

The need for a greater focus on pedagogical theory in counselor education is clear. A 10-year content analysis of articles published on pedagogy in *Counselor Education and Supervision* highlighted the focus on teaching techniques, coupled with a significant gap in attention to pedagogical theory (Barrio Minton et al., 2014). In a more recent review of literature published between 2011 and 2015, Barrio Minton and colleagues (2018) found an increase in the number of articles grounded in theory or research, although nearly half of the articles published on pedagogy were still grounded in concepts such as competency standards. The current editor of *Counselor Education and Supervision* highlighted the gap in literature addressing pedagogy, stating “the one topic remarkably absent in the literature published in *CES*, a journal about counselor education, is pedagogy” (Korcuska, 2016, p. 156). Despite the importance for counselor educators to establish a theory of pedagogy, little has been written in this area.

There has been ample attention paid to different approaches to teaching course material in counselor education programs. For example, suggestions for incorporating religion and spirituality (Adams et al., 2015), teaching empathy (Bayne & Jangha, 2016), incorporating a social justice perspective (Brubaker et al., 2010), attending to grief and loss issues (Doughty Horn et al., 2013), encouraging reflective thinking (Griffith & Frieden, 2000), facilitating the development of group leadership skills through the use of film (Moe et al., 2014), and training for the assessment of nonsuicidal self-injury (Rutt et al., 2016). In contrast to the relatively large number of ideas about how to teach or incorporate specific content, literature tying these ideas to specific pedagogy is scant. It is perhaps not surprising then that respondents in a recent qualitative study of counselor education doctoral students reported that their doctoral studies did not adequately prepare them for teaching (Waalkes et al., 2018). More specifically, participants in this study reported lack of preparation in pedagogy.

Although having instructional strategies for teaching a variety of elements in the counselor education curriculum is necessary and helpful for instructors, instructors would further benefit from anchoring these techniques to a pedagogical theory. Consider the analogy to the relationship between counseling techniques and counseling theory. Using a variety of instructional strategies without an intentional pedagogical theory would be similar to teaching counseling students specific interventions without helping them develop any knowledge of theory and how theory informs their counseling interventions. Though students do need to learn specific intervention strategies, counselors have an ethical responsibility to use practices grounded in theory (ACA, 2014). Similarly, it is critical that educators have a pedagogical theory informing their classroom interventions. Barrio Minton and colleagues (2014) made this point by saying as an “understanding of counseling theory might help clinicians understand why specific techniques are appropriate, the integration of broader pedagogical concepts might help counselor educators build intentional foundations rather than rely on “bags-of-tricks” articles to design instructional activities and assignments” (p. 173). Just as there are numerous theories in counseling and no one theory fits for every counselor or every client, instructors may be skeptical of an argument defending a universal, monolithic theory for all diverse counselor educators. However, the pedagogical theory defended herein is sufficiently pluralistic and experimental to assuage the concern that no one pedagogical theory will fit for every instructor or every student.

In this paper, we will provide a brief overview of John Dewey’s philosophy of education, pedagogical theory, and teaching techniques that align with both. In order to do so, we must define our terms. Philosophy of education is a broad theoretical reflection on the nature, purpose, and function of education both macrocosmically and microcosmically. Macrocosmically, philosophy of education addresses issues such as the relationship between schools and society.

Microcosmically, philosophy of education approaches pedagogical theory, a theoretical reflection on the nature of teaching and learning. At the most specific level of analysis, we address pedagogy itself, involving teaching techniques that align with and are derived from a pedagogical theory. Thus, after introducing Dewey's philosophy of education from the perspective of his early "Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology", we will offer specific examples of how counselor educators can use Dewey's work to inform their teaching. We will also attend to challenges to both instructors and students in implementation. One note concerning our approach is in order. We will consistently use analogs in the activity of counseling in order to illustrate the insights of Dewey's philosophy of education and pedagogical theory.

Ultimately, we argue that counselor educators should attend to John Dewey's philosophy of education, pedagogical theory, and its concomitant teaching techniques to inform their instruction on the strength of several premises. First, his pedagogical theory is attentive to the plural needs of a diverse body of counselor educators described above. Second, his model of experiential learning maintains the principle of continuity in student experiences by aligning the context of learning with the context of practice. Last, Dewey's pedagogical theory maintains continuity between the embodied activity of learning and counseling and the mental inquiry that is a part of both. One premise of this article is that, while we think that Dewey's philosophy of education is widely applicable, counseling offers a special case in education that highlights the efficacy of Dewey's approach to education. Counseling is an embodied, transactive, and interpersonal activity that demands the maintenance of continuity between the counselor and the client, and, in the education of the counselor, between teacher and student.

