

Spring 2024

Using a Cultural Humility Framework for LGBTGEQIAP+ Affirming Counseling Training

Amber Pope

William & Mary - School of Education, alpope@wm.edu

Noelle St Germain-Sehr

William & Mary - School of Education, nstgermainsehr@wm.edu

Bianca Augustine

William & Mary - School of Education, braugustine@wm.edu

Amanda St. Germain-Sehr

Tai Lexumé

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/educationpubs>



Part of the [Counselor Education Commons](#), and the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pope, Amber; St Germain-Sehr, Noelle; Augustine, Bianca; St. Germain-Sehr, Amanda; and Lexumé, Tai, Using a Cultural Humility Framework for LGBTGEQIAP+ Affirming Counseling Training (2024). *Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES) Newsletter*, 19(2), 9-11.
<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/educationpubs/201>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education Articles by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

USING A CULTURAL HUMILITY FRAMEWORK FOR LGBTGEQIAP+ AFFIRMING COUNSELING TRAINING

Amber L. Pope, PhD, LPC, LMHC, CCTP

Noelle St. Germain-Sehr, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, BC-TMH, ACMHP

Bianca R. Augustine, PhD, LPC, CCTP

Amanda St. Germain-Sehr, MS, MA, LPC, MT-BC

Tai Lexumé, MS, Resident in Counseling

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;



**Amber L. Pope, PhD, LPC, LMHC,
CCTP**
alpope@wm.edu
Department of School
Psychology & Counselor
Education, William & Mary



**Noelle St. Germain-Sehr, PhD,
LPC-S, NCC, BC-TMH, ACMHP**
Department of School
Psychology & Counselor
Education, William & Mary



**Bianca R. Augustine, PhD, LPC,
CCTP**
Department of School
Psychology & Counselor
Education, William & Mary



**Amanda St. Germain-Sehr,
MS, MA, LPC, MT-BC**
Department of Counseling,
Texas A&M University-
Commerce



**Tai Lexumé, MS, Licensed
Resident in Counseling**
Department of School
Psychology & Counselor
Education, William & Mary

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/affectual 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 Sylvia Rivera
 - 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.

References

- Astramovich, R. L., & Scott, B. E. (2020). Intersectional advocacy with LGBTQ+ clients in counseling. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 14*, 307-320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2020.1827473>
- Bettergarcia, J., Matsuno, E., & Conover, K. J. (2021). Training mental health providers in queer-affirming care: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 8*(3), 365-377. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000514>
- Botelho, M. J., & Lima, C. A. (2020). From cultural competence to cultural respect: A critical review of six models. *Journal of Nursing Education, 59*(6), 311-318. <https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20200520-03>
- Freeman-Coppadge, D. J., & Langroudi, K. F. (2021). Beyond LGBTQ-affirmative therapy: Fostering growth and healing through intersectionality. In K. L. Nadal & M. R. Scharrón-del Río (Eds.), *Queer psychology: Intersectional perspectives* (pp. 159-179). Springer.
- Hope, D. A., Holt, N. R., Woodruff, N., Mocarski, R., Meyer, H. M., Puckett, J.A. Eyer, J., Craig, S., Feldman, J., Irwin, J., Pachankis, J., Rawson, K. J., Sevelius, J., & Butler, S. (2022). Bridging the gap between practice guidelines and the therapy room: Community-derived practice adaptations for psychological services with transgender and gender diverse adults in the central United States. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice, 53*, 351-361. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000448>
- Jones, J. M., (2023, February 22). *U.S. LGBT identification steady at 7.2%*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/470708/lgbt-identification-steady.aspx>
- Lekas, H-M., Pahl, K., & Fuller Lewis, C. (2020). Rethinking cultural competence: Shifting to cultural humility. *Human Services Insights, 13*, 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1178632920970580>
- Pachankis, J. E., Soulliard, Z. A., Morris, F., & Seager van Dyk, I. (2023). A model for adapting evidence-based interventions to be LGBTQ-affirmative: Putting minority stress principles and case conceptualization into clinical research and practice. *Cognitive & Behavioral Practice, 30*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2021.11.005>
- Pope, A. L., St. Germain-Sehr, N., Augustine, B., St. Germain-Sehr, A., Lelumé, T., Moe, J., Snowden-Gregg, S., & Jackson, T. (2024a). *Developing an asynchronous LGBTQ+ affirmative counseling training: A mixed-methods study*. [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of School Psychology & Counselor Education, William & Mary.
- Pope, A. L., Vasic, S., Adams, J., Augustine, B., Snowden-Gregg, S., & Kim, Y. (2024b). *Queer futures: "Towards an LGBTQ+ responsive counseling profession*. [Manuscript in preparation]. Department of School Psychology & Counselor Education, William & Mary.
- Singh, A. A., Finan, R., & Estevez, R. (2023). Queer and trans resilience: Moving from affirmation to liberation in our collective healing. In J. M. Koch, E. E. Townsend-Bell, & R.D. Hubach (Eds.), *Identity as resilience in minoritized communities* (pp. 1-22). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38977-1_1