily gained until they are practicing counselors. Counselor educators could benefit from better understanding what these necessary approaches may (or may not) specifically look like, from the students’ and the profession’s point of view, so that they may introduce their students earlier in their training to tangible approaches to advocacy. Further, the predisposed ideas of what students perceive to constitute true social justice advocacy may be guided by their preconceived notions of and attitudes toward justice, which could be a barrier to social justice competence development. Current guides and research offer counselor educators with the understanding that social justice competencies, such as advocacy, are crucial components of counselors’ professional identities. However, the subjectivity of and lack of clarity regarding what constitutes an act of advocacy is a limitation to students’ understanding of self- and other-advocacy.

“IS IT ADVOCACY?”

Counselor educators can challenge their students to think critically about what behaviors constitute advocacy. To address this knowledge gap, I created the activity titled “Is it Advocacy?”, which is an active learning approach in which students are challenged to consider a variety of behaviors and interventions that some may consider an act of advocacy, while others may not. A goal of this activity is to challenge students to use their critical thinking to better understand what advocacy looks like. This goal is accomplished by requiring students to consider both subjective as well as objective perspectives. Subjectively, students engage in respectful debate regarding their thoughts, feelings, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs toward many examples of behaviors to determine if, from their perspective, that activity could be considered an act of

advocacy. Objectively, students are challenged to think laterally about their perspectives of these behaviors; students are encouraged to fact-check their opinions and attitudes by finding empirical, scholarly works and supporting theories to validate their inclinations of advocacy. This approach is inspired by lateral learning, which occurs when students search for more information about the trustworthiness of the original source, rather than relying solely on the information given to them on one page (Stanford History Education Group, 2019). Following this activity, the goal is that students have a well-informed understanding of what advocacy can look like in a multitude of situations and contexts.

I have used this activity in an elective course that explores sustainable social justice advocacy in the mental health field. However, this activity can be applied to any course where topics of social justice, multiculturalism, and activism are discussed. The *ACA Code of Ethics (2014)* states that counselor educators are to incorporate multicultural- and diversity-related content into all courses (F.7.c); given the flexibility of this activity to meet the needs of counselor educators' unique pedagogical styles and counseling programs, "Is it Advocacy?" could be appropriate in any course.

Description of "Is it Advocacy?"

This active learning approach is a multi-day activity that challenges students to consider various acts of advocacy. Three class periods of at least 90 minutes per session is sufficient. Depending on the class's comfort with discussing social justice issues, counselor educators may find that more days are needed to meet the goals and objectives of this activity. Days one and two of the activity are typically successive on the course calendar, while day three of the activity occurs later in the semester. On day one of this activity, students are given time to consider the "5W's of Advocacy" by answering the following questions: (1) "Who is an advocate?" (2) "What is advocacy?" (3) "When is advocacy required?" (4) "Where does advocacy take place?" and (5) "Why is advocacy so important?" Students typically answer these questions subjectively, and noting this to students helps them consciously differentiate between their subjective ideas from objective ones for the remainder of the activity.

On day two of this activity, "Is it Advocacy?" opens with various behaviors that most individuals agree would be considered advocacy. These acts are larger movements that consequentially have resulted in clearer social change. For example, students consider whether voting is an act of advocacy. Students are then encouraged to consider both subjective and objective ideas surrounding advocacy and what it means to engage in these behaviors, rather than relying on their opinions or experiences alone (e.g., lateral learning; Stanford History Education Group, 2019). Other behaviors that students consider early in "Is it Advocacy?" include volunteering, climate justice, walk-outs, protests, and movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, #MeToo). Throughout the activity, I ask follow-up questions and facilitate discussion on the rationale for students' decisions.

As the class moves further into the activity, students are asked to think critically about whether the behavior is an act of social justice advocacy. For instance, students consider whether the use of social media is an act of advocacy. We discuss the use of various hashtags, such as

#BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #LoveWins, and more. Students consider when the use of such hashtags is considered advocacy. I ask students, “is it advocacy if someone shares a post with the hashtag in it, although they did not write it themselves?” or, “is it advocacy if they share one’s personal experience with the content related to the hashtag in an original post?”

Another example from social media that we discuss is the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. When introducing certain social justice movements to students (e.g., Ice Bucket Challenge, GameStop stock movement), I take time to share information about the movement with students through news articles, videos, and more, so that students can have a more informed discussion around it. For instance, I explain to students that the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge was a social media movement to fundraise for The ALS Association, which supports research to better understand treatment and prevention for Lou Gehrig’s disease. This movement resulted in over \$115 million raised in donations, increasing the ALS Association’s funding for research around the world by 187% (ALS Association, 2019). Students are asked to consider, “Is it advocacy if someone completed the Ice Bucket Challenge and posted their video on social media, but they did not donate money or nominate someone else to complete the challenge?” or “Is it advocacy if someone completed the Ice Bucket Challenge and did not donate financially, but someone that they nominated did financially donate?” These conversations typically result in divided thoughts on what the threshold of advocacy is when using social media. The activity continues until sufficient time remains (10-15 minutes) in the class period to close out the activity with some reflection. Students are asked to journal independently in class about how their idea of advocacy has adjusted throughout the activity. For instance, did the student’s idea of advocacy change, or did this activity solidify their ideas? I also allow space for students to ask follow-up questions to the class as they finish day two of the activity.

Later in the semester, we revisit “Is it Advocacy?” for a third day of the activity. Typically, day three of “Is it Advocacy?” occurs somewhere around two to three months after day two of the activity. I leave space between the activity days to allow students to build more objective ideas around advocacy through course content such as class lectures, required readings, cultural immersion experiences, service learning, and research papers. The goal is that students have a more educated idea of the breadth of behaviors that could constitute acts of advocacy, which can inform their critical thinking process during the activity. The class can revisit a few examples from earlier in the semester to see if students’ ideas have changed from day two of the activity. For instance, at this later point in the semester, students have discussed the three types of advocacy: self-advocacy, individual advocacy, and systems advocacy. As such, I have noticed that students are able to recognize acts of self-advocacy more efficiently compared to the beginning of the semester. For instance, when students were asked about the use of social media hashtags in the early part of the semester, they might not recognize sharing one’s personal experience with the content related to the hashtag in an original post as an act of advocacy due to this being perceived as “selfish” or not benefiting others directly. Later in the semester, students might recognize that if the individual is advocating on behalf of themselves to another person or group who can implement social change, this is indeed an act of advocacy (i.e., self-advocacy).