### **Key Concepts of John Dewey's Philosophy of Education and Pedagogical Theory**

It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a complete review of John Dewey's naturalist and instrumentalist philosophy. However, by way of John Dewey's reconstruction of the reflex arc concept in psychology, we can introduce his philosophy of education and, more specifically, his pedagogical theory. John Dewey's philosophy built on the evolutionary naturalism of Charles Darwin to reconceive the reflex arc in psychology (1896). The basic idea of the reflex arc originated at least as far back as René Descartes in the seventeenth century (Davidson, 2003). Descartes (1637) developed a mechanical model whereby an external impulse from the environment, say from a prick of thorny bush to the skin of one's bare leg, activates a cord through which the stimulus travels to the brain. The brain then activates another cord back to the leg, causing it to retreat, completing the reflex arc. Dewey (1896), building on the insights of William James, in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), thought the mechanical model was flawed because it amounted to a series of "jerks" that failed to account for the complex coordination of situations and processes that constitute the learning process (Davidson, 2003).

When we imagine the counselor-client interaction mechanically, involving an external counselor intervention as stimulus and a client reaction as response, we fail to appreciate the broader context of the interaction, including the client's and counselor's background experiences, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and values. The mechanical model also ignores the theory informing the interaction, the affect of each person involved, their intentions, and more. Dewey argued that the arc does not begin with an external stimulus, but from a stimulus that involves the coordination among the sensory and motor actions of the learner and elements of their involved situation. According to Dewey, the external stimulus was in fact the product of analysis, not a primary element. Dewey's approach was more holistic. He began with an involved situation, wherein the learner brings to their situation their background

experiences, habits, and interests. These inform their interactions with their natural and social environmental conditions, which cause adjustments, new behaviors, and further modified environmental conditions. Dewey's central critique of the reflex arc in psychology is that our interactions are more complex than a simple and mechanical stimulus-response. Rather, Dewey (1896) posited that we are intentional organisms in a transactive relationship with an environment. This notion becomes evident in his pattern of inquiry, his theory of experience, and the way these undermine unnecessary dichotomies in the philosophy of education.

Applied to counseling, this reinforces the idea that the counselor and client do not respond to one another in a vacuum. For example, the client discloses to their counselor that they are pregnant. This stimulus (the disclosure) does not generate the same intervention, or response, across situations. The counselor would have to take in the remaining context—does the client appear excited or devastated? What are the age and relationship status of the client, as far as the counselor knows? Through previous discussions, does the counselor have any insight on how the client feels about starting a family? If the counselor fails to take into consideration these and other factors, their intervention in response to the disclosure might be quite off base.

### **The Pattern of Inquiry**

Dewey (1938) conceived of learning as inquiry, and he generalized a pattern of inquiry that helped inform his pedagogy. An indeterminate situation, which includes doubts, questions, uncertainties, and discomforts is a necessary condition of inquiry. The first step in the process of inquiry is to constitute the situation that was initially indeterminate as problematic. The constitution of the problematic situation is a step in inquiry, since there has been movement from relative indeterminacy to the identification of the constituents of a given situation, pointing to

possible solutions. Reasoning ensues as to direct action by *an idea* in order to resolve the problem by rearranging the conditions of indeterminacy toward settlement and unification.

Dewey's pattern of inquiry applies to navigating a walk through the woods, (how to get across a winding stream), navigating a morally problematic situation, (how to distinguish and sanction three differing instances of academic dishonesty on student papers), or navigating an intricate social or natural scientific experiment, (finding out by what degree frequent, low-stakes assessments increase student learning and retention). That said, a mundane interpersonal example helps illuminate the pattern. You encounter a colleague in the hall and engage in a brief conversation, but their demeanor is unfeeling and the interaction is terse, and this is unusual for your conversations. You feel uncertain and uneasy, as the situation is indeterminate. You begin to hypothesize causes for this uncertainty and discomfort, and after mentally running through various possibilities, you remember that they left you a voicemail the night before when you were busy with your family. You listened to it late at night and failed to return the call. Next, you must hypothesize a solution. Is a short text, an email, or a visit to their office and an offer to go for coffee most appropriate? You settle on the last solution and visit them during your next free moment. Once there you explain your reason for not returning the call, apologize, and you discuss their need that prompted the voicemail over coffee together. The situation has been rearranged toward settlement and unification.

