# SACES
## SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION
# NEWSLETTER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear SACES Members,

As President of SACES, it's my privilege to connect with you through this newsletter and share some exciting developments and initiatives that underscore our organization's commitment to excellence and growth. Being part of SACES means engaging with a dynamic community of leaders, counselors, supervisors, and counselor educator colleagues who are all driving forward the standards of our profession. It's a thrilling journey, and I am excited to share a few ongoing initiatives that our Executive Board and our members are actively working on.

One of our core focuses has been on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). In this vital area, we are thrilled to announce a partnership with the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and our generous sponsors to expand our Diversity Scholars program. This year, we have the pleasure of offering ten scholarships, effectively doubling our impact by supporting five additional scholars compared to previous years. This initiative is a significant step toward fostering a more inclusive and diverse professional community.

In the realm of research, our commitment to advancing knowledge has never been stronger. We have successfully allocated funding to appoint a third editor for our Teaching and Supervision in Counseling (TSC) journal. This expansion enhances our journal's reach and depth and reflects our dedication to academic excellence. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Bradley McKibben, Dr. Christian Chan, and the editorial board for their exemplary stewardship of TSC. Under their guidance, the journal has flourished, becoming a cornerstone of scholarly contribution in our field. Leadership development remains another cornerstone of our mission. Dr. Hannah Coyt's

contributions to the Emerging Leader Program have been nothing short of transformative. Her passion and leadership have significantly enriched this program, and the enthusiasm and commitment of our Emerging Leaders personally inspires me. To further build on this foundation, Dr. Asha Dickerson and I are honored to have been appointed by the SACES Executive Board as the new co-chairs of the Emerging Leader Program. We are dedicated to continuing this legacy of leadership cultivation within counselor education and supervision. Financial stewardship is critical to our organization's ability to support its members effectively. I want to acknowledge the exceptional work of our Treasurer, Dr. Derrick Shepard. He has worked diligently with the ACES and SACES leadership to ensure our funds are used ethically. His efforts in exploring investment opportunities for the SACES budget promise to bolster our scholarship and grant offerings. His leadership in assembling a talented Budget and Finance committee has been instrumental in these endeavors. ***CONTINUTED***

**MICHAEL JONES**
**SACES PRESIDENT**
**2023-2024**

*CON'T*

Finally, the preparation for our upcoming conference in Dallas, TX, is in full swing, thanks to the tireless dedication of Dr. Kori Babel, Dr. Isabel Farrell, and the entire conference committee. Their efforts are setting the stage for what promises to be an enriching and memorable event for all attendees.

These highlights represent just a fraction of the impactful work being undertaken within SACES. It is through the collective effort, dedication, and passion of our members that our organization continues to thrive. Thank you for your unwavering support and for being an integral part of our community. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of those we serve and shaping the future of counselor education and supervision.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Michael Jones, LPC-S, NCC, BC-TMH*

# 2023-2024 SACES LEADERSHIP

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**Special Committees**
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Journal Associate Editor: Christian Chan

# Call for Submissions: Summer 2024 Issue

The editorial team is seeking submissions for consideration in our Summer 2024 issue of the SACES Newsletter. The issue's theme is **Supervision: Advance the theory and practice of counselor supervision** Submissions must be between 500 and 800 words (not including references) and sent electronically as a Word document to newsletter@saces.org. Please include the author name(s), credentials, and affiliation(s) in the title page. Editorial staff request that authors submit photos in .jpg format as additional files (separate from the manuscript). Submissions must be received by **June 30, 2024**.

For questions or more information, please contact the editorial team at newsletter@saces.org.

The SACES Newsletter is a peer-reviewed publication of the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.

# SACES 2024 CONFERENCE -
# AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Events over the past few years have continued to highlight the importance of the professional counselors' workforce who can cultivate culturally responsive and healing relationships while simultaneously advocating for the protection of marginalized communities, counseling ethics, and counselors' scope of practice. These issues facing the U.S. are playing out on center stage in Texas, with the introduction or passage of many bills that directly affect LGBTQ+ communities, schools, and communities at large. You can read more about recent bills in this Texas Counseling Association Legislative Report.

In response to these legislative actions in Texas, several SACES members have asked: Should SACES go to Texas? Why would we support the economy of a state that is leading the way in suppressing marginalized communities and the counseling profession?

These questions are worthy of serious consideration. As we sat with these questions, we found ourselves weighing risks and opportunities to support and empower our Texas community.

Advocacy action is at the core of our counseling and counselor educator identity. Advocacy requires intentionality in our actions, and as an organization, we pondered how we can find ways to give space for those who need it while also building up a community of counselor educators and supervisors ready to address these issues in their programs and communities. In particular, when many states in the southern region are facing a legislative year in 2025 (such as Texas).

 So, what if you do choose to come to the conference? We ask you to come in the spirit of building a community of counselor educators and supervisors deeply committed to developing a workforce of counselors equipped to address the oppression within our communities and engage in advocacy action. In support of that commitment, you can expect to see the following initiatives integrated into the conference:

- Keynote panel addressing strategies on legislative advocacy as we prepare Texas and many states in the southern region for a legislative year in 2025.
- Dedicated social justice and diversity track.
- Returning to the community through a fundraiser to address the needs of a marginalized community in Dallas.
- Dedicated guide to help you understand opportunities for supporting restaurants and tourism owned by BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals who are invested in their community.