Following the recap discussion, I introduce students to more nuanced and complex behaviors. When students are asked whether the behavior is an act of advocacy, the response is typically “it depends.” For instance, students are asked about the use of books as an act of advocacy. Students consider different instances when book reading and writing may be an act of advocacy. I might ask, “Is it advocacy if you read children’s books with diversity-related content in it, such as *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* (Lil Miss Hot Mess, 2020), to your kids?” or “Is it advocacy if you read books, such as *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017), *How to be an Antiracist* (Kendi, 2019), or *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970, 2018) independently with the intent of developing a greater understanding of diversity-related issues?” or “Is it advocacy if you participate in a book club over these books with diversity-related or social justice-related content?” Students typically agree that authoring a book on such content is an act of advocacy, however decisions are more divided when discussing these other questions.

The “Is it Advocacy?” activity asks students to consider the following tangible acts: voting, climate justice, volunteering, certain social justice acts (e.g., walk-outs, protests, wearing merchandise), social media use (e.g., hashtags, participating in social media movements), movements (Black Lives Matter, MeToo, FreeBritney, GameStop stock movement), music, education, books, reaching out to politicians, a business that advocates for certain human rights (e.g., Pride Month), celebrity advocacy, and silence (e.g., Blackout Day 2020; GLSEN Day of Silence). Ultimately, students decide if these behaviors are acts of advocacy or not, providing an educated rationale as to how they formulated this judgment. Students are given the opportunity to explore the real-world implications of having such differing views and ideas of what advocacy truly is.

“Is it Advocacy?” in Counselor Education

This activity is applicable to counselor education in various ways. For instance, counselor education programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) are expected to train their students in areas such as social and cultural diversity, as well as discuss, “strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination” (CACREP, 2016, p. 10). “Is it Advocacy?” addresses this standard practice in counselor education by introducing such strategies to students and encouraging them to think critically about each behavior. Counselor educators interested in implementing this activity in their classroom have a handful of resources available to them to customize this discussion-based activity to the needs of their unique program. For instance, counselor educators should be up to date on current issues that are calling mental health professionals to act at the local, statewide, national, and global levels. Staying engaged with various media outlets (e.g., news sources, podcasts, music, books) and participating in frequent professional development opportunities (e.g., attending professional conferences offered by ACA and the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors [ACES]) will enhance awareness of social justice issues. By using these resources, counselor educators model social justice competency development to their students, which is an effective pedagogical approach along with active learning approaches (Havlik et al.,

2019). Also, being up to date on current advocacy competencies is an ethical imperative (ACA, 2014, C.2.f) that is crucial for counselor educators' own professional development, as well as in the facilitation of activities such as "Is it Advocacy?" that challenge students to consider their level of social justice competence. Counselor educators should consider a variety of resources, such as the ones listed above, to cater this activity to the unique needs of their counseling programs.

Counselor educators who incorporate "Is it Advocacy?" into their pedagogy can consider ethical guidelines, as well as potential impacts this activity can have on the classroom. "Is it Advocacy?" is an activity that supports the *ACA Code of Ethics*' (2014) statement that counselor educators embed material related to multiculturalism and diversity into all courses (F.7.c), and this activity fosters students' understanding of diversity-related issues that need advocacy. Additionally, the *ACA Code of Ethics* states that counselors must communicate diversity-related content in a way that is developmentally and culturally appropriate (ACA, 2014, A.2.c.). Counselor educators must consider the developmental level of their students to determine the best approach to having students think critically about various behaviors and advocacy. For instance, a first-year master's student may have different needs than a doctoral student. "Is it Advocacy?" is a developmental approach in that it has multiple sessions of the activity over time, allowing for students to grow in their social justice competence before advancing in the activity. Further, the *Code of Ethics* states that counselor educators must practice only within the limits of their competence based on their education and training (ACA, 2014, F.7.b) and that multicultural competency is required across all counseling specialties (ACA, 2014, C.2.a). As such, counselor educators must ethically consider their ability to navigate a conversation around certain acts of advocacy and develop their skills as need be. However, given that multicultural competence is an expectation, and new standards of multicultural competence include social justice competence as well (Ratts et al., 2016), counselor educators should use their past education and training to incorporate "Is it Advocacy?" into their courses, while furthering their social justice competence through resources suggested earlier.

Counselor educators must consider the possible impact of this activity on students' personal and professional development and be prepared to navigate those conversations in a large-group setting. Some students may connect more personally with certain acts of advocacy discussed, therefore counselor educators should set the expectation of respectful dialogue before engaging in the activity. Counselor educators should also be prepared to offer external resources for students who may have a difficult time due to the activity. Counselor educators can work through such issues by empowering students to resolve their conflicts together in the classroom through restorative justice practices (Winn & Winn, 2021). "Is it Advocacy?" has great potential to positively impact students' understanding of self- and other-advocacy, and counselor educators must be mindful of the varied effects that some students may experience during these difficult conversations.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of "Is it Advocacy?"

"Is it Advocacy?" was created with developmental ideals in mind. Multicultural and social justice competence must first begin with internal reflective work of the counselor (Sue & Sue,

2013). This activity is incorporated at the beginning of the semester (before students engage in this self-reflective work in the academic setting) and again at the end of the semester (after course content that discusses social justice-related constructs, as well as intrapersonal and interpersonal activities to practically apply such content). The activity's adherence to this theory indicates its success for students from a developmental standpoint.

From a subjective viewpoint, I observed students develop their understandings of what advocacy is from a broadened perspective, particularly acknowledging that self-advocacy does indeed constitute an act of advocacy, in that student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the course were met and or exceeded. SLOs for the course included: (a) increased awareness, knowledge, and skills related to social justice, (b) creating action plans to serve the mental health needs of an underserved population, and (c) development of students' social justice identities. The author recognized students applying the critical thinking skills implemented during "Is it Advocacy?" in other practical activities, such as evaluating behaviors of a college's institutional advocacy organization, creating a comprehensive social justice action project of their own, and engaging with community partners through service learning.