### **Mind-Body Continuity**

One result of Dewey's naturalistic description of the pattern of inquiry was a rejection of unwarranted dichotomies in philosophy. These include theory and practice, mind and body, fact and value, subject and object, thinking and doing (Dewey, 1938). Mind and body, for instance, should not be conceived as separate. Rather, thinking with Dewey, our higher intellectual activities

are continuous with our lower, biological and practical endeavors. Mark Johnson (2007) illustrated that much of intellectual activity builds on conceptual schemes borrowed from our embodiment. For instance, when you ask, “do you see?” you ask a physical question about vision, whose bodily metaphor has been conceptually transferred to a mental activity of knowing. What we will demonstrate below is that teaching practices that fail to take into account the embodied nature of learning as inquiry needlessly and detrimentally separate the mind from the body and, thus, fall short of habituating the necessary skills for effective counselors.

Dewey applied his quest to find the excluded middle between dichotomized concepts to pedagogy in *The Child and Curriculum* (1902). Dewey argued that the methods of education focusing on the curriculum emphasize the rational, the organized, the expansive, and the disciplined aspects of learning, while those focusing on the child emphasize the emotional, holistic, narrow, and self-interested aspects of learning. But Dewey thought the dichotomy was flawed from the start. Rather, the curriculum should be seen as a natural outcome of student interests. We must begin with interests, as the active precedes the passive in the student learning, but those interests contain the problems whose reasoned, disciplined, and organized inquiry must help her resolve. Below we offer examples of how student interests and background experiences, an important part of the involved situation of the learner (the holistic classroom environment), can inform the curriculum of a given class session. Ignoring student experiences and interests runs the risks, described below, of treating the material taught as lifeless and inert, which can further hinder the students’ habituation of the skills for effective counselors.

### **Role of Teacher and Student**

Dewey (1938) described a conflict between a traditional model of education and a progressive model of education. In a traditional model, teachers are responsible for transmitting

ideas to students in a setting that is considerably different than those, such as the home or their place of work, that attend to their narrow, self-interested, holistic, and emotional attunement. In this rational and organized setting, students are expected to conform to the expected style of behavior. The purpose of this traditional education is to prepare students to be successful in the future by applying the organized learning in the affective and holistic context. This aim is accomplished by students learning facts and skills from a teacher who takes on the role of expert, while students take on the role of compliant and obedient learner. This amounts to what Paulo Freire (1993), albeit in a different context, called the “banking concept” of education, the depositing of inert and lifeless “facts” into the container-minds of students. Dewey finds this to be a distorted vision of the activity of learning. Dewey’s (1938) criticism with this style of education is that it is “one of imposition from above and outside” (p. 6). Furthermore, the gap between the subject matter to be learned and the learner is so great that what is to be learned must be imposed by the instructor. In this style, what it means to learn is to acquire the knowledge contained in books and in the minds of the instructor. That which is learned is static, organized, and complete, rather than dynamic, an organic product of student experiences, and ongoing. For counselor trainees, acquiring knowledge in a static manner will be of little help when they are sitting across from a client in distress.

Consider an analogy to learning how to fish in order to understand both how the active precedes the passive in learning and how learning is an embodied activity. A lecture and a quiz on baiting a hook, casting a line, and landing a fish falls entirely short of habituating the skill of fishing. But fishing is *not* more uniquely embodied than doing an intake on a new client or, for that matter, teaching a class in counseling. Further, some of the same behaviors that constitute ineffective counseling also constitute ineffective teaching, according to Dewey. For example,



counselors are trained to approach their clients from an egalitarian place, to be collaborative, and to work *with* the client, not work *on* the client. In the same way, Dewey discouraged a top down approach where the teacher is the expert and the student is the passive recipient of the teacher's vast knowledge. Thus, the traditional model not only treats the instructor as imposing expert and the student as an empty and passive vessel, it needlessly separates the mind from its embodiment and, thus, hinders the way embodiment participates in the habituation of a skill. As we will argue below, counseling is a uniquely embodied activity as well, and educative experiential activities in counseling should take place in environments that closely resemble its practice.

