Navigating Microaggressions

Impacts on Counselor Professional Identity Development and Instructional Strategies for Inclusivity

In this brief, we explore the impact of microaggressions on counselor professional identity development, particularly among marginalized groups. Drawing on current research, we highlight the unique challenges faced by counselors and counselors-in-training (CITs) in addressing microaggressions within academic and professional settings. To address these challenges, we introduce the Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework. This teaching strategy fosters inclusivity and better prepares CITs to navigate microaggressions effectively. The framework outlines evidence-based teaching strategies grounded in research. It promotes cultural humility, professional growth, and resilience among CITs by offering practical tools that counselor educators can implement in training environments.

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Introduction

Counselor professional identity (CPI) development is a foundation of the counseling profession, shaping how counselors approach their work, build relationships, and address professional challenges (Dollarhide et al., 2023). CPI is a developmental process that integrates personal and professional values, skills, and knowledge, directly influencing counseling professionals' effectiveness and cultural competence (Lile, 2017). Educational and professional environments play a crucial role in this development, but microaggressions pose a significant barrier.

Defined by Sue et al. (2022) as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities," microaggressions can undermine confidence, self-efficacy, and belonging, particularly for counselors from marginalized groups (Broadwater, 2020; Griffith, 2024). This brief addresses these challenges by introducing a structured instructional strategy, *the Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework*, designed to equip counselors and counselors-in-training (CITs) with the tools to recognize, reflect on, and respond to microaggressions. This framework fosters an inclusive learning environment, advancing CPI development and promoting cultural humility. While recognizing, reflecting, and responding have been utilized in various fields, including conflict resolution and anger management, the instructional strategy presented here is tailored to counselor education (Goldstein et al.,1998). The Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework is designed to equip CITs with the skills to identify, contemplate, and effectively address microaggressions within therapeutic settings.

COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND BARRIERS

CPI evolves through personal values, worldviews, educational experiences, clinical training, supervisory relationships, and ongoing professional growth (Maurya & DeDiegol, 2023). This dynamic process is influenced by milestones, achievements, and challenges that can either strengthen or hinder a counselor's sense of self within the profession. Relationships play a pivotal role in fostering CPI. Connections with peers, instructors, and supervisors help counselors refine clinical skills, navigate ethical obligations, and develop a sense of belonging in the profession (Peters & Vereen, 2020). Supervisory relationships enhance skill development, while mentorship supports addressing barriers and promoting professional growth. Building a sense of community within the counseling field mitigates challenges and creates opportunities for continued development (Gibson et al., 2023).

Microaggressions are a barrier to CPI, undermining confidence, belonging, and identity development. Marginalized counselors often face unique challenges due to systemic inequities and intersectional identities (Avent et al., 2019). For instance, women counselor educators report experiencing microaggressions that expose power imbalances and systemic discrimination, highlighting the need for institutional support to mitigate harm (Avent et al., 2019). CITs

frequently encounter microaggressions from clients, leading to emotional distress but also opportunities for contextualization and growth (Sackett et al., 2023).

Counselors of color often brace for racial microaggressions, employing strategies to manage these encounters, which impact their well-being and professional identity (Branco & Bayne, 2020). Non-binary counselors report experiences of misgendering that harm their mental health and sense of belonging (Griffith, 2024), while counselors with disabilities face ableist microaggressions that compound challenges in their professional roles (Cook et al., 2024). Addressing barriers like microaggressions through education, mentorship, and training is necessary for developing a strong CPI. By navigating challenges and using adaptive strategies, counselors can strengthen their professional identity and promote inclusivity in the field.

IMPACTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions impact marginalized groups within the counseling profession, affecting their mental health, sense of belonging, and professional identity (Griffith, 2024). Non-binary counselors frequently experience misgendering and invalidation, which contribute to feelings of alienation and diminished professional efficacy (Griffith, 2024). Counselors of color often navigate racial microaggressions that undermine their confidence and sense of belonging in educational and professional settings (Branco & Bayne, 2020; Oates, 2023). These challenges highlight the systemic barriers faced by marginalized counselors.