We hope you will choose to come to Dallas, build up our counselor education community, and invest in the local community. It is our vision that you will leave energized, enriched, and equipped with new tools for developing counselors responsive to parallel challenges in your own communities.

Isabel Farrell, SACES President-Elect
Michael Jones, SACES President
Hannah Bowers, SACES Past-President

# TEACHING AND SUPERVISION IN COUNSELING
*THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION*

Our editorial team is excited to share with you all Volume 5, Issue 2 of Teaching and Supervision in Counseling (TSC). In this issue are eight empirical and conceptual articles pertaining to counselor education and supervision, including:

"Using the Five Ps: Conceptualizing COVID-19-Related Mental Health Concerns" by Christine D. Gonzales-Wong and Scott Peters. https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/1

"Experiences of School Counseling Trainees in a Primary Care Integrated Behavioral Health Care Practicum" by Kaprea F. Johnson, Krystal L. Clemons, Lauren B. Robins, Alexandra Gantt-Howrey, Afroze N. Shaikh, and Heather A. Jones.
 https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/2

"Counseling Practicum Students' Experiences Working with Children with Learning Exceptionalities" by Kathryn Babb, Viki Kelchner, and Laurie Campbell.
 https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/3

**TEACHING AND
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"Exploring the Relationship Between the Supervisory Alliance and the Development of Reflexive Self-Awareness: A Mixed Methods Approach" by Alexandre Brien, Réginald Savard, Cynthia Bilodeau, and Patricia Dionne. https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/4

"Infusing Anarchist Pedagogy into Counselor Education" by Andrew Wood.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/5

"Teaching Trauma Theory and Practice in Counselor Education: A Multiple Case Study" by Charmayne R. Adams, Casey A. Barrio Minton, and Jennifer Hightower.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/6

"Mentorship in Counselor Education: A Scoping Review" by Gideon Litherland, Gretchen Schulthes, Edward Ewe, Kaj Kayij-Wint, and Kok-Mun Ng. https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/7

"Students' Perceptions of Grades and Grade Inflation in Counselor Training" by Daniel A. DeCino, Phillip L. Waalkes, and Steven Chesnut. https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol5/iss2/8

As an open access journal, all of these articles are freely available. TSC is the official journal of the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES), a region of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). The mission of SACES is to empower and support diverse counselor educators and supervisors in scholarship, advocacy, community, education, and supervision. The aim of TSC is to publish high quality scholarship that informs teaching, supervision, and mentoring in educational and clinical settings.
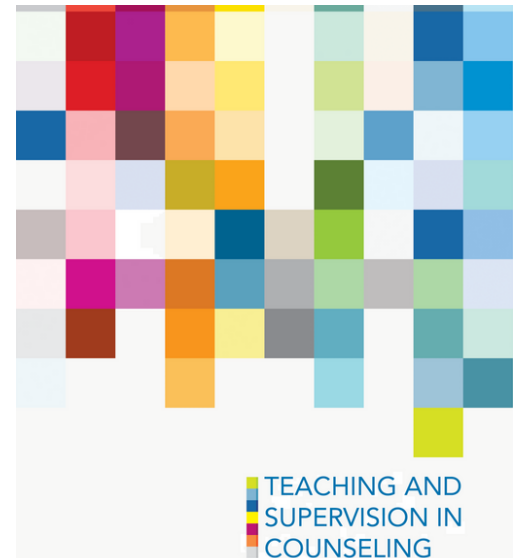
# TEACHING AND SUPERVISION IN COUNSELING
*THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION*

TSC invites manuscript submissions for consideration in upcoming issues of the journal. Manuscripts submitted to TSC fall within one of four categories: teaching, clinical supervision, mentorship, and current issues and topics relevant to the Southern Region of ACES. More information about these categories can be found on the journal's aims and scope page at https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/aimsandscope.html.

Articles may be empirical, conceptual or theoretical, or based on current issues; with an emphasis on empirical research. Articles must be scholarly, grounded in existing literature, and have implications for the counseling profession including, but not limited to, counselor education, supervisory practice, clinical training, pedagogy, mentoring, or advocacy and public policy. All manuscripts are submitted to a blinded peer-review process. Additionally, a goal of TSC is to provide mentoring to graduate students in the area of peer review and writing. Accordingly, graduate students are encouraged to submit manuscripts to TSC.

Quantitative and conceptual manuscripts should not exceed 25 double-spaced typewritten pages, and qualitative and mixed method manuscripts should not exceed 30 double-spaced typewritten pages. These page limits include title page, abstract, references, and all tables and figures in addition to the body of the manuscript. Current issues manuscripts should be between 10 to 15 pages in total length. The manuscripts should also be written according to the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual style, 7th edition, and APA Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS). More information about TSC's submission guidelines and policies is available at https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/policies.html.

Manuscripts can be submitted to https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/submit.cgi?context=tsc
If you have any questions, please contact us at tscjournal@saces.org

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# FOSTERING INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE: BRAVE SPACE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Our team facilitated a study during Spring 2023 in two graduate and two undergraduate courses at two institutions, with the aim to explore students' experiences in classroom environments during "difficult discussions." Our team embraced "brave space" practices by Arlo and Clemens (2013) to foster a comfortable yet challenging culture. The difficult discussions covered sensitive topics (i.e., racism, sexism, ableism, privilege, and oppression) serving as catalysts for students to confront biases and reassess their values (DesRochers, 2022). The "brave space" concept encouraged students to remain engaged in the face of discomfort, express challenging views, and listen empathetically (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Difficult discussions in higher education often serve as platforms for students to engage in dialogue surrounding sensitive topics (Watt, 2007). These challenging discussions can evoke emotions in students, challenging personal experiences, or preconceived notions (Wallin-Ruschman, 2018).