### **Educative vs. Miseducative Experiences**

Progressive models of education both embraced and distorted Dewey's description of experiential learning. While Dewey (1938) advocated for experiential education, and his pedagogical theory was labeled progressive by educational theorists, those educational theorists advocating for "progressive" education and experiential learning developed their "progressive" pedagogy merely in a reaction to the old, traditional style of learning. A key critique Dewey made of the progressive education movement was its failure to make the distinction between educative and miseducative experiences. Although Dewey supported experiential learning approaches, he recognized that not all experiential activities are educative. Thus, he rejected the exaggerated student centered approach, which uncritically follows the uninformed impulses of the student when forming experiential activities. Experiences can be disconnected or of poor quality. Miseducative experiences include those experiences that increase automatic skill resulting in rote execution of the skill, which can be insufficiently sensitive to context and nuance, or those experiences that are too *disconnected* to promote future growth.

As a result, Dewey felt the need to provide a *theory* of experience that would enable teachers to distinguish educative from miseducative experiences. Dewey (1938) described a theory of experience involving the concepts of continuity and interaction. Continuity suggests all of our past experiences impact us currently, and our current experiences impact us in the future. Interaction suggests the situation influences the experience, and the experience affects the environment. In other words, how a student experiences a lesson will be a combination of their past experiences, informing interests, the plural ways they frame problems encountered, the unique environment in which inquiry happens, and interaction with the instructor.

Therefore, the key is not just to have experiential learning in education, but to have quality experiential learning activities (Dewey, 1938). A quality experience engages the student in the present and provides a positive present experience, but also results in future creative experiences. Quality experiences facilitate the development of habits that result in growth, and they ignite curiosity and initiative. Dewey (1938) warned instructors that “it is a mistake to suppose that an acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquainted” (p. 28). Therefore, experiential activities that are educative closely resemble the context in which students will be executing whatever skill or knowledge they are working on. The close resemblance of contexts of learning and practice is continuity at work in experiential learning. This continuity of experience, we show below, informs counselor education in specific ways. For example, while having counseling students practice obtaining initial informed consent by reading a generic statement off of a piece of paper is technically an experiential activity, Dewey would categorize this as a miseducative experience. In order to make this activity more educative, the counselor educator would encourage students to practice obtaining informed consent in a more nuanced way

that would include taking into consideration the setting in which the counselor trainee was working, the developmental level of the client, and the interpersonal style of the counselor trainee.

### **Problem Based Learning**

One teaching technique derived from Dewey's pattern of inquiry and pedagogical theory discussed below is problem based learning (Koschmann, 2001). Instructors prompt students with indeterminate situations, where they need to hypothesize and establish a problem and a solution. Below, we will apply this model to counselor education. The pattern is uniquely appropriate to counselor education, as professional counselors encounter clients whose problems do not disclose themselves in a ready-made way. The counselor client interaction often begins in indeterminacy, and counselors and clients must establish problems in a process of inquiry. It is infrequent that a client comes to counseling already knowing exactly what the problem is and only seeking help to fix the problem; typically, counselors and clients must first identify the problem. As an example, consider the client who schedules an appointment due to an increase in low mood. They explain that nothing has happened recently to contribute to their low mood, and they express confusion as to why they are feeling unmotivated, tearful, and generally down. As the client reports this to the counselor, the counselor is experiencing an indeterminate situation. The counselor's role is to begin a process of inquiry to understand better what might be contributing to how the client is feeling. The counselor might ask the client about any history of mood disorders; any recent life changes such as a job change or a change in relationship status; any recent or historical drug use; and history of trauma. Through this process of inquiry, the counselor identifies that the client is coming up on the 10- year anniversary of the loss of their father and perhaps this is contributing to how they are feeling.

We argue here that not only does this pattern of inquiry map onto counselor client interaction appropriately, but it should also apply equally well to counselor educator student interaction. Central to Dewey's pedagogical theory is the insight that learning is an active process of establishing problems amid indeterminate situations and navigating solutions to them experientially and experimentally. Additionally, Norman and Shmidt (1992) found that problem-based learning improves both intrinsic interest in the material and more self-directed learning skills. Problem based learning suits teaching counseling students in two ways. First, by using problem based learning in the classroom, instructors help counseling students habituate an active process of identifying problems and hypothesizing solutions, a skill counselors will need throughout their careers. Additionally, a career in counseling is optimally a career in continuous education. Therefore, helping counseling students habituate self- directed learning is crucial.