Systemic factors, which include ableism and intersectionality, further exacerbate these experiences. Counselors with disabilities encounter ableist microaggressions that challenge their professional credibility, while those with intersecting marginalized identities face compounded discrimination that amplifies the effects of microaggressions (Cook et al., 2024). Women counselor educators also report microaggressions stemming from power dynamics in academia, underscoring the need for systemic change to foster inclusivity (Avent et al., 2019).

CITs are vulnerable to microaggressions in clinical and educational settings. Client-initiated microaggressions present unique challenges, requiring CITs to simultaneously manage emotional reactions, maintain therapeutic alliances, and uphold professional composure (Sackett et al., 2023). In classroom settings, microaggressions can create a "toxic rain" effect, causing personal harm and distracting from learning (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). The "toxic rain" effect refers to the metaphor that captures how seemingly small but consistent negative experiences, including microaggressions, institutional neglect, and anti-immigrant sentiment, can accumulate over time like acid rain, corroding an individual's emotional well-being, self-concept, and sense of belonging (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). This effect emphasizes how long-term exposure to social and legal invisibility and barriers to educational and occupational opportunities slowly weakens development, leading to diminished aspirations and identity conflicts. CITs often rely on support systems and contextualization strategies to navigate these encounters, underscoring the importance of mentorship and supervisory relationships in their professional development.

Identity affirmation and resilience act as protective factors against the adverse effects of microaggressions. Resilience-building strategies, including fostering self-efficacy and community support, are essential for maintaining professional identity and effectiveness (Harper, 2024). Counselor education programs are critical in addressing these challenges by integrating frameworks such as relational cultural theory (Sackett & Jenkins, 2019) and resilience theory (Pack-Butler, 2022). However, there remains a need for targeted interventions within counselor education to address the impacts of microaggressions and promote inclusive environments explicitly.

RATIONALE FOR THE INTERVENTION APPROACH

While studies have broadly examined microaggressions, specific investigations into their impact on the professional identity development of counselors and CITs remain limited (Broadwater, 2020). Research highlights the prevalence and effects of microaggressions but often overlooks their implications for identity development within educational settings (Raheem et al., 2014). Current training programs frequently lack structured strategies to help counselors effectively navigate these experiences (Broadwater, 2020).

Many counselors report feeling unprepared to address microaggressions in their professional roles. Studies on racial and gendered microaggressions reveal that these subtle acts of discrimination can lead to emotional distress and diminished professional efficacy (Barnes, 2011). Counselors often encounter these challenges in client interactions, workplace environments, and supervisory relationships, where microaggressions erode self-confidence and self-efficacy (Broadwater, 2020; Oates, 2023). Addressing this gap is critical for developing comprehensive training strategies that promote resilience, inclusivity, and professional growth.

To meet these challenges, we present the Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework, an approach tailored to counselor education. This framework, supported by evidence-based teaching strategies, provides a structured method for equipping counselors with the skills to navigate microaggressions effectively and develop cultural humility and professional competence. The following section introduces a teaching innovation designed to equip CITs with a tool for recognizing, reflecting on, and responding to microaggressions.

Teaching Innovation/Instructional Strategy

The Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework is a structured, evidence-informed instructional strategy tailored to the unique needs of counselor education. This approach equips CITs to address microaggressions effectively while fostering cultural humility, professional growth, and relational skills. Combining experiential learning, reflective practices, and skill-building micro-interventions, the framework introduces a

novel, practical method for navigating microaggressions and enhancing professional identity development.

Grounded in relational cultural theory (RCT), the framework emphasizes mutual empathy and relational growth, preparing CITs to approach microaggressions with cultural humility and understanding (Sackett & Jenkins, 2019). Role-playing exercises and guided discussions provide experiential learning opportunities, allowing CITs to engage actively with realistic scenarios, develop critical self-awareness, and enhance their multicultural competencies (Houshmand et al., 2017). These interactive strategies ensure that CITs are deeply involved in their learning and equipped to navigate complex interactions in diverse contexts.