Objectively, students' anonymous evaluations indicated that activities such as "Is it Advocacy?" challenged them to think (85% strongly agree or agree) and enhanced their learning (62% strongly agree or agree). Students reported that they participated in "a lot of great self-reflecting assignments" such as "Is it Advocacy?" that helped them understand their "place as an advocate." Further, students reported the activity "made me challenge my preconceived notions of what advocacy really means and how to truly be an advocate." There are ample opportunities to continue to assess the effectiveness of "Is it Advocacy?" and this feedback from students, as well the author's my observations, suggest that this activity is useful to meet the objective of developing social justice competence and awareness of what acts constitute advocacy.

IMPLICATIONS

"Is it Advocacy?" can be developed further. For instance, future research can address in a generalizable population the effectiveness of activities such as "Is it Advocacy?" that develop students' social justice competence. Research conducted on a broader scale can find the significant impacts of these activities to empirically support these types of pedagogical strategies. Another important consideration is the diverse identities and lived experiences of the students who participate in this activity. At my institution, students primarily identify with dominant cultures (e.g., white, housing secure, cisgender, heterosexual), therefore my objective and subjective reports may be limited in scope. Although students acknowledge and examine these privileges in class, I hope to incorporate this activity into future spaces beyond my homogenous institution, such as at statewide, regional, and national workshops or conferences, in order to better understand the impact of such an activity on students who do not have primarily privileged identities and experiences. In addition, my institution is exclusively synchronous, and the college does not offer asynchronous or online learning options. Therefore, it will be important to consider the possible effectiveness of "Is it Advocacy?"

for asynchronous learners. Counselor educators who attempt this activity asynchronously could offer valuable insight into the effectiveness of these discussions through a different pedagogical approach. Finally, as events at the local, statewide, and national level continue to occur (e.g., mass shootings, passing of laws, social movements), the activity will continue to be updated to stay current with the needs of the underrepresented groups. “Is it Advocacy?” cannot be a stagnate activity that is incorporated in the same way each semester, and counselor educators should continue to examine the effectiveness of this activity as they explore new, current topics and events.

As other counselor educators implement activities similar to “Is it Advocacy?” we might better understand how this approach translates into multiple counselor education spaces. Counselor educators with various specializations, trainings, and cultural backgrounds may apply this activity differently with their students, all with the same intent of fostering students’ social justice competence development by encouraging students to reconsider their typically limited frame of how self- and other-advocacy can be implemented. The field of counseling and counselor education has vital resources available to understand multicultural and social justice competence (ACA 2020; Lewis et al., 2003; Ratts et al., 2016; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009), and activities such as “Is it Advocacy?” can further equip students to consider tangible behaviors as acts of self- and other-advocacy.

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Engaging in Cross-Discipline Collaborative Training for School Counselors and School Nurses

Meeting the Mental Health Crisis in Schools

Schools are bracing for a mental health crisis, with students experiencing increasing rates of mental health issues exacerbated by childhood poverty, COVID-19, and ongoing racial discrimination and oppression. These experiences impact students' academic, career, personal/social development, and physical health into adulthood. Early identification of student needs are vital and many students do not receive care outside of the school setting. This project attempted to increase student access to school health care through cross-discipline training between school nurses and school counselors. Both professions are essential in providing needed student care, yet research and training regarding collaboration is lacking.

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This project was funded by the Josiah H. Macy's Foundation President's Grant

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KEYWORDS

antiracism, research, evaluation, social justice, counselor education

Introduction

K-12 schools are encountering a mental health crisis as students needing mental health care exceed schools' ability to provide services. The complexity of student health needs continues to increase over the past years, which include physical health, mental health, and social factors that influence overall health (Bitsko, et al., 2018). In the United States, a reported one in six children exhibit mental health symptoms (Cree, et al., 2018), and schools are one of the largest providers of mental health care (Green et al., 2013). The effects of COVID-19 likely exacerbated mental health needs in children (Duan et al., 2020; Panchal, et al., 2020; Swick & Powers, 2018). School closures and social isolation affected all students, but particularly minoritized students and those living in poverty (LaFave, 2020; Moss et al., 2020; National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Additionally, the uncertainty created by the pandemic including the loss of family, structure and routine inconsistencies, in-person school to virtual learning, and a lack of social outlets increased student mental health concerns like anxiety and depression. Moreover, when schools switched to virtual formats, mental health services also became remote (Krogstad et al., 2020; LaFave, 2020; Moss et al., 2020).

When exploring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Burke-Harris, 2018), Cronholm et al., (2015), Felitti et al. (1996), and van der Kolk (2014) highlighted the ways in which these traumatic exposures and pediatric adversities can impact both physical and mental health. Early identification within the school system allows for the provision of needed mental health care, which include interventions that can assist in buffering early risk factors such as discrimination, poverty, and other societal problems that negatively impact child development (Author et al., n.d.; Blaustein & Kinnibugh; 2018; Ray et al., 2022; Sanders et al., 2020). Pediatric adversity impacts children's physical, social-emotional, academic, and career development (Burke-Harris, 2018; Cronholm et al., 2015; Felitti et al., 1996, and van der Kolk 2014).

As school counselors focus on children's academic, career, and social emotional development (American School Counseling Association [ASCA], 2020), it is vital that they address mental health difficulties within schools. ASCA (2022) tasked school counselors with interprofessional collaboration to best support the needs of students in schools. One example of such interprofessional collaboration is with school nurses, who are at the forefront of this health crisis. As many students present with somatic complaints that indicate mental health concerns, these students are often first seen within the school nurse office (Ellertsson et al., 2017; Hoscotte, 2023). School nurses are members of the school health team with expertise on the intersection of physical and mental health, though research on school nurse and school counselor collaborations is lacking.