The impact of engaging in "difficult discussions" extends beyond emotions, influencing cognitive and behavioral responses. Exposure to diverse perspectives enhances critical thinking, understanding of social issues, and empathy (Case & Hunter, 2015). Navigating these discussions empowers students to develop confidence, communication skills, and advocacy for social justice (Gurin et al., 2002). Barriers and challenges, including cultural differences and power differentials, often hinder inclusive participation, leading to emotional labor and potential burnout (Denson & Chang, 2019; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). In addressing these complexities, educators and institutions must adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches, establish ground rules, actively listen, and manage power dynamics within the classroom (Chan et al., 2015). Incorporating diverse perspectives into

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the curriculum and providing training/resources for instructors are essential (Ratts et al. 2015). Addressing systemic inequalities within higher education is crucial for creating truly inclusive learning environments (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Our research utilized Braun and Clarke's (2021) four-step reflexive thematic analysis (e.g., collecting data, coding processes, generating initial themes, and developing/reviewing themes) to analyze qualitative focus group data at the conclusion of the Spring 2023 semester. Upon initial review, our focus group results underscored the positive influence of the "brave space" concept. For instance, students articulated the role brave spaces have in fostering authentic conversations and enhancing comfort levels when addressing controversial topics. One student's reflection encapsulates this sentiment: "*I have never been in a class where everyone was so comfortable discussing such controversial and heated topics*." Another student highlighted the importance of the professor's reminder about "brave space," stating, "*Speaking for yourself and not for others makes others feel more comfortable to speak and tell their stories*." Another student echoed this sentiment, affirming the importance of the "brave space" concept: "*I know that I never would have felt as comfortable talking about these things if it weren't for the inclusion of brave space*." These insights reinforce the significance of creating an environment where students feel safe, heard, and encouraged to engage in difficult discussions. Through the lens of the "brave space" concept, the instructor's introduction and review not only facilitated authentic conversations but also significantly enhanced students' comfort levels when confronting sensitive topics. This integration underscores the importance of creating spaces where students feel supported, validated, and empowered to actively participate in discussions that challenge their perspectives, thus fostering a culture of open dialogue and critical engagement.

Overall, this exploration into "difficult discussions" and the use of "brave spaces" within higher education classrooms provides valuable insights relevant to the development of counselors, particularly the potential to enhance cultural competence when working with diverse clients. Understanding the nuances of difficult discussions and their impact on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses is essential in providing effective support (Day-Vines et al., 2018). By

acknowledging the diverse emotional responses elicited by these discussions, counselors can tailor their interventions to address the unique needs of clients from varying backgrounds. Furthermore, counselors can draw from the strategies employed by instructors in creating inclusive learning environments, such as establishing clear ground rules for respectful discourse, actively listening to diverse perspectives, and managing power dynamics. Incorporating diverse perspectives into counseling sessions and providing counselors with training and resources to facilitate challenging conversations can further enhance their cultural competence and effectiveness in supporting clients navigating complex social issues. By integrating these insights into their practice, counselors can play a pivotal role in fostering constructive dialogue and promoting social justice with their clients.

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# USING A CULTURAL HUMILITY FRAMEWORK FOR LGBTGEQIAP+ AFFIRMING COUNSELING TRAINING

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Although enhanced visibility has created more space for LGBTGEQIAP+ ways of being over the past few decades, anti-LGBTGEQIAP+ discourse, legislation, and acts of violence have increased in the U.S. in recent years. However, the number of LGBTGEQIAP+ Americans who self-realize their sexual, affectional, and gender expansive identities continues to increase, especially among younger generations (Jones, 2023). LGBTGEQIAP+ people continue to engage in advocacy, celebration, and community (Singh et al., 2023), drawing upon their strengths and resiliency despite the spike in anti-LGBTGEQIAP+ sentiments in the U.S. The sociopolitical environment still has detrimental effects for many LGBTGEQIAP+ people, and marginalization stress contributes to higher risk for mental health and substance abuse concerns over LGBTGEQIAP+ people's lifespans (Hope et al., 2022). Hence, LGBTGEQIAP+ people seek counseling at higher rates than the general public (Pachankis et al., 2022). Counselors will encounter LGBTGEQIAP+ clients in their practice and need to be versed in LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming counseling to support clients' resiliency in their exploration and expression of LGBTGEQIAP+ ways of being while living in a cisnormative and heteronormative society.