The framework also integrates resilience theory to help CITs manage the emotional toll of microaggressions. Through building resilience, counselors can maintain professional composure and support themselves and others during challenging interactions, empowering them to remain effective and grounded in their practice (Pack-Butler, 2022).

The framework incorporates targeted prompts and reflective exercises that enhance professional identity and equip CITs to respond to microaggressions with confidence, self-awareness, and inclusiveness. This approach addresses critical gaps in counselor education, fostering equitable practices and preparing culturally competent counselors capable of addressing systemic inequities and supporting diverse clients (Rudecindo et al., 2025).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING THE RECOGNIZE, REFLECT, RESPOND PROCESS

The Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework helps CITs identify, analyze, and address microaggressions while fostering professional identity and cultural humility. Implementation is divided into three steps: Recognize, Reflect, Respond, each designed to build competencies in counselor education classrooms. (Please see Appendix A and B)

Preparation

Preparation begins with educators explaining the framework's purpose and role in equipping CITs to navigate microaggressions effectively. This explanation includes an overview of microaggressions, their definitions, examples, and their impact on counseling relationships, referencing foundational research. Educators should create realistic role-playing scenarios that reflect diverse identities and contexts, ensuring inclusivity and relevance (Branco & Jones, 2021). Role cards, case studies, reflective prompts, video clips, and popular culture reference materials should be prepared to enhance engagement during the Recognize phase.

Suggested Resources for Implementation. Educators can use several resources to enhance the implementation of the framework. The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al., 2016) provide a foundational guide for integrating cultural humility, reflexivity, and inclusivity into training. Annotated research articles on microaggressions,

resilience theory, and relational cultural theory deepen understanding and promote evidence-informed approaches (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022). These tools support the development of cultural competence and empower future counselors to create inclusive and equitable professional environments (Ratts et al., 2016). By integrating these resources into their curriculum, educators can enhance their strategies and better prepare CITs to address the challenges of microaggressions.

Optional Format and Considerations

Implementing the framework requires adherence to ethical principles, including cultural humility, respect for diversity, and equity promotion. Ethical counselor education emphasizes creating inclusive learning environments rooted in self-reflection and cultural awareness. To enhance engagement and accessibility, the Recognize phase can integrate videos or pop culture references depicting microaggressions as an alternative to traditional role-playing.

Videos from films, television, or documentaries offer tangible illustrations of microaggressions. Carefully selected clips showcasing subtle or overt behaviors, such as dismissive comments about someone's cultural background, provide CITs with concrete examples of microinsults or microinvalidations, two types of microaggressions. These materials serve as conversation starters, facilitating discussions about the microaggressive behavior's intent, impact, and underlying dynamics. Social media interactions or viral moments can also highlight microaggressions in relatable ways, bridging theoretical concepts with practical applications while fostering critical thinking about cultural dynamics.

This optional format supports diverse learning styles, encouraging CITs to engage with the material in thought-provoking and accessible ways. Observing microaggressions in various contexts helps CITs recognize their prevalence and develop the skills to identify and address them effectively. Incorporating media-based approaches complements traditional role-playing, enriching the Recognize phase with an additional layer of experiential learning.

Cultural Adaptation of the Framework. To increase the applicability of this framework across various settings, it is essential to consider how cultural factors may influence both the experience of microaggressions and the appropriateness of intervention strategies. While the framework emphasizes cultural humility, further adaptations may be needed to address specific cultural values, communication styles, or systemic dynamics present in different regions or communities. For example, some cultural groups may prioritize indirect communication or collectivist values, which could shape how microaggressions are perceived and responded to (Farber et al., 2021). Educators are encouraged to adapt scenarios, examples, and reflection prompts to reflect the lived experiences and cultural backgrounds of their CITs. This cultural tailoring can promote greater relevance and effectiveness, reinforcing the importance of intersectionality and context in counselor training.