### **Case Example**

Professor A is teaching Psychopathology this semester. Professor A generally follows a traditional education model in all of the classes they teach. For class tonight, Professor A is teaching students about Depressive Disorders. In preparation for class, Professor A has asked students to read the DSM 5 chapter pertaining to Depressive Disorders, as well as the corresponding chapter in a Psychopathology textbook. The professor begins class with a thorough lecture, complete with overhead slides, addressing diagnostic criteria of the different Depressive Disorders. Because Professor A knows that experiential education is important, they spend the last portion of class working on a written case study where students are asked to identify the symptoms the case study client is reporting and to come up with a hypothetical diagnosis based on the symptoms.

Professor B is also teaching Psychopathology this semester. Professor B has been reading more about educational theories and is trying to incorporate a Deweyan approach to their teaching. In preparation for class, Professor B also asks students to read the DSM 5 chapter pertaining to Depressive Disorders as well as the corresponding chapter in the textbook. However, during class Professor B does not start with a traditional lecture and corresponding slides. Instead, Professor B uses the first portion of class to embody a fictitious client, beginning with a brief narrative. The narrative does not offer the students a ready made problem. The situation is initially indeterminate. For example, the professor/ client does not offer up clear cut symptoms of a Depressive Disorder, but rather discusses vague unease, poor performance at work, and dissatisfaction with interpersonal relationships. The students are encouraged first to identify the key problem(s) the professor/client seems to be experiencing. Then, students are encouraged to ask clarifying questions and to identify further information they would need from the professor/client in order to make an informed decision about a diagnosis. Finally, students are asked to identify a diagnosis based on the professor's response to their clarifying questions. After the completion of this exercise, the professor engages the students in process questions. For example: *what was most challenging for you about this exercise? What previous knowledge did you draw upon in order to complete the activity? And, how do you imagine it would feel to work with this client?* If the problem involved Depressive Disorders, the instructor could ask what prior experiences the students have had with these mood disorders, including both any assigned reading and life experiences, which informed their inquiry, and invite the students to ask further questions.

For the second portion of the class, Professor B organizes role-plays for the students. Each student has the opportunity to role play the client and the counselor, where the counselor is trying to identify an appropriate working diagnosis. At this time in the semester, students have learned

about Depressive Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Trauma Disorders, and Bipolar Disorders. As a result, students who are role playing the client are instructed that they are able to report symptoms of any diagnosis covered in the class thus far. The student role playing the counselor is encouraged to treat the role play like an intake session, with one goal being the identification of an appropriate working diagnosis.

After coming together to discuss symptoms presented by their clients and the working diagnosis the student role playing the counselor came up with, the final step in the exercise is for the student counselor to practice having a discussion related to goals with the client, and then to write a sample treatment plan using the counselor's chosen theoretical orientation.

Professor B's approach to class exemplifies a Deweyan approach on multiple fronts, where Professor A's approach is more traditional. First, using a lecture/ presentation style as Professor A reinforces the concept of educator as knowledgeable expert, and student as passive recipient of knowledge from the instructor. Further, this model, relying on the banking concept (Freire, 1993), suggests that when students need this information in the future, all they have to do is open their brains and pull out the material deposited by their instructors. In the current example, while it is certainly helpful to be able to recall specific criteria for a diagnosis of a Depressive Disorder, knowing these criteria does not necessarily translate into being able to recognize all of the myriad ways symptoms of a Depressive Disorder can manifest in a client, nor does it translate into being able to effectively gather information related to client symptoms through an intake interview.

In contrast, Professor B successfully embodies several Deweyan concepts. By opening the class with the client narrative, Professor B engages the students in a process of inquiry by asking students to identify the most salient pieces of information in the process of hypothesizing the problem, clarify the additional information necessary to hypothesize a solution, and come to a

resolution. By avoiding the lecture/ presentation style, Professor B requires that students become more active in their learning of the material, and avoids reinforcing the idea that instructors are there to dump knowledge into students' brains to be accessed at a later time. In addition, this models a pattern of inquiry that the students will need to replicate in their work as counselors. Further, Professor B encourages continuity for the students through their questions and class discussion. This enables the instructor to learn what past experiences, and thus interests, prejudices, and modes of framing problems, students bring to the class, and how these past experiences, being continuous with the day's lesson, will inform, aid in, or challenge the day's inquiry. For example, through the discussion that Professor B facilitates at the beginning of the class, they come to realize most students conceptualize depression primarily as sadness. It is critical for Professor B to be aware of this frame for students so that the professor is able to offer experiences that modify students' schema of depression to also include symptoms such as low motivation, anhedonia, sleep dysregulation, and irritability.