**Importance of a Cultural Humility Framework**

Recent shifts in multicultural training accentuate cultural humility rather than cultural competence. Cultural humility is a process-oriented approach grounded in learning how to care for diverse clients from clients themselves, whereas cultural competence centers the counselors' learning and self-efficacy in working with diverse populations (Lekas et al., 2020). Rather than assuming that counselors can become proficient in working with diverse populations, cultural humility models center critical introspection, curiosity, ongoing learning, and social justice advocacy as necessities for offering culturally responsive care (Botelho & Lima, 2020;

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Freeman-Coppadge & Langroudi, 2021; Lekas et al., 2020). An example of a culturally humble approach to counseling LGBTGEQIAP+ clients would be to support clients' self-empowerment and self-advocacy, fostering clients' internal locus of control and valuation in response to contextual factors. Contrast this to a cultural competency approach of "empowering" our clients, which may reinforce clients' external locus of control and seeking valuation outside of themselves. "Empowering" our clients suggests we as counselors are giving them the strength or authority to make changes in their lives versus acknowledging this power and resiliency already exists within our clients and LGBTGEQIAP+ communities. As LGBTGEQIAP+ ways of being are multifaceted, pluralistic, and constantly evolving, a cultural humility framework is essential to training counselors in LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming counseling.

**Considerations for Counselor Educators**

To start, counselor educators must do our own critical introspection, seek out our own training in LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming counseling, and commit to allyship behavior to change the trajectory of LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming counseling training in our profession. Counselor educators establish affirming environments at the program level by clearly integrating LGBTGEQIAP+ identities into social justice program and classroom policies, broaching cultural differences in the classroom and supervision, developing and modeling accountability practices (e.g., how to repair cultural ruptures), and promoting LGBTGEQIAP+ persons to leadership positions. Moreover, faculty collectively can review a course crosswalk to ensure LGBTGEQIAP+ content is integrated into each master's and doctoral level course. We provide the following suggestions and concrete examples for grounding LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming counseling training within a cultural humility framework. The strategies below are based on recent literature (Bettergarcia et al., 2021; Hope et al., 2022; Pachankis et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2023), as well as the authors' professional experience and current research (Pope et al., 2024a, 2024b):

- Design educational content from a process-oriented approach
  - Use interactive journaling methods between the educator and trainee to promote ongoing learning and self-reflection
  - Model power-balanced relationships with trainees, such as using their feedback and input to inform course content
- Consider how to disrupt dominant social discourses
  - Include content on gender diversity prior to sexual/affectional diversity

  - Provide examples of international advocacy as alternate models to Eurocentric advocacy practices
  - Encourage critical examination of the inclusion of gender dysphoria as a mental disorder in the DSM-5-TR
- Emphasize intersectionality and first-person lived experiences of LGBTGEQIAP+ communities
  - Center experiences from queer people of color, including major historical figures like Bayard Rustin and Slyvia Riveria
  - Review the intersectional history of LGBTGEQIAP+ communities (e.g., indigenous gender identities prior to colonization)
  - Use multimedia that highlights the lived experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized backgrounds (e.g., a neurodiverse nonbinary individual adjusting to college)
- Promote trainees' critical introspection
  - Integrate identity development journeys and power/privilege exploration
- Emphasize the strengths and resiliency of LGBTGEQIAP+ communities
  - Discuss resiliency alongside marginalization stress
  - Use strengths-based vs. deficit-based language (e.g., gender euphoria vs. gender dysphoria, inviting in vs. coming out)
  - Highlight the importance of social connection, such as families of choice, counseling and support groups, and community healing practices
- Include experiential learning activities
  - Practice responding to microaggressions
  - Write an LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming self-disclosure statement
- Use advocacy models that emphasize intersectionality and self-empowerment, such as the Intersectional Advocacy Counseling Framework (Astramovich & Scott, 2020)
- Integrate sociopolitical advocacy opportunities
  - Develop LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming workplace policies
  - Create a statement for delivery at local legislative or school board sessions
  - Attend advocacy days at local or state legislatures
- Encourage involvement in LGBTGEQIAP+ spaces
  - Attend Pride events or PFLAG meetings
  - Listen to established LGBTGEQIAP+ content creators

**Conclusion**

We as counselor educators are responsible for demonstrating our own critical reflection, commitment to ongoing learning, and social justice advocacy through our behaviors, serving as models for the behaviors we want to promote in our trainees (Pope et al., 2024b). Infusing LGBTGEQIAP+ affirming practices start at a program level when counselor educators display cultural humility through their own actions. Even small changes in our course content, such as including stories, videos, or guest speakers representative of diverse

LGBTGEQIAP+ communities, decenters us as the experts and centers the lived experiences of LGBTGEQIAP+ people to foster trainees' learning. The foundation of affirming counseling is holding space for our clients to explore themselves, their multifaceted identities, and ways of being, so they can show up more authentically in their lives (Pope et al., 2024b). When we create space in our programs and classrooms for LGBTGEQIAP+ expressions coupled with fostering trainees' curiosity and critical introspection, we lay the groundwork for future counselors to deliver person-centered and affirming care to LGBTGEQIAP+ clients.

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# FROM ANXIETY TO ASSURANCE:
# HOW TEACHING ASSISTANT-LED LABS ADDRESSES COUNSELING STUDENT'S ANXIETY IN STATISTICS

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Statistics courses often elicit significant anxiety and stress among Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) doctoral students. To quell anxiety, the instructors on record developed six lab activities designed to be facilitated by teaching assistants (TA) for a CES doctoral statistics course. The labs were designed to provide practical application of the course content with the goal of enhancing the critical thinking and analysis skills of students. Each lab activity required students to utilize quantitative research design elements to appropriately select and utilize statistical analysis, including the use of Jeffrey's Amazing Statistical Package (JASP, 2024) and G*Power (Faul et al., 2007).