Opt-out Option. The framework incorporates an opt-out option to ensure inclusiveness and respect for the psychological safety and comfort of all CITs. This option acknowledges individual boundaries while maintaining the integrity of the learning objectives, allowing all participants to engage meaningfully in ways that align with their comfort levels. CITs opting out

of direct role-playing or immersive activities can participate through alternative methods. For example, they may engage in observational analysis, observing peers in role-playing scenarios and providing written or verbal feedback on the dynamics and strategies employed. CITs may also conduct case study analyses, independently or in small groups, examining written or video examples of microaggressions. These analyses are supplemented with reflective journaling or group discussions to deepen insights. Another option includes creative projects developing educational resources like infographics or guides focused on recognizing and addressing microaggressions. CITs may also engage in anonymous reflection by submitting private reflections to the instructor or participating in anonymous journaling. This approach provides a safe space for CITs to process their thoughts and emotions without the pressure of public discussion.

THE RECOGNIZE PHASE

The Recognize phase of the framework emphasizes cultivating real-time awareness of microaggressions and their impact within professional settings. CITs engage in thoughtfully designed activities, specifically role-playing scenarios and video analyses, to explore how microaggressions manifest and influence interpersonal dynamics. These exercises are tailored to reflect real-world counseling situations, incorporating diverse identities and the complexities of power dynamics to ensure relevance and depth.

Instructors facilitate this phase by assigning the counselor, client, or observer roles within role-play activities or simulated interactions. CITs are provided with detailed case studies, role cards, and video recordings to immerse themselves in these scenarios. These materials offer concrete examples of verbal, behavioral, and environmental microaggressions, helping CITs analyze interactions from multiple perspectives. Educators use prompts like "What occurred in the interaction that might be perceived as a microaggression?" and "Who might be impacted, and how?" to guide critical thinking and foster awareness of the dynamics at play.

To further enhance their situational awareness, CITs are encouraged to incorporate mindfulness practices that attune them to the subtleties of interpersonal interactions. Through observing and identifying microaggressions, ranging from microassaults and microinsults to microinvalidations, CITs develop a nuanced understanding of how these behaviors affect relationships, identity, and emotional well-being. This phase prioritizes experiential learning to provide CITs with the foundational skills needed to recognize microaggressions effectively. By stepping into these roles, CITs gain firsthand insight into the subtle yet impactful nature of microaggressions and their potential consequences on professional relationships and clients' well-being.

The Recognize phase lays the groundwork for deeper reflection and equips CITs with critical observational skills needed to address systemic inequities and foster cultural humility. This foundational understanding prepares them to engage meaningfully in the subsequent stages of the framework, which focus on reflection and constructive response.

THE REFLECT PHASE

The framework's Reflect phase is designed to help CITs process their observations and experiences from role-playing scenarios or media analyses. It fosters deeper introspection and critical thinking about the dynamics of microaggressions. This stage emphasizes the importance of thoughtfully analyzing interactions to understand their emotional, relational, and systemic implications.

CITs engage in guided reflection activities, journaling, small group discussions, and instructor-led debriefs. These methods provide safe and supportive spaces for CITs to explore their thoughts, share insights, and connect their reflections to their professional growth. Educators facilitate these activities using structured prompts, such as "What emotions did you experience during the activity?", "How did the microaggressions influence professional relationships or the therapeutic alliance?", and "What are the broader implications of these interactions for counseling practice and professional identity?"

Reflection activities encourage CITs to move beyond immediate reactions and critically examine the systemic and interpersonal dynamics. Through this process, they deepen their understanding of how cultural factors, power dynamics, and personal biases shape professional relationships. Group discussions foster collaborative learning by allowing CITs to gain multiple perspectives, while journaling provides a private space for deeper introspection.

Educators play a pivotal role in guiding CITs through this phase by facilitating critical discussions about the complexities of microaggressions. Key questions, such as "How does this behavior relate to cultural, social, or personal biases?" and "What are the potential effects on the client, myself, or the therapeutic relationship?" help CITs unpack the nuances of these interactions. These prompts also encourage CITs to critically evaluate the ripple effects of microaggressions on both individual and systemic levels, helping them connect their reflections to broader professional and societal contexts.

