

Philosophy of Education

I believe that all counseling should be considered humanistic at its foundation.

Person-centered models should underlie all further models, and any model which holds confounding stances (e.g. the use of purposely initiated discomfort and heightened risk for dissociation during exposure therapy), should have thorough and empirically grounded reasoning for such stances. I draw counselors-in-training (CIT's) to first examine the person-centered lens as their "foundational" theory from which to build all other theories.

My students learn best from play, not punishment. I want people to learn effectively, so I create safety in my classrooms. Teaching counseling skills, theories, and dispositions holds risk to the counselor-in-training. The instructor is responsible for creating safe, trauma-informed environments which reduce anxiety of counselors-in-training. While Derrida's *différance* and **bifurcation** provides insight into the breakdown of language and leaves the teacher as an impossible position, I think bifurcation can be used to create humor and joy in the classroom by creating breaks in observing the systematic, internally consistent truth of language. Some methods I have utilized to enhance the learning environment by creating both safety and humor include utilizing visual diagrams to describe learning goals and progress, providing up-front information about class expectations, attending to student cues of overwhelm during class, and trainer modeling of flexibility. When teaching Principles of Helping at University of Buffalo (AKA Prepracticum Skills), I used the visual diagram to create a mind-map of categories of skills that would be covered in class (CITE ARTICLE). We reviewed those mind-maps at different points in the semester as an anchor to build understanding, and I believe this activity assisted in clarifying expectations and thus reducing student anxiousness.

In my theory of counselor development, I believe that CIT's must actively work during class and outside of class to increase mindfulness, congruence, self-care, emotional maturity, and other personal factors which are required of the counselor ("dispositions"). To me, this is the total developmental and holistic approach to counselor education. I believe that counseling is a highly specialized field and that the heightened sense of attention and sensitivity cannot be taught only in the classroom and requires a significant engagement in all contexts.

I think that some people are not equipped to become counselors, for a variety of reasons. Counselor educators should have a clear vision of exactly which determinants may exclude someone from becoming a counselor, including but not limited to: emotional/empathic aptitude, ethical and moral stances, mental health stability, and personal histories. Inherent to the developmental humanistic model is that people can change and grow. In cases where individuals meet all but some requirements, I would want to participate with a team that creates fair systems to reduce bias in evaluating these students, while also protecting the community from harm. As a counselor educator, the potential for a "rogue" counselor providing services with no basis in the field's general attitudes would be a worst-case scenario. In response to this possibility, I teach in a fashion that strongly encourages an ethically responsible professional worldview.

In contrast to stringent standardization and gatekeeping, I agree with Dewey and Kolb that students should create their own learning experiences. Student self-direction remains an important value in my classroom. Wherever possible, I remind students that they might consider "shopping around" for a theoretical lens, and that they also might consider selecting paper and project topics for this purpose.

Mindfulness is a helpful factor in counselor education. This practice includes taking concrete, actionable steps to integrating present-moment awareness into homework, classroom activities, and faculty meetings. Mindfulness provides a universal philosophy for counselors to discover the necessary factors of awareness which allows for constructive emotional processing, stress reduction and self-care, reflective practice, and the use of process-based interventions. Mindfulness within a counselor education program should be considerate of individual needs and learning styles (e.g. some students may be less comfortable shutting their eyes, or laying on the ground for a body scan activity), and these methods must always occur with trauma-informed and accessibility considerations.

To summarize, my instructional design is informed by phenomenology, humanism, social constructivism, deconstructionism and bifurcation, and developmental models. In some ways, the instructor reflects the practitioner as a beacon of hope and transferential object from which the students begin to understand the counseling mindset.