The lab activities included 15 - 20 multiple-choice question assignments housed in the institution's learning management system. The activities were self-graded and provided students with immediate feedback. The TAs received a tutorial video reviewing the practical application solutions and the correct answers to the remaining conceptual questions to help prepare them for the effective facilitation of each lab group session. During the two-hour lab group sessions, students worked in small groups of three to five students with the facilitation and support of their TA to complete the assigned lab activities. Introductory lab questions asked students to input data, select and run appropriate statistical analyses, test assumptions, and review and interpret results. The remaining questions required students to demonstrate conceptual understanding and application of the week's course material.

Empirical evidence suggests that students in non-mathematical disciplines (e.g., social sciences) regard statistics courses as the most anxiety-inducing course in their degree program (Chew & Dillon, 2014). According to McIntee et al. (2022), statistical anxiety can be identified in several key
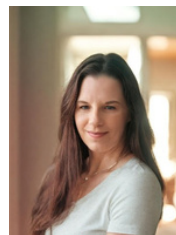
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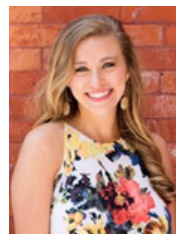


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areas in the learning environment: anxiety of asking for help, anxiety of evaluation, and anxiety of interpretation. The TA-led labs created opportunities for these areas to be addressed more efficiently and effectively than in a larger classroom setting with traditional pedagogical approaches.

Historically, statistics courses have primarily been taught using a didactic lecturing approach, exacerbating a common fallacy that statistics courses are to be feared, difficult, or boring (Breitenbach, 2016; Davies, 2021; Gordon, 2004). Only recently have instructional designs been modified to include group work and collaborative assignments (Jones & Palmer, 2020), including teaching assistants and tutoring practices aimed at producing better student outcomes and perceptions toward statistics (Budé et al., 2009). The authors have recently experienced the utilization of TA-led labs and their effectiveness in reducing anxiety and improving student outcomes. These labs incorporate active learning strategies, such as group work and collaborative assignments, which provide students with opportunities to engage with the material and receive feedback from peers and TAs.

**Benefits of TA-led Statistic labs**

Guardiola et al. (2010) found that statistics labs are a valuable tool in enhancing student outcomes. These labs can offer emotional check-in, scaling questions for comfort with current lab material, shared teaching roles, and practical application of course material. Student roles in the lab may include lab quiz facilitator, notetaker, reference searcher, or assumption gatherer. While not always possible, rotating these roles allows students various levels of leadership in the learning process. During labs, the teaching assistant guides the group by managing time restraints, clarifying answers, summarizing lingering questions, providing clarity on statistical analyses, and encouraging students.

When students can work with other students and receive support from a TA, they may feel less anxious about the material and more confident in their ability to succeed. TA-led labs improve student learning by facilitating active engagement with the material and encouraging collaborative problem-solving, which can strengthen student understanding and improve learning outcomes. TA-led labs foster a sense of community among students. Working in a lab setting allows students to connect with other students and develop relationships that can be beneficial both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the implementation of TA-led statistics labs for doctoral counseling students represents an innovative approach utilizing various resources to alleviate student anxiety and improve student outcomes. These labs address key areas of statistical anxiety more effectively than traditional teaching approaches by engaging the learners and enhancing the community through direct contact with peer support. Counselor educators can explore and integrate such innovative pedagogical approaches in hopes of facilitating the success and well-being of counseling students navigating the challenges of statistical courses. Ultimately, the TA-led statistics labs reduced anxiety, strengthened student learning, improved learning outcomes, and fostered community.

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# PREPARING SCHOOL COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING TO SERVE BLACK GIFTED STUDENTS: BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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Black students are often underrepresented within gifted programming and unidentified for gifted screening or services (Luckey Goudelock & Grantham, 2023; NAGC Board of Directors, 2020). Thus, it is imperative that school counselor educators (SCEs) inform school counselors-in-training (SCITs) of this educational disparity, emphasize their ethical obligation for advocacy, and prepare them to explore gifted Black students' educational and social/emotional needs in a culturally responsive manner.

**Underrepresentation**

Underrepresentation impacts gifted Black students and the lack of diversity within gifted programs (Ford et al., 2023, Peters, 2022). Only 277,000 Black students were identified as gifted in 2016 (Gentry et al., 2022), signaling that three out of four never get identified (Sparks, 2022). These statistics are especially alarming considering that there are approximately 7.4 million Black students in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This low enrollment highlights the racial disparity that has plagued gifted programs since the 1970s (Peters, 2022). Researchers contend that such underrepresentation is the result of segregationist practices that promote racism and marginalization within education for Black students (Ford & King, 2014).

**Bias**

Black students are more likely to be referred for gifted services, and tend to perform better, when they have teachers of the same racial background (Grissom & Redding, 2016). When gifted Black students encounter teachers who are not culturally competent or knowledgeable about diverse learning styles, their behaviors are seen as problems rather than characteristics of giftedness (Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014). Aside from teacher bias, gifted Black students also encounter culturally biased testing when seeking admission into gifted programs (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Luckey Goudelock & Grantham, 2023). For example, test questions that include words or phrases that are not common to students' culture or their usual communication style contribute to scoring disparities and inequities within gifted programs.