The Reflect phase aims to cultivate self-awareness, cultural humility, and a nuanced understanding of systemic inequities. Engaging in guided reflection, CITs develop the ability to identify how microaggressions affect themselves, their clients, and the counseling profession. This phase lays the groundwork for the next stage of the framework, where CITs will focus on developing constructive strategies for responding to these challenges in professional practice.

THE RESPOND PHASE

The Respond phase of the framework equips CITs with evidence-based micro-intervention techniques to address microaggressions constructively, professionally, and empathically. Building on the awareness and insights gained in earlier phases, this stage focuses on helping CITs develop and refine practical skills to navigate challenging interactions effectively while preserving therapeutic relationships.

Educators begin this phase by introducing and modeling evidence-based micro-intervention strategies that include inquiry-based responses and affirming statements. For example,

phrases like "Can we pause and explore what you meant by that statement?" or "I hear your perspective, but I'd like to understand more about where that comes from" are demonstrated to promote dialogue and mutual understanding. These techniques encourage collaboration and empathy, allowing CITs to address microaggressions without conflict.

In high-pressure situations, counselors may feel caught off guard, emotionally activated, or uncertain about how to address microaggressions without disrupting the therapeutic alliance. To support CITs in these moments, the framework introduces structured response techniques that can be deployed in real time. These include grounding phrases such as, "Let's pause for a moment. I want to make sure I understood what you meant," or redirective statements like, "That comment may have a different impact than intended. Can we explore it together?" CITs are also taught brief self-regulation techniques like deep breathing, silent counting, or mindfulness anchors, to manage their own affect before responding. Role-playing exercises are intentionally designed to mimic escalating or emotionally intense scenarios, allowing CITs to practice staying composed, reflective, and ethically grounded under pressure. Emphasis is placed on tone, pacing, and nonverbal communication, allowing CITs to practice diffusing tension while still addressing the harm in the moment.

CITs then participate in skill-building activities, including role-playing scenarios where they apply these strategies in controlled settings. Role reversals are incorporated to enable CITs to explore multiple perspectives, deepening their understanding of how microaggressions impact relationships. These exercises also contrast scenarios with and without interventions, emphasizing the importance of addressing microaggressions effectively. Throughout these activities, CITs receive constructive feedback from peers and instructors, allowing them to refine their approaches and build confidence in their responses.

An important component of the Respond phase is the integration of relational cultural theory (RCT) principles, which emphasize mutual empathy and relational growth (Ticknor & Averett, 2017). CITs are encouraged to consider how their responses can repair ruptures caused by microaggressions and help maintain trust within the therapeutic alliance. This focus on relational growth ensures that interventions address the immediate behavior and foster long-term understanding and connection. Key reflective questions guide CITs as they practice and refine their responses, including "What is an appropriate way to address this behavior while fostering understanding?" and "How can I repair potential ruptures in the therapeutic relationship?"

CITs can develop the skills to address microaggressions with professionalism, cultural humility, and emotional intelligence. This equips them to navigate similar challenges in real-world counseling settings while maintaining professional composure and fostering relational integrity and growth. The Respond phase empowers CITs to handle microaggressions with empathy and confidence, preparing them to create inclusive and supportive environments in their practice. By the end of this phase, CITs demonstrate the ability to implement actionable strategies that strengthen the therapeutic alliance and promote cultural humility in counseling relationships.

DEBRIEF AND WRAP-UP STEP

The debrief and wrap-up conclude the activity, ensuring that CITs leave with a clear understanding of key lessons and their practical applications. Educators summarize the primary takeaways, emphasizing the importance of cultural humility, reflexivity, and professional composure when addressing microaggressions, reinforcing the foundational principles of the Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework, and helping CITs connect the activity to their CPI. Educators share additional resources containing research articles, toolkits, or videos that deepen CITs' understanding and support the real-world application of their skills, enhancing their ability to address cultural and systemic factors impacting counseling relationships.