In the above scenario, both professors incorporated an experiential approach. However, Professor B's approach is informed by Dewey's pedagogical theory. In the above example, Professor A uses an experiential activity, a case study, but it is not particularly educative in part because it does not resemble the context in which the diagnosing skills will likely be used in the future. It is unlikely that counseling students will regularly be asked to identify a diagnosis of a client on paper. Further, a paper case study does not engage students in the same way as an active role play. The paper case study constitutes less of a quality experience because it does not promote the habits of executing the skills that lead to student growth; nor does the context of learning sufficiently resemble the context of application and practice.

By using the role play, Professor B requires that both students in the role play be engaged. While the main work being done in the role play is by the counselor, the student role playing the client also has to consider what symptoms they want to display and how these will contribute to a diagnosis. Second, allowing the student playing the role of the client to endorse symptoms of any of the diagnoses studied so far in the semester reinforces the idea of continuity (Dewey, 1938). Continuity at a broader, curricular level is also reinforced by treating the role play as an intake, where students are concurrently practicing their basic counseling skills. Continuity at a curricular level is also reinforced by asking students to practice having a goal setting conversation with their client and to write a treatment plan that is informed by theory. In contrast to the paper case study, the structure of the role play allows the student counselors to begin working on habits of diagnosis, the execution of intake skills, and the development of a theory- informed treatment plan that leads to growth. Finally, Dewey (1938) challenged frequently used dichotomies, such as knowing and doing. He would argue that knowing *is* doing, and engaging in role play is example of this concept.

### **Multicultural Considerations**

Just as counselors endeavor to embody a theoretical orientation that adapts effectively with diverse populations, so too must instructors use a pedagogical theory that will be effective in working with diverse learners (Kleist, 2016). Dewey did address the challenges of working with a group of culturally diverse students. He operated on the assumption that students come to their inquiries with plural values and diverse background experiences. By focusing on the holistic learner and encouraging instructors to understand how each students' experiences, frameworks, prejudices, and biases impact their experience of a particular lesson, Deweyan pedagogy contains the tools to address multicultural considerations in the classroom.

Leonard Waks (2007) writes:



The term “multiculturalism” arises in circumstances where there are distinct ethno-cultural subgroups residing within the polity, whether on their own native grounds, in immigrant enclaves, or dispersed throughout the population, and making claims for cultural and political recognition. In its normative sense the term denotes recognition of the personal identities and group loyalties tied to these subgroups, and of their claims for differentiated rights, including differentiated educational rights (p. 28).

Dewey (1916) was well aware that the student’s primary associations are often with their ethnic families or neighborhoods. Schools, including institutions of higher education, commingle diverse student groups who bring with them their distinct perspectives. Dewey (1916) thought any educational theory that neglects these primary associations, often including firmly habituated patterns of learning, to be impoverished. Rather, as Waks (2007) noted, Dewey insisted that education “inscribes not upon a tabula rasa, but upon these deeply habituated perspectives” (p. 33). Therefore, a Deweyan approach in the classroom would include counselor educators considering their students’ worldviews in a similar way that counselors consider the worldview of their clients. Furthermore, Dewey argued that a key benefit of a diverse classroom is that students are able to step out of their narrowly held views as a result of discussions and problem solving exercises with their classmates. As Waks (2007) pointed out, “The fusion of the learners’ horizons—their formation of capacities to shape common interests, project common ends, and converge upon common means despite their differences in perspective—is a primary educational *goal*” (p. 34) from a Deweyan perspective. This is consonant with work counselor educators are training their students to do with clients. The hope is that counselors, despite having any number of differences with their clients, will be able to come to a common solution.