NEED FOR SPECIALIZED TRAINING

School nurses can play a key role in better identifying social, behavioral, and academic inequities, and addressing them with the youth and their families. Approximately 30% of student health visits to school nurses are for mental health concerns, often disguised by headaches and stomachaches (Foster et al, 2005). This pattern is especially true for minority children who are more likely to present to the school nurse than attempt to engage the school counselor or mental health services directly (Foster et al., 2005; Mason et al., 2021; Mayes & Byrd, 2022). Yet, in a 2008 study, nearly 80% of Washington D.C. public school nurses reported that they did not feel adequately trained in mental health to provide the necessary services (Acosta Price & Graham Lear, 2008). In a review of the literature examining school nurse roles in child mental health, Ravenna and Cleaver (2016) found that a key component of school nursing includes supporting and coordinating student mental health. However, multiple barriers existed for school nurses to provide such care due to inadequate training and a lack of confidence in their skills (Ravenna & Cleaver, 2016).

Additionally, despite ASCA's (2022) call for interprofessional collaboration, extant literature rarely explores school counselor and school nursing collaboration (Cogan & Kiefner, 2019). This project aims to train school nurses in identification, assessment, brief intervention, and referral of mental health concerns within the school system to improve self-advocacy in mental health care. Despite school nurses and counselors being at the epicenter of mental health within school systems, there is little research on partnerships and collaborations between the two professions (Cogan & Kiefner, 2019). These two professions are critical to the health and wellbeing of students and are not involved in academic or discipline services, thus alleviating some of the power differentials between school professionals and students and allowing for more authentic and engaging relationships. Additionally, both professions promote connections through intentional relationship building, are guided by the principles of confidentiality, and focus on the wellbeing of the whole school. Together, they can jointly manage student mental health needs by creating built in systems for assessment and referral.

By improving access to training within educational systems, we aim to improve school nurse engagement in mental health needs within the school system in order to foster cross-professional collaboration. It is vital for training programs to increase mental health education as well as provide cross-discipline collaboration to ensure nursing students are equipped to provide necessary services for students as soon as they enter the workforce. Through training and collaboration, school nurses will be better equipped to address the growing health inequities within educational systems. Similarly, school counselors will better identify physical health needs of students and collaborate with school nurses in proper identification and support for students who experience adversities that may otherwise be unknown to school counselors. Through collaboration both in training and in practice, school nurses and school counselors can better address student mental health needs within the school system as they work together to identify, assess, treat, and refer students for necessary mental health treatment. Both professions place the health and safety of children as their top priority, however, often are isolated from each other within the school system. As school counselor training is housed

within counselor education programs, it is vital for counselor educators to examine how to expand training to include school nurses to enhance the emotional health of children.

Increasing Collaborative Training among School Personnel

To address this isolation and gap in training, two professors, one within counselor education and one within the school of nursing, explored the effectiveness and feasibility of in-school didactic and experiential mental health training of school nurses and school counselors. Due to the double trauma of COVID-19 and discrimination, early identification of mental health needs is essential, and treatment must meet the developmental, cultural, and trauma-based needs of students served. Ultimately, the cross-disciplinary training is the first step in expanding interdisciplinary mental health education to place-based care for students. It stems beyond the typical confines of an academic medical and university setting, and places public health and mental health of children and adolescents into the curricula of nursing and school counseling students.

Using empirically-supported training programs including *Mental Health Training Intervention for Health Providers in Schools* (MH-TIPS; Bohnenkamp et al., 2019) and *Child-Teacher Relationship Training* (Morrison & Helker, 2010) adapted from Child-Parent Relationship Training (Bratton & Landreth, 2019), this collaboration provided school nurses with necessary training on the identification of mental health concerns in children and didactic knowledge developmentally appropriate mental health assessment. It also provided training on the experiential awareness of effective communication with children and families to best meet their mental health needs. Additionally, school nursing faculty educated future school counselors in recognizing the ways in which adversity and oppression impact children's physiological development. This curriculum provided didactic training and experiential learning based upon Kolb's learning theory (1984) to enhance reflection and integration of material into new situations (Poore et al., 2015).

The purpose of this project was two-fold. By combining a Pediatric Adversity nursing course and Comprehensive Counseling Program course, we addressed the real need for collaborations across disciplines within elementary and secondary schools. Ultimately, this was the first step in expanding interdisciplinary mental health education to school-based care for students. The capacities of nursing and education faculty together enhanced their combined ability to address inequities in health and education outcomes evident in the United States.

To meet the need for increased mental health education and collaboration within the school system, we first addressed the identified gaps within school nurse mental health training and school counselors' provision of support through collaboration within the school nursing and school counseling programs. The training recognized the diverse needs of students and

ways in which trauma, adversity, and oppression can impact student behavior and emotional needs within the school system. We offered both didactic learning through video lectures, guest speakers, course discussions, and experiential learning through case presentations and collaborative case identification to engage students in co-learning opportunities.

We included the following information within the crossover courses (NURS 6215 Pediatric Adversity and Early Childhood Development and Health; CNSL 6477 Coordination of Comprehensive Counseling Programs). We provided these lessons synchronously and asynchronously to assist students with diverse learning needs. Students enrolled within these courses gained experiential training on: (a) communication with children to address mental health concerns, (b) brief mental health interventions, and (c) appropriate referrals. Within their two courses, we addressed the following topics:

1. Developmentally informed symptomatology of mental difficulties
2. Trauma's influence on children's emotional and behavioral expression in schools
3. Impact of systemic racism on emotional and behavioral expression in schools
4. Identification of trauma in school systems
5. Brief mental health assessments in schools
6. Developmentally appropriate communication skills to meet the mental health needs of students
7. School nurse and counselor scope of practice
8. Discerning somatic complaints and mental health issues
9. Coordination of care amongst school professionals
10. Ethical issues in assessment and provision of mental health services
11. Psychotropic medications and interactions
12. Equity and access to mental health care within the school system.

This project provided essential collaboration to provide necessary communication, culmination of knowledge, and increased awareness into the professional identities and roles of two vital school professions. By creating cross-professional communication and knowledge and increased collaboration across these health professions, students benefited from increased access to trauma- and diversity-informed mental health care within the school system.

Reflexivity and Classroom Impacts

We are aware of the heightened emotional impacts of exploring pediatric adversity and adverse childhood experiences (Stone et al., 2023). To that end, we attempted to expose students to the content in ways that scaffolded the experiences and avoided flooding students with intense emotions. We also attempted to reflect upon the ways in which racism, discrimination, and oppression influence children's experiences of adversity, and the longitudinal impacts of those experiences on child development. To do so, we addressed their own privileges and positionality and encouraged students to explore those aspects to model awareness, acceptance, and exploration of identity. This approach better enabled both school nurses and school counselors in effectively engaging cross-culturally with parents and students who share many differing identities. However, because both educators were not practicing within the school system, the proximity of working within schools was lacking.