Evaluation and Assessment

Targeted metrics assessing inclusivity and counselor identity development can evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies for addressing microaggressions in counselor education. Reflective journals, competency assessments, and feedback surveys measure progress in recognizing and addressing microaggressions while fostering cultural humility and resilience (Raheem et al., 2014).

Classroom climate surveys and structured evaluations, which include role-play and scenario-based assessments, provide evidence of CITs' ability to respond effectively to microaggressions and track changes in understanding, confidence, and real-world readiness. Reflective journals also encourage introspection and allow educators to assess growth in self-awareness, cultural humility, and critical thinking (Griffith, 2024). Educators can use these methods to refine instructional approaches, ensuring training programs effectively address microaggressions while fostering culturally competent and inclusive counseling professionals.

SUPERVISION AND PEER SUPPORT IN NAVIGATING MICROAGGRESSIONS

Supervision and external support systems, including peers and mentorship, can be viable avenues to support counselor trainees' process with discrimination and microaggressions (Chong et al., 2024). A supervisor's multicultural competence and cultural humility are fundamental for creating safety and openness in supervisory relationships. While supervision and peer support provide important external structures for navigating microaggressions, addressing the internal and emotional impact these experiences have on CITs highlights the need for strategies that promote emotional regulation and resilience.

Managing Emotional Responses to Microaggressions

Emotional responses such as frustration, fatigue, and sadness are valid and commonly experienced when engaging in diversity work. It is emphasized that the goal is not to suppress

these emotions but to acknowledge, process, and manage them in healthy and constructive ways (Miller et al., 2018). Counselors and CITs should be encouraged to develop reflective practices, set emotional boundaries, and seek community support. Regular debriefing, mindfulness exercises, and validation of emotional responses can foster resilience and sustainability in the profession (Miller et al., 2018). Encouraging counselor educators to model **emotional transparency and regulation** demonstrates to CITs how to respond without internalizing harm.

Microaggressions are not only cognitively strenuous but also emotionally distressing, often creating anxiety, anger, and trauma-related symptoms (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022). Counselors and CITs may experience emotional fatigue or hypervigilance in environments where microaggressions are frequent (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022). Teaching counselors how to regulate these responses is essential for preserving well-being and professional effectiveness. Strategies that support resilience and regulation may include emotional regulation skills, mindfulness, peer support, and cognitive reframing skills. Counselor educators also have a role in fostering ways to build resilience, reduce harm, and validate emotional experiences (Skinta & Torres-Harding, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

The Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework is grounded in ethical principles that align with the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014) and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Guidelines for Ethics and Best Practice (2011). Counselor educators have a professional obligation to promote learning environments that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to the unique needs of diverse counselor trainees (Ratts et al., 2016).

This framework is intentionally designed to honor the dignity and autonomy of all participants. Strategies such as opt-out options, reflective journaling, and observational alternatives ensure that trainees can engage meaningfully while maintaining their psychological safety. These practices uphold the ethical imperative to do no harm and support the creation of safe, respectful spaces for addressing culturally sensitive topics. The framework prepares CITs to identify and respond to microaggressions as ethical breaches that can undermine trust, therapeutic rapport, and professional integrity. By integrating cultural humility, critical self-awareness, and relational ethics, the framework fosters core values of justice, advocacy, and respect for the inherent worth of all individuals. Educators implementing this framework are encouraged to model ethical behavior by attending to power dynamics, facilitating respectful dialogue, and encouraging reflexivity in both classroom and supervision settings. These practices are critical for preparing culturally responsive counselors equipped to navigate ethical complexities in diverse clinical environments.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training framework offers a structured and evidence-informed strategy for counselor education, several limitations should be acknowledged. The framework has yet to be formally evaluated across diverse institutional contexts and cultural environments, limiting its generalizability. Additionally, the reliance on role-play and reflective practices may not fully capture the complexity of real-time clinical dynamics or institutional barriers counselors might face in practice.