**Mental Health**

Gifted Black students often experience negative effects on their mental health when their giftedness is misunderstood or devalued in school. When their academic, social/emotional, and psychological needs are overlooked, gifted Black students may become unmotivated and disengaged (Clemons & Mayes, in press; Ford et al., 2023; Luckey Goudelock & Grantham, 2023; Stambaugh & Ford, 2015). As a result, they often receive unwarranted consequences such as discipline, misdiagnoses, and referrals to special education (Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014). Furthermore, gifted Black students often experience microaggressions (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015), social isolation, depression, and anxiety (Clemons & Cokley, 2022; Ford et al., 2023).

**Ethics**

The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) Ethical Standards (2022) reveal how professional school counselors (PSCs) should meet the needs of all students, including those who are members of marginalized groups. PSCs must advocate for students



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by ensuring that they are not discriminated against due to race or any exceptionality (A.10.f). Moreover, PSCs must advocate for students to have access to, and inclusion within, accelerated programs without being excluded on the basis of race or other cultural factors (A.10.g). When disparities exist, PSCs should advocate for systemic change (A.10.h).

**Recommendations**

Since many school counseling preparation programs do not provide SCITs with specific training to serve gifted students or gifted students from marginalized groups (Ford et al., 2023; Peters & Morris, 2010) the authors provide SCEs with the following recommendations.

- Encourage SCITs to reflect on their own cultural background as well as their biases and assumptions related to gifted Black students. (e.g., "When you think of gifted Black students, write down the thoughts that come to mind.")
- Ensure that SCITs understand their obligation to foster academic, career, and social/emotional development for all students, including those who are often marginalized by educational systems.
- Discuss key terms with SCITs such as "neurodiversity" and "twice exceptional" as they relate to gifted Black students.
- Teach SCITs to use school data to identify disparities that impact gifted Black students (e.g., low enrollment in accelerated courses).
- Introduce SCITs to case conceptualizations that involve gifted Black students and assist them in developing appropriate interventions.
- Provide opportunities for SCITs to connect with gifted Black students to understand their experiences.
- Strategize ways that SCITs can foster school connectedness for gifted Black students (e.g., mentorships).
- Require SCITs to develop a presentation to educate others about gifted Black students.
- Urge SCITs to challenge inequitable policies and procedures within gifted programs (e.g., biased tests).
- Provide SCITs with tools to address microaggressions and other acts of oppression (e.g., specialized training and guest speakers).
- Expand the knowledge of SCITs by incorporating content into coursework around learning styles, multiple intelligences, and different areas of giftedness.

- Teach SCITs to identify indicators of giftedness aside from testing (e.g., advanced communication skills).

When SCITs are equipped to meet the needs of gifted Black students, they can foster more inclusive school communities and positively impact their social/emotional health and wellness.

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# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION: ENHANCING COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING COMPETENCE FOR WORKING WITH LOW SOCIOECONOMIC CLIENTS

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The number of people living in poverty in the United States in 2022 was 37.9 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Research shows that low-income clients are two to three times more likely to exhibit psychological distress than their middle- and upper-class counterparts (East et al., 2016). Therefore, it is essential to understand how counselors are trained to provide services to these clients. Current research suggests that many factors impact the ability of counselors to provide services to people living in poverty, including counselors' attitudes about persons living in poverty, their beliefs about the factors contributing to poverty, and their own family of origin's socioeconomic status (Kitchens et al., 2020; Parikh et al., 2013; Parikh et al., 2011; Ricks et al., 2020; Sturm, 2008). Counselors may make false assumptions about clients living in poverty when the counselor infers the causes of the clients' problems (Kitchens et al., 2020; Ricks et al., 2020; Sturm, 2008). Research among counselors has suggested that counselors may even perceive clients from low socioeconomic backgrounds as having a less promising future than other clients (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008). To address counselors-in-training (CITs) beliefs and attitudes towards individuals living in poverty, counselor educator programs must provide multicultural experiences specifically related to increasing student knowledge of poverty-related competencies. The Council of Accredited Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2023) requires counselor education programs to implement multicultural competencies as one of the core curriculum areas but fails to provide guidance on how to infuse it into the curriculum (Standards 3.A and 3.B). Many counselor education programs implement multicultural training for CITs in either a single course or an infused curriculum design, which addresses multicultural issues across the curriculum (Dameron et al., 2020). CITs who were trained in an infused multicultural curriculum have been shown to have higher perceived awareness, knowledge, and skills compared with those who took a single multicultural course (Dameron et al., 2020). Counselor education programs that adopt a more infused curriculum design can help promote counselors who are more equipped to enter the community

prepared to work with low-income clients and diverse populations. Counselor education programs can also work to adopt pedagogical approaches enforcing both direct exposure and self-reflection (rather than passive knowledge attainment) to best facilitate CITs' multicultural knowledge of self and others' cultural backgrounds and identity compositions (Killians & Floren, 2020).