Additional considerations include applying the material for nursing students beyond the school setting. Many nursing students did not plan to engage as a school nurse or were not exposed to the school settings. To actively engage school counseling and nursing, we: (a) identified materials to advocate for placing nurses within the school system, and (b) identified the importance of school counselors engaging with medical professionals to better understand the holistic needs of the students with whom they work. By expanding beyond school nurses, students in both disciplines may recognize the benefits of collaboration. Additionally, through identification of the benefits of employing school nurses, school counseling students can better advocate for their students through exploration with school boards and administrators on how to employ full time school nursing staff.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

As a result of this training, students became uniquely situated to collaborate with school nurses and counselors within their future schools to further increase the positive impact on the mental health needs of students. Through this project, we hoped to increase school nursing students' knowledge and self-efficacy for engaging in mental health discussions and assessments with students and school counselors. Furthermore, we aimed to increase school counseling students' knowledge and awareness of somatic complaints of mental health, connections between physical and mental health symptoms, and the role of physical health in student development. Professional skills related to key objectives of the cross-discipline collaboration were discussed in class, including diversity considerations, somatization of mental health, physical health and student development, and common physical concerns of students.

We also informally investigated students' professional skills related to key objectives of the cross-discipline collaboration, including diversity considerations, mental health assessment, trauma indicators, brief mental health interventions, symptoms necessitating referrals, roles of school counselors, and collaboration with families.

Informal data gathered from in-class discussions, course evaluations, and assignments indicated students felt better prepared to meet the mental health needs of students within the school system. Nursing students also noted increased comfort in collaborating with school counselors in their future work within the schools. Additionally, school counseling students reported increased collaboration with school nurses within their internship sites, demonstrated increased comfort in assessing mental health versus medical issues with students, and an increased desire to collaborate with school nurses in the future. School nursing students appreciated the awareness of behavioral presentations of trauma, while school counseling students identified the medical presentation of trauma as uniquely beneficial for their own training. Students identified the lectures centering on the vital roles that school nurses and school counselors play within student mental health as particularly beneficial across programs.

Implications

Throughout the seven weeks of the course, we created seven lectures to engage cross-discipline collaboration and engaged students in case conceptualizations and discussions to further facilitate cross-discipline learning. The qualitative data stemming from student assignments and discussions provided rich information for future implementation of this collaboration. We will continue to provide opportunities for cross-discipline engagement and learning, allowing for in person learning, to continue to increase nursing students' self-efficacy in engaging in mental health discussions and further utilize school counseling students to assist nursing students' awareness of school culture. This project will further inform medical education and counselor education through publications in academic journals detailing this collaboration. We will continue to solicit feedback and data from students involved in this collaboration and incorporate their comments and feedback into future collaborations.

The mental health needs of students are vast and extend beyond the ability of a single school health professional. Through collaboration of nursing and counselor education faculty, students' ability to address health and education inequities was enhanced. By collaborating across disciplines, school nurses and counselors can better identify, assess, and provide services for students who may otherwise not receive services or support. This collaboration benefited not only the professionals engaged, but the future students they will encounter. This unique project cultivated a strong collaborative relationship between an experienced pediatric nursing professor and a school counseling professor by engaging in training and the co-development of products that will advance the adoption of best practices in school health to reduce health and educational disparities.

Unanswered Questions and Limitations

A limitation of this pilot program includes lack of quantitative data to determine effectiveness of this cross-discipline collaboration. While informal data was collected, when providing this cross-discipline collaboration in the future, it is vital to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that the goals of the course are being met.

One of the difficulties of engaging in this cross-professional training included differences in training modalities. Within this university, nursing students enrolled in the pediatric adversity course did not all align their professional goals with school nursing, thus creating a gap with the school counseling course, where all students indicated a history of and desire to work within the school system. Additionally, nursing curriculum is provided in an online, asynchronistic format, creating difficulties in establishing relationships and engagement between the two classes. To address this gap in the learning environment, the authors and professors identified several dates wherein students could meet virtually and synchronically to engage in experiential learning activities, discussion, and didactic training.

An additional difficulty in cross-discipline collaborative training for many include the limited number of universities hosting both specializations (school counseling and nursing). We are employed at a large research one university that hosts a nursing program, as well as a counselor education program, enabling such cross-discipline collaboration. This may not be the case for many counselor education programs. While the opportunity may not exist to integrate programs and courses across professions within a single university, we identified a significant need within this training and encouraged flexibility and creativity to access cross-discipline collaboration. While many universities may not host those two programs, many community colleges offer nursing programs which could allow for collaboration. Identifying community members or individuals at other training programs may allow for guest lecturers and collaboration outside of the traditional university setting. We suggest collaborating with current school nurses and or training programs outside their respected universities to allow for this cross-discipline training. Counselor educators can also share with students the role of school nurses within their curricula and discuss ways in which partnership and collaboration can occur within schools. This exploration can occur while students are actively engaged in the school system, as with practicum and internships.

Future Directions for Practice and Research

Children are experiencing increasingly high levels of adversity (Bitsko, et al., 2018) and often lack access to care outside of the school setting (Green et al., 2018). The deleterious physical and mental health impacts of adversity into adulthood as well as on children's academic, career,

and personal/social development necessitates professional collaboration. Adversity, including the COVID-19 pandemic, may impact both physical and mental health of children, and thus requires multi-faceted interventions to address this need (Duan et al., 2020; Panchal, et al., 2020; Swick & Powers, 2018). Collaboration between school nurses and school counselors can better meet the needs of students within the school system and enhance identification of students who could benefit from physical and mental health support. Future research can assess the benefits of cross-discipline collaboration within the school system and the potential impacts on students' academic, career, and personal/social development. Exploring the ways in which cross-discipline collaboration impact's student development, both in the immediate and longitudinal spaces, provides necessary data to promote the continued collaboration between medical and mental health professionals to provide holistic support.