Personal and institutional barriers may also challenge the implementation of this framework. Counselor educators and CITs may have implicit biases that affect their ability to engage in these practices fully. Institutional resistance, a lack of administrative support, time constraints, or fear of disrupting classroom dynamics may also hinder the integration of anti-microaggression strategies. Addressing these obstacles requires a sustained commitment to equity, self-awareness, institutional advocacy, and faculty training to effectively model and support these efforts.

Future research should explore this framework's long-term effectiveness through qualitative and quantitative methods, particularly in diverse training settings. Studies could also examine how the framework impacts counselor self-efficacy, client outcomes, and perceptions of inclusivity in supervision. Expanding implementation across online, hybrid, and multicultural classrooms may enhance accessibility and relevance. Adaptations of the framework for use in continuing education and clinical supervision contexts would offer opportunities for ongoing professional development.

Implications

Addressing microaggressions in counselor education has far-reaching implications, shaping education, professional development, and multicultural training. Equipping students with tools to navigate microaggressions fosters inclusive learning environments. It promotes cultural humility, a key attribute for developing culturally competent counselors who can address systemic inequities and effectively serve diverse populations (Sue et al., 2022).

Integrating strategies to address microaggressions into training and professional development strengthens the foundation for culturally responsive practices. This work aligns with the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies by advancing self-awareness, social justice advocacy, and improved outcomes for marginalized clients (Ratts et al., 2016). However, gaps remain in research, specifically around the long-term impact of these interventions and the compounded challenges faced by counselors with intersecting marginalized identities

(Broadwater, 2020; Houshmand et al., 2017). Counselor training programs must incorporate anti-racist and equity-focused content while prioritizing diversity among faculty and students. These efforts create inclusive academic cultures that support marginalized communities and advance the counseling profession in necessary ways.

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Appendix A

Three-phase Framework (Recognize, Reflect, Respond)

Phase	Goal	Implementation activities	Resources & Tools
Recognize	Help CITs identify microaggressions in diverse counseling contexts.	Provide definitions and examples of microaggressions.	Pop culture clips, case studies, or social media examples.
		Use role plays, case studies, video clips, or media-based scenarios.	Role cards and reflective prompts.
Reflect	Encourage CITs to analyze and process emotional, relational, and cultural responses.	Facilitate journaling, group dialogue, or reflective writing.	Reflective prompts and guided questions.
		Promote discussion of identity, bias, and emotional responses.	Articles on cultural humility and relational-cultural theory.
Respond	Equip CITs with strategies to address and respond to microaggressions ethically and effectively.	Practice assertive responses and micro interventions.	*Multicultural Counseling Competencies* (Ratts et al., 2016).
		Encourage role-play feedback and peer debriefing.	Resilience theory and ethical response guidelines.

Appendix B

INSTRUCTIONS

The *Recognize, Reflect, Respond to Microaggressions in Counselor Training* framework helps Counselor-in-Training (CITs) identify, analyze, and address microaggressions while fostering professional identity and cultural humility. Implementation is organized into three sequential steps:

Recognize

- Introduce the purpose of the framework and its relevance to counseling practice.
- Define microaggressions and present examples.
- Provide context on the impact of microaggressions in counseling relationships.
- Use realistic role-playing scenarios or inclusive examples that reflect diverse identities and contexts.
- *Prepare materials such as:*

    - Role cards
    - Case studies
    - Reflective prompts
    - Optional: video clips or pop culture references to enhance engagement

Reflect

- Facilitate guided reflection through group discussion, journaling, or targeted prompts.
- Help CITs explore their own emotional responses, cultural identities, and implicit biases.
- Support the development of professional identity and multicultural awareness through relational dialogue.

Respond

- Teach and model micro-interventions to address microaggressions in real time.
- Use skill-building activities such as behavioral rehearsal, role-playing, and peer feedback.
- Integrate resilience theory strategies to help CITs manage emotional strain and remain grounded in challenging interactions.
- Encourage the development of inclusive and ethically informed responses that align with professional standards.