Projects that promote direct exposure may include the implementation of advocacy projects, placement during internship or practicum experiences at low-income schools or community agencies, service projects in low socioeconomic areas, and course simulation projects when field experience is not available (Barna, 2020; Hsieh & Chen, 2018; Ramirez, 2023). Although these experiences may look different in various counselor education programs, advocacy projects

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could include engaging in advocacy events within the local community, presenting at school board meetings, presenting at city council meetings, or writing an advocacy letter to local leaders. Service projects could include immersion trips to low-income agencies or regions; volunteering in organizations serving low-income individuals; engaging in disaster response; or developing and/or presenting at local workshops addressing mental health issues. Simulation projects could include scenarios on providing mental health counseling to clients living in poverty, navigating low-income clients' access to mental health services, or balancing family needs while living in poverty. After engagement in poverty-related activities, it can be beneficial to have students reflect on their experiences and reactions to the events through recording their experiences, class/group discussion and/or journaling (Barna, 2020; Killians & Floren, 2020).

Regardless of the single course or infused course curriculum, CITs should be introduced to multicultural course content at the beginning of the counselor education program to help shape the academic lens through which the CITs view the curriculum (Celinska & Swazo, 2016). Counselor education programs should continue to examine their course design and pedagogical approaches to ensure CITs are prepared to work with and advocate for diverse populations upon graduation. Moreover, through direct exposure to working with low-income and diverse populations in counselor education programs, CITs will be better prepared to engage in leadership programs addressing the unique needs of this population. Assessing the effectiveness of course design can be accomplished through pre- and post-course assessments; end-of-program assessments or surveys; and by assessing the perceptions of site supervisors of internship students as part of the midterm and final evaluations. Additionally, counselor education programs should review their program's scores on national counselor examinations.

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# THE POWER OF THE NEURODIVERSITY PERSPECTIVE: HOW A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH CAN IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

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Neurodiversity includes a wide spectrum of brain-based disabilities from neurodevelopmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and learning disabilities as well as any altered brain state or structure such as traumatic brain injuries, anxiety, mood disorders, and schizophrenia. From this perspective, "diversity among brains is just as wonderfully enriching as biodiversity and diversity among cultures and races." (Armstrong, 2010, p. 3).

The Neurodiversity Movement is a part of the Disability Rights Movement. Members of disability rights activist organizations like the Autism Self Advocacy Network view disability as a natural part of human diversity and believe that our society is set up in a way that excludes people with disabilities. The social model of disability posits that instead of trying to fix disabled people, we should work to make sure people with disabilities can access what they need (Olkin, 2002). This perspective is a crucial and substantiative shift from the medical model which was built on the premise that disability is an impairment in a body system or function that is inherently pathological. From the medical perspective, the goal is to return the system or function to as close to normal as possible. The result of this model is that professionals are viewed as disability experts, and those with a disability are expected to follow the advice of these experts (Olkin, 2002).

In counseling, a neurodiversity-affirming lens means that a therapist must view each client as an expert on their own experience. The clinician must be open to the experience of their client and learn from neurodivergent communities when determining the most appropriate language, treatment intervention, and resources (Pantazakos, 2023). They must not try to "normalize" neurodivergent people or have them conform to neurotypical expectations. Neurodivergent-affirming care means that clinicians must shift from a framework of pathology to a strengths-based model that embraces well-being, self-determination, validation, and self-advocacy (Grant, 2023; Pantazakos, 2023).

Counselor educators have a responsibility to address these issues in the classroom. First, there is the personal work of examining one's own biases and presuppositions about neurodivergent individuals. Then, counselor educators can help students do the same by promoting a neurodiversity-affirming perspective in didactic and clinical classes. In the remainder of this article, we discuss some brief implications for counselor educators and supervisors and provide additional resources in the references and recommended resources section.

One important starting place is to emphasize the role of ableism in the challenges neurodivergent people face. Counselor educators can apply Meyers' (2003) minority stress theory, which was originally developed for gay and lesbian individuals. Meyers suggested it was not a minoritized status itself that led to mental health concerns but rather the stressors associated with societal ignorance and oppression. Lack of understanding of the unique communication styles, emotional needs, and sensitivities of neurodivergent persons, for example, leads to deficit-based diagnosis, misunderstanding, and interventions that try to change the individual rather than listen to what that individual says they need (Curnow et al., 2023). Together, these experiences can

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erode a person's mental health. Certain classes such as diversity and lifespan development lend themselves to this discussion, but these concepts can be integrated into any class.

Assessment and diagnosis are other areas of the curriculum that would be enhanced by a neurodiversity-affirming framework. While a diagnosis can be helpful for many individuals in obtaining useful services/accommodations and in beginning to work through some of their own internalized ableism, many diagnostic processes can focus primarily on problems and weaknesses and may further pathologize the individual (Jones, 2016). Counselor educators can talk with students about utilizing assessments that address both challenges and strengths as well as how to talk with clients about the purpose and social meaning of diagnosis. In addition, counselors can help students be aware of inequity in access to diagnosis as it can be a costly procedure, especially for adults. Further, due to sensory, executive functioning, social, and communication differences, neurodivergent individuals may engage in behavior that is perceived as disruptive or aggressive and the focus of diagnosis may be on their behavioral concerns (Jones, 2016). This is a particular risk for Black and Brown children and adolescents.

A third area where a neurodiversity-affirming framework can be readily integrated is in discussions, and supervision related to therapeutic interventions and the therapeutic relationship. Depending on the unique cognitive and intrapersonal characteristics of the client, some counseling interventions, particularly cognitive ones, may not be a good fit without substantial modification (Curnow et al., 2023; Pantazakos, 2023). Relational therapies are uniquely positioned to address challenges connecting with others, a common difficulty for some neurodivergent individuals (Pantazakos, 2023). Further, counselor educators and supervisors can discuss the benefits of empowering neurodivergent clients by focusing on client-directed goals, acknowledging strengths, and using reflective listening to build interoceptive skills.