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Inclusive Syllabi

An Essential Tool for the Inclusive Online Classroom

The syllabus is often overlooked as a tool to build equitable and inclusive classes. The course syllabus is an essential tool that can support an inclusive classroom culture from day one. Online counselor educators must be intentional about creating a sense of community and “being together” in the digital space, particularly for learners from marginalized communities. In this teaching practice brief, the authors describe their experience of developing a scalable inclusive syllabi protocol for a CACREP-accredited online counselor education program, using language that conveys a growth mindset, connection, support for diverse populations, and normalization of resource usage for success. Implications, best practices, and implementation strategies are discussed.

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Introduction

The syllabus is often the first exposure learners have to a course and their instructor. In online programs with many sections of the same course, the syllabus may be created by one counselor educator and taught by the other. This means that the syllabus is posted to the classroom without personalization from the faculty member teaching the course. Syllabi typically document the assignments, materials, and grading rubrics or penalties so that the university meets accreditation and legal requirements. It also contains language that is required by the accrediting body, university, and laws. As a result, syllabi are often seen merely as a stale and obligatory contract crowded with boilerplate verbiage; students may disregard the syllabus instead of engaging with it.

Engagement in an online environment is vital to having an inviting, inclusive atmosphere that helps to mitigate attrition and keep students involved in the course. Creating an inclusive syllabus that promotes a growth mindset (Dweck, 2017) and belonging has gained support in the past few years (Orr & Hamming, 2009; Womack, 2017; Fuentes, Zelaya & Madsen, 2021; and Yarosh, 2021). The concept of growth mindset has trended in education, particularly in K-12 and STEM education, for two decades. However, there is a dearth of research about its application in counselor education. Dweck (2017) defined the growth mindset as the belief that intelligence, ability, and competence are not fixed nor finite, but can be cultivated through effort, practice, and trial and error. In contrast, the fixed mindset asserts that these qualities are firmly set and fundamentally unchangeable (Dweck, 2017). Effective communication in the online classroom includes the growth mindset attitude that learners may struggle with but ultimately can grow, develop, and achieve mastery. The inclusive syllabus provides a solid introduction to the growth mindset in an online classroom. Below is a brief literature review that explores the current scholarly support for inclusive syllabi.

RELEVANT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE SUPPORT

Across all levels of academia, there has been a push in recent years toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and andragogy and there is ample literature and training for promoting DEI in the curriculum. Syllabi are a universal expectation in academe, but there is little research on them (Gin, Scott., Pfeiffer, Zheng, Cooper, & Brownwell, 2021) and fewer studies yet that specifically examine how the syllabus can contribute to equitable and inclusive classes.

Ludy et al., (2016) found that students preferred graphic-focused engaging syllabi over text-focused contractual syllabi. Further, they contend that students in the class with the engaging syllabus were more motivated and interested. Yarosh (2021) found similar results when comparing text rich and more visual syllabi, concluding that visual syllabi may help some students access material. Saville et al., (2010) researched the relationship between the

amount of information in a syllabus and students' perspective of faculty competence. Students who received a detailed in-depth syllabus rated their faculty member higher in competence than those with a less detailed syllabus and students demonstrated a greater willingness to recommend the teacher to others and to take a future course from them. The authors found that students perceive faculty with detailed syllabi as competent, caring, and supportive.

Gin, Scott., Pfeiffer, Zheng, Cooper, & Brownwell (2021) examined 75 biology syllabi at university for inclusive content. While syllabi included information about course content, information about creating a safe and positive course climate was rarely addressed unless the university explicitly required inclusive content. Although not research driven, Fuentes et.al. (2021) offered eight theoretically supported considerations for creating syllabi which include: (a) engaging in reflexivity; (b) adopting a diversity-centered approach; (c) highlighting diversity in the course description and acknowledging intersectionality; (d) developing diversity-centered learning objectives; (e) including a diversity statement; (f) decolonizing the syllabus; (g) fostering a family-friendly syllabus; and (h) establishing ground rules for communication. The authors believe that becoming more culturally competent is ongoing, and faculty members should always engage in self-reflection when creating their syllabi.

Many of these considerations are reflected in the Student Experience Project's (SEP) online module titled "Your Syllabus as a Tool to Promote Student Equity, Belonging, and Growth" (n.d.a). SEP is a collaborative effort involving university faculty, researchers, and academic organizations to establish and promote evidence-based practices that support inclusion in higher education. The SEP asserts that when learners feel supported and have access to resources, they are more likely to persist and succeed (SEP, n.d.b).

SEP (n.d.c) piloted the module at 16 public research universities and nearly 300 instructors took part in this training. When surveyed at the end, 90% of the participating faculty reported that the module assisted them in developing a revised syllabus with a growth mindset, and students who were surveyed on faculty's revised syllabi reported that the syllabus was more clear and more supportive of the student (SEP, n.d.c).

THE RATIONALE FOR INCLUSIVE SYLLABI

When counselors meet their clients for the first time, one of the most important tasks is to build a trusting relationship. This includes active listening, joining, building rapport, and gaining their trust. One could argue that the syllabus is a parallel process; it is our first interaction with students, so it serves the same goal of building a trusting relationship. Having an inclusive syllabus that uses welcoming language to promote a growth mindset sets the stage for a strong relationship during the course.

One of the greatest challenges in online education is building a sense of community and connection in the classroom (Foster, Neuer-Colburn, & Briggs, 2018). In an in-person classroom, communication is fluid, continual, and adaptive to various circumstances. However, in the

online classroom, communication is constrained, requiring deliberate effort on the part of instructors to effectively convey support to learners (Sarsar & Harmon, 2017).

Students from marginalized populations may be further inhibited by a lack of multicultural competence on the part of the faculty member (Foster, Neuer-Colburn, & Briggs, 2018). These students may be drawn to online education because it seems to be a more culturally neutral learning space than land-based institutions (Bawa, 2016). However, even faculty members who consider themselves accepting of diverse populations may perpetuate unconscious bias toward students with ethnically identifiable names (Conoway & Bethune, 2015). Thus, instructors must take explicit measures to ensure a welcoming, growth-minded classroom, and this effort can begin with the language presented in the syllabus.