### **Challenges**

## **For the Instructor**

Using John Dewey's pedagogical theory as a framework in counselor education does not come without challenges, both for the instructor and the student. For the instructor, there are realities of standardized tests that students will need to take for licensure, and the sense of pressure that students will need to have a "container" of knowledge from which to pull in order to pass these exams. Another challenge is the sheer intentionality it takes to use a Deweyan approach in the classroom. Making sure experiential learning exercises are educative, considering the importance of continuity in the classroom, and each semester adapting the course to meet students where they are based on their previous experiences is no small feat. Finally, many students may not be accustomed to being required to be such an active participant in their education, and may be resistant to this approach.

In addition to the above general challenges for an instructor, there are specific challenges for counselor educators related to a lack of exposure to instructional theory. As noted by Kleist (2016), a recent review of counselor education doctoral program websites indicated that only about 50% of programs include a class devoted specifically to teaching. As a result, it is reasonable to expect that many counselor educators are entering the field with little knowledge of educational theory in general, much of the less experience implementing an educational theory in practice.

## **For the Student**

For the student who is more familiar with attending class and sitting in the back row while the instructor tries to pour knowledge into their metaphorical cup, a Deweyan style of instruction will feel quite different. While many, and hopefully most, students will be excited to take more of an active role in their studies, some students may find it difficult not to have the same structure they are used to. Requiring that students engage in the process of inquiry where they are

encouraged to ask meaningful questions and pursue the resolution to those questions may also be challenging for students who are more familiar with a passive instructional approach.

Dewey believed in a collaborative approach between teacher and student, much like counselors use a collaborative approach with their clients. Therefore, counselor educators can draw on their clinical experience when considering how to engage students who may be unfamiliar with this style of classroom. For example, instructors can facilitate conversation early in the semester about the role of the instructor and the students, and the expectation that students are actively involved in the class. Depending on what course is being taught, the instructor can provide examples of what engagement and involvement will look like and offer an opportunity to address questions or concerns from the students about their involvement. Instructors can also collaborate with students around goals for the class for the semester, topics students would like to see addressed within the context of the course, and previous knowledge about course topics the students are entering the class with.

### **Implications**

The goal of incorporating a Deweyan approach into the classroom is developing clinicians who are better prepared for their clinical work. A classroom informed by Deweyan pedagogy is one where students are active in their learning; where they practice working with initially indeterminate clinical situations that will resemble their work in the field; where their experiential activities closely mimic the settings in which they will practice the skills they are learning; where prior knowledge and experiences are incorporated into the current class; and where learning follows a pattern of inquiry, as outlined by Dewey. We suspect such a setting results in students whose practical habituation of counseling skills that translate more effectively into their clinical work outside of the classroom is coextensive with the learning of content knowledge about what

counseling is. The evidence above that problem based learning improves both intrinsic interest in the material and promotes self directed learning buttresses this hypothesis.

By adopting the insights of Dewey's philosophy of education, counselor educators meaningfully answer the call to ground their pedagogy in theory. Further, counselor educators encourage active and meaningful participation from students; endeavor to make learning continuous across the curriculum; and use students' experiences, frameworks, and prejudices to inform the trajectory of the lesson. In doing so, counselor educators maintain the principle of continuity in student experiences, establish continuity of context between learning and practicing, and manifest the benefits of embodiment in the habituation of counseling skills.

The field would further benefit from comparing classrooms informed by Deweyan pedagogy compared to other pedagogical theories. For example, examining the experience of students in a Deweyan classroom versus students in a traditional classroom, where the teacher works to identify truths, organize them in a way that students can understand and use them, give the knowledge to the students, and evaluate the extent to which students are able to learn the material (von Glasersfeld, 1984). Although examining the students' experiences in these different classroom environments is the place to start, eventually it is also critical to identify the extent to which students' experiences in these different classrooms impact their work with clients. In doing so, counselor educators continue to identify the most effective ways to train counselors so that clients receive the best care possible.

In conclusion, there is a natural fit between Dewey's philosophy of education and the training of counselors because his conceptualization of the teacher and student and each of their roles is similar to how we conceptualize counselor and client and each of their roles. Further, his approach leads to the habituation of skills in an environment that is similar to the environment in

which the skills will be used. Dewey encourages the instructor to work collaboratively with students and to use students' previous experiences to inform the classroom, which is very similar to how a counselor works with a client. Further, by focusing on having classroom experiences that mimic the future environment in which the skills will need to be used, students go to their clinical placement more prepared to work with clients than if their classroom experiences are not intentionally focused in the same way.

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