Finally, it is important for counselor educators to include neurodivergent voices in the form of speakers and authors, and consider the intersectionality of diverse identities. A neurodiversity-affirming framework emphasizes some key values in the counseling profession: client autonomy, holistic wellness, individual development, and social justice. When counselor educators integrate this framework into their teaching, they help their students grow and move the profession toward more inclusivity.

**Recommended Resources:**

1. Conversations | A neurodivergent podcast. (n.d.). https://www.divergentpod.com/

2. Embrace Autism. (2022, June 30). Embrace Autism | The ultimate autism resource. https://embrace-autism.com/

3. Henderson, D. A. (2023). Is this autism? : A guide for clinicians and everyone else (S. C. Wayland & J. White, Eds.). Routledge.

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# BEYOND THE BOOKS: TACKLING THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Between 2016 and 2021, mental health issues have increased by 25 to 41 percent among students. Major issues include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-harm (Marks & Bryant, 2022). Students studying in the humanities, the arts, and architecture are particularly vulnerable to anxiety and depression (Posset, 2021). These mental health issues are caused by many internal and external factors, additionally, the training and resources that are being offered to address these issues are inadequate (Ramluggun et al., 2022). In response, there has been a significant increase in cases of anxiety across campuses (Marks & Bryant, 2022). Additionally, faculty in higher education are becoming increasingly overburdened, and adequate programs are lacking when it comes to addressing mental health issues (Ramluggun et al., 2022). This article discusses the potential solutions to some of the most common challenges identified by faculty and students since this mental health crisis began in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Causes of Mental Health Crisis**

As a result of budget cuts during and following 2020, many universities have increased their class sizes. By increasing the number of students per class, faculty cannot provide individual attention to each student, and students cannot bond with one another, which induces social isolation, depression, and loneliness (Vogt & Johnson, 2022). Authors noted that academic pressure, workload, financial stress, and transitions and adjustment difficulties also contributed to the mental health crises. It is difficult for students to participate in extracurricular activities or social gatherings when they are overloaded with assignments.

In addition to stigmatizing mental health, graduate students avoid discrimination by omitting information about their mental health in advisory meetings (Posset, 2021). When the student finally seeks treatment, they may already be at the height of their mental health crisis. As a result, it is statistically unlikely that students needing help will receive it (Ramluggun et al., 2022). This challenge can result in a student relapsing into mental illness.

**Why the Current Implemented Systems Do Not Help**

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found that 64% of college students dropped out because of mental health issues. Son et al., (2024) found that the majority of students surveyed with a mental health struggle did not seek services due to several reasons including lack of trust in a stranger, the stigma around mental health, and not viewing their struggles as "severe enough" (Son et al., 2024. p. 11). Since faculty are short-staffed and no one is assigned to each student, advice and help are inconsistent (Ramluggun et al., 2022). In the absence of adequate funding, faculty members are overburdened, which results in lengthy delays in providing assistance to students (Ramluggun et al., 2022).

Increasing demands for mental health assistance have led faculty members to become primary resources for addressing psychological challenges. This might surpass the accessibility of the university support services (Ramluggun et al., 2022). However, while faculty members are willing to assist, their expertise and support might be insufficient to address the complex mental health issues. Students' personal stories and struggles can also induce stress and emotional strain among faculty members (Ramluggun et al., 2022). Furthermore, faculty may be vulnerable to their own mental health issues due to role conflicts and the demands of their profession (Possett, 2021). Despite the current mental health crisis, it is crucial to implement recommendations to assist students and faculty within higher education.

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**Strategies for Addressing Mental Health Concerns**

One of the effective strategies involves using tuition insurance coverage to facilitate affordable and accessible mental health support. Through virtual counseling services, both students and faculty can access mental health counseling readily. Additionally, the establishment of dedicated mental health officers or task forces within academic institutions can be valuable (Black, 2024).

Another recommendation is to promote mental health awareness and destigmatize mental health disorders. As proposed by Schwarz (2024), there is a need to incorporate information about mental health resources on student ID cards. This can assist in reducing stigma, allowing students to feel more supported.

The third recommendation is to provide proactive measures such as stress management workshops, counseling sessions, and peer support groups, as suggested by Schwarz (2024). Furthermore, to manage the workload, introducing "nap pods" on campus could be a viable solution. Research by Summer and Singh (2024) confirmed that short naps can boost energy levels, whereas, lack of sleep can increase anxiety, depression, and performance problems (Koppell, 2023).

The discussion concluded that there is a need to focus urgent attention and interventions to respond to the mental health crisis in higher education (Zhai, 2020). The current systems are not sufficient to address the growing mental health needs of students (Son et al., 2020). Hence, prioritization of mental health awareness, and providing accessible resources should be the first priority for policymakers and educational institutions. Tuition insurance coverage for virtual counseling, establishment of dedicated mental health officers, and incorporation of mental health resources on student ID cards are helpful strategies. Additionally, proactive measures like stress management workshops and "nap pods" can have a positive impact on students' well-being and academic performance. Hence, policymakers can ensure the well-being of all individuals within higher education, providing students and faculty with adequate mental health support. It is only through our collective effort that the current mental health crisis in higher education can be stopped from progressing further.

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