Lack of training for faculty members can also be a barrier to effective online instruction. Faculty members must learn new technological applications and effective communication and engagement tools for online platforms (Mohamed & Zainal, 2013). In other words, in the absence of the faculty member's in-person persona, written words on a screen become the primary means of communication. A blunt message communicated face-to-face with warmth and humor will be received more favorably by learners than the same message written without that interpersonal emphasis. Thus, faculty members must intentionally use language in written form to build connections, convey support, and inspire a growth mindset.

Student engagement continues to be a struggle for online educators, particularly concerning attrition. While attrition is a problem regardless of the educational format, it is particularly problematic for online or distance learning. Persistence rates are significantly lower for distance education than face-to-face settings (Delnoij, Dirkx, Janssen & Martins, 2020). Attrition can be attributed to academic causes, such as lack of preparation. However, issues of engagement and support are the primary causes of student attrition (Mohamed & Zainal, 2013). A study of 5323 online learners revealed that students primarily desire instructor interaction and presence in the classroom (Mandernach, 2020). The authors assert that a syllabus can serve as a transformative classroom tool, and therefore must be written intentionally to increase a sense of faculty presence, connection, and support.

HOW INCLUSIVE SYLLABI ADDRESS THE NEED

To overcome obstacles to learner engagement and success, counselor educators must consider the process of online education, not just content delivery. Effective online counselor education includes language that connects with the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of both learners and instructors to bridge the technological divide and create community and a sense of connection. "Being together" in the online classroom begins with social presence and the syllabus is often the first encounter between the learner and the instructor. Intentional language and communication within the syllabus set the stage for a productive learning experience (Foster, Neuer-Colburn, & Briggs, 2018). Motivational messages that convey emotion are among the most effective communication tools for online instructors and can increase learners' motivation and engagement (Sarsar & Harmon, 2017).

Positively affecting learners' experience of the online classroom can lead to lowered attrition, improved academic outcomes, and increased engagement, particularly for learners from marginalized populations, including people of color and people experiencing financial stress (Student Experience Project, 2022). Creating a sense of belonging within the classroom is a critical component of enhancing learners' experience, and creating inclusive syllabi is the one step toward that goal.

Description of Inclusive Syllabi

The syllabus establishes the norms for the classroom and sets the tone and expectations for the term (SEP, n.d.a). Ultimately, the inclusive syllabus described below was created to follow the call to, "...ensure that students' earliest experiences in their courses promote a sense of belonging and self-efficacy that will support equity, belonging, and growth" (SEP n.d.a, para. 4). The SEP module was used as a framework to review and revise existing boilerplate language in syllabi with language that: (a) supports a growth mindset; (b) creates a sense of belonging; (c) communicates care; (d) communicates the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and (e) normalizes the use of university resources.

APPLICATION OF INCLUSIVE SYLLABI TO COUNSELOR EDUCATION

The authors work full-time for an online, CACREP-accredited counselor education program that attracts a diverse student body. Our counseling programs aspire to embody the *Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies* (MSJCC) by practicing inclusivity throughout our curriculum, communication, and climate (Ratts, Singh, & Butler, 2016). After taking the SEP (n.d.a) module, one of the authors invited all core faculty in the university's School of Counseling to participate in reviewing and revising existing syllabi. Five faculty and one administrator committed to a five-hour time frame to take the 90-minute SEP module, engage in one one-hour meeting, two 30-minute meetings, and 90 minutes of independent work revising boilerplate language to attend to the five goals.

Specific examples that can be used in an inclusive syllabus are as follows:

1. Support a Growth mindset: Support a growth mindset: "Each person in this course has had access to different opportunities and experiences; we are all learning together. Be open to feedback about behaviors or comments a peer or professor identifies as racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or otherwise biased."
2. Create a Sense of Belonging: "When I took my first research course, I was quickly overwhelmed and wondered if I belonged in the counseling profession. I overcame these fears by..."

3. Communicate Care: “Please reach out to me if you find yourself struggling to complete the work in this course due to life events or are feeling overwhelmed by the class.” (Gin et al., 2020)
4. Communicate the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion: a land acknowledgment or digital land acknowledgement based on self-reflection and relationships with Indigenous people. For example, “[School Name] is located on the traditional and ancestral land of the Ohlone and the Muwekma Ohlone people. This region holds great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for its original stewards, the Native nations and peoples of this area. We acknowledge their connection to this land, and give thanks for the opportunity to live, work, and learn on their traditional homeland,” (Equity Accelerator, n.d., Example Syllabus, para. 1).
5. Normalize the use of university resources: “If you would like to explore accommodations and other supports to fully realize your potential, please reach out to Disability Services....”

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Inclusive syllabi that emphasize a growth mindset, connection, and inclusion align with relational ethics and promote well-being within the classroom per the current *ACA Code of Ethics*. Dispositional issues that may have been seen as problematic (e.g., reactive behavior because of lack of inclusion) may be alleviated by the more intentional use of inclusive, supportive language in syllabi.

Traditional syllabi often rely on principle ethics expectations in addressing classroom behaviors, *Principle ethics* reflect these cultural roots, resulting in rules-based standards based on a presumed sense of shared morality (Mifsud & Herlihy, 2022). For example, a traditional syllabus based on principle ethics may present a rigid late work policy that does not accommodate students’ diverse needs.

Relational ethics may prove a more culturally sensitive approach. Grounded in relational-cultural theory (RCT), relational ethics acknowledges that growth occurs through human connection and interdependence, disconnection causes distress, power dynamics cause disconnection, and interconnectedness can facilitate healing (Mifsud & Herlihy, 2022). Thus, inclusive syllabi typically apply the relational ethics perspective regarding classroom expectations and culture. In contrast to the late policy described earlier in the paragraph, a relational ethics approach would include a flexible late policy that honors the diverse circumstances of individual students while still promoting accountability.

While the American Counseling Association *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) requires counselor educators uphold standards for academic, skill, and dispositional appropriateness for the profession, it also expects counselor educators to recruit and maintain diverse faculty and student populations. Thus, counselor educators may perpetuate a lack of inclusion without

a roadmap for best practices. Implementing the inclusive syllabus in the classroom can set the stage for increased engagement and consistent accountability.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The authors recommend that counselor educators interested in creating more inclusive syllabi begin with the SEP project's numerous resources, including SEP's (n.d.a) free online module included in the first-day toolkit (SEP, n.d.b). This module includes guidance, research, and evidence-based tips to make simple yet powerful adjustments to the language and intention behind the syllabus.

While individual faculty can review and implement the tools described in this module, the authors recommend implementation within a small group or team setting. At our university, which has a large pool of counselor education faculty, a small group of seven faculty volunteers (including the three authors) completed the module, discussed it together, and created plans for implementation on a larger level including revision of an existing syllabus in our program. The collaboration created opportunities to explore blind spots and to adjust the inclusive syllabi concept based on the opportunities and restrictions within our department (e.g., we use a universal syllabus template for all sections of each course, thus any changes made need to be program-wide and general enough to apply to all courses and faculty members).

Another resource that faculty can use is the suggestions offered by Gin et al., (2021). These authors present a comprehensive table that reviews the elements of a syllabus with definitions, which students are likely to benefit from each element, how these elements can be used to promote inclusion, and supporting literature for each element. This allows the faculty to see how each section of the syllabus can promote a more inclusive environment. Gin and colleagues (2021) provide examples of inclusive language for different sections of the syllabi. For example they suggest changing, "...students should arrive on time and stay for the entire class..." to "We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all, it is important that we..." (Gin et al., 2021, p. 236). Softening the tone so that it promotes a "we" mentality may resonate more with all students.

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Inclusive Syllabi

The practice of inclusive syllabi is new and there is little research to date that demonstrates how to evaluate the effectiveness of syllabi revision. However, there are related studies that provide important insight into how such evaluation might take place (Ludy et al., 2016; Saville et al., 2010; Yarosh, 2021; and SEP, 2022). These studies often have a small sample size but do offer some support for the use of inclusive language.

ASSESSMENT METHODS TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF INCLUSIVE SYLLABI ON STUDENT LEARNING

Expectations for CACREP programs include assessment measures. Alignment with these expectations is recommended in assessing the impact of inclusive syllabi on student learning. Data must be gathered on two levels: Program evaluation and student assessment (CACREP, 2016). Inclusive syllabi can impact data collected at both levels.

First, program evaluation data include student assessment data, student demographics, and follow-up studies to examine student success and satisfaction (CACREP, 2016). These data should align with the program objectives. Examining evaluation data from pre- and post-inclusive syllabi implementation using existing program practices may yield shifts in retention of diverse students, and overall program satisfaction.

At the student assessment level, key performance indicators (KPIs) assess the attainment of knowledge and skill in core CACREP areas. In addition to KPIs, learners in counseling programs are expected to demonstrate professional dispositions appropriate to the profession (CACREP, 2016). Via the syllabus, communicating a growth vs. fixed mindset, normalizing the use of resources to attain success, and using inclusive language to create belonging should create a ripple effect that may positively impact both the attainment of KPIs and the demonstration of professional dispositions. Per CACREP expectations, examining multiple data points at critical moments in the program (e.g., during pre-practicum or field experience) and comparing those points to pre-inclusive syllabi teaching may reveal positive trends.

In addition, the SEP (2022) recommends real-time data using an iterative approach in the classroom. This data collection approach empowers faculty members to more readily support students who may be struggling and to highlight gains made in the classroom because of their teaching practice. Real-time data collection can also highlight disparities in achievement among various demographic groups, which can indicate areas for improvement and change at the programmatic level (SEP, 2022). Real-time data can be gathered via digital anonymous surveys, exit slips (written responses to a prompt that are given to the faculty member at the end of class), small or focus group discussions, or documenting classroom observations (Alber, 2017). The authors' university intends to pilot a more inclusive syllabus in multiple courses in our CACREP accredited program as well as non-counseling programs in the Spring 2023 term. To date, assessment methods in previous studies have used a simple t-test to compare syllabi or used a short survey to gain information about the syllabus (Yarosh, 2021; SEP, 2022).

Discussion & Implications

The use of inclusive syllabi in the counselor education classroom is a novel approach that lacks profession-specific data. However, adopting these practices is a simple, accessible, creative, and potentially transformative approach to building an inclusive community of learners that in

turn will enrich our profession with diverse viewpoints. While there are unanswered questions to be explored, there exists the potential for future research and application.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND/OR LIMITATIONS

Creating inclusive syllabi is a novel concept and little research exists to support best practices or universal standards counselor educators might rely upon to develop their syllabi. However, research on the impact of inclusivity in the classroom is more robust, and the inclusive syllabus is a natural extension (Fuentes et al., 2021). Thus, the authors feel counselor educators can adopt these principles with confidence that inclusive language in the syllabus meets both pedagogical best practices and the counseling profession's commitment to social justice.

Another limitation relates to the structure of the counseling program. The authors' program, for example, is large and online. Syllabi are created from a standard template and are the same across all sections of a course. Thus, faculty members can't individualize the syllabus to facilitate relational connections with students (e.g., faculty members cannot include a personal bio in the syllabus as recommended by the SEP).

In smaller programs where faculty members can personalize their syllabi, the question of standards re-emerges. What parameters should faculty exercise around self-disclosure? What microaggressions may occur through unexamined bias? Faculty must enact care and self-awareness to create syllabi that achieve the desired intent.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The authors and their colleagues are in the early stages of implementing inclusive syllabi concepts university wide. Evaluation and feedback gleaned from student outcome data and faculty experience will inform our future efforts. From a larger perspective, creating culture change in higher education toward a more inclusive, supported, and resourced landscape aligns with the counseling profession's commitment to multicultural equity and social justice. In addition, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic disrupted many established norms and expectations in higher education, for example, face-to-face learning as the default. The pandemic also exposed and exacerbated the financial strain felt by many learners, resulting in partial student loan debt forgiveness at the national level. These changes have created an extraordinary opportunity for faculty members to reinvent traditional ways of teaching and administering educational programs.

Thus, future directions for research and practice in counselor education include examination of outside influences that may prove detrimental to academic success, including the strain of poverty and resource limitation, the burdens of caregiving, and/or the absence of basic needs (e.g., secure housing). While higher education cannot solve these problems, awareness of their influence on academic attainment, and creating a culture of inclusion through policies and practice may further enrich the diversity of our profession and the success of our students (SEP, 2022).

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