Queering the Curriculum: Queer Intersectionality in Counselor Education

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Counselor education and other academic disciplines have a powerful opportunity to teach students from a nuanced and complex perspective by integrating a queer intersectional framework into their curricula. Understanding vital training concepts from a lens that incorporates a range of identities that represent the interplay of systems of power, privilege, and oppression deepens a student’s learning. This essay explores the shortcomings related to educating students within the confines of the LGBT acronym and provides innovative, applicable strategies for incorporating a queer intersectional frame across curricula. These efforts can enhance students’ knowledge, awareness, skills, and advocacy aptitude that expand beyond dominant narratives of queerness.

Keywords: intersectionality, queer theory, counselor education, language, LGBTQ+, queer

My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit!
—Flavia Dzodan (2011)

This powerful, direct quotation from an op-ed piece by Dzodan (2011) explicitly highlights the urgency to center intersectionality (Collins, 1986, 1990, 2004; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) as the crux of social justice efforts. Second wave feminism was revolutionary for its time and efforts to underscore the voices of women. However, valid critiques of the second wave have argued that an intersectional approach is not supplemental; it is primary (Bowleg, 2017; Bowleg & Bauer, 2016; Chan, Cor, & Band, 2018; Chan, Erby, & Ford, 2017; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Cor & Chan, 2017; Hancock, 2016; Warner, Settles, & Shields, 2016). First wave feminism, dating back to the women’s suffrage movement in the mid-1800s, centered the voices of white, straight, cisgender women in particular. This has historically devalued, disempowered, and silenced the voices of queer women of color with expansive sexualities and gender identities. To take intersectionality seriously means to acknowledge that one identity, in its limitations, cannot represent all identities and narratives (Yuval-Davis, 2012).

The field of counseling is, of course, directly influenced by the sociopolitical
environment (Ratts, 2009, 2011; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). Historically, the counseling field, as well as other academic disciplines, have been slow to evolve with trends around expansive sexualities and genders (Chonody, Rutledge, & Smith, 2012; Rossi & Lopez, 2017; Young, 2015). It has taken many years for counseling programs to shift away from strictly heteronormative and gender confining paradigms (Carroll & Gilroy, 2002). One measure of the field’s development over

1 We use queer as a more expansive umbrella term for folks identifying with a range of sexual/affectional and gender expansive identities and experiences. We believe the “LGBT” acronym has a binary impact on identity whereas the term “queer” can be defined both by the group and the individuals. Though our intention is to be inclusive, we recognize that choosing any singular term may not capture the experiences of all peoples.

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time is a nuanced examination of the accreditation standards for counseling and their attention to multiculturalism and sexual and gender diversity. These will be discussed further in a later section (CACREP, 2016). While accreditation standards are catching up, some academics may be hesitant to expand pedagogy surrounding queerness in gender and sexuality. When educators intentionally use language to center the experiences of people who are so often pushed to the margins (i.e., trans women of color, folks identifying as pan- or asexual, agender, individuals who are intersex), they are valuing those individuals’ nuanced and complex lives (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Ratts, 2017; Young, 2015). Scholars have examined how detrimental language that consists of misgendering can perpetuate cisgenderism and sexism in research and by effect, teaching (Ansara & Hegarty, 2013). In fact, these writers call on lecturers, supervisors, researchers, authors, reviewers, and journal editors to challenge “cisgenderist forms of discrimination and social exclusion in language and writing” (Ansara & Hegarty, 2013, p. 174.)

The purpose of this paper is to examine existing curricula and pedagogical assumptions in counselor education, provide practical ways to integrate a queer intersectional framework throughout coursework, and offer strategies for more expansive language related to sexual and affectional orientation and gender identity in counseling curricula. Queer theory by itself has been critiqued for its lack of an intersectional framework; we offer this unique framework to address these concerns (Cohen, Jones, & Tronto, 1997; Johnson & Henderson, 2005). The ultimate goal is an improved, nuanced, and integrated framework to ensure counselor educators are training multiculturally competent and social justice minded future practitioners.

Theoretical Framework in Intersectional Queer Theory

In this section, we define what we mean by a queer intersectional approach by unifying tenets from both queer and intersectional frameworks. Queer theory is a framework firmly based in removing binaries within identity categories; developing solidarity and diversity across different communities within sexuality, affection, and gender identity; and forming activism to challenge normative definitions, especially heteronormativity (Lugg & Murphy, 2014). Intersectionality is a framework based in Black feminist thought that illustrates connections between identities, multiple forms of marginalization and oppression, and a social justice agenda (Corlett & Mavin, 2014).


Despite the exponential growth of intersectionality for implementation across
disciplines, a significant number of key thematic elements covers the widely
expansive framework. Collins and Bilge (2016) identified six core themes of the
overarching intersectionality framework: (a) power; (b) social inequality; (c) social
context; (d) rationality; (e) complexity; and (f) social justice. Intersectionality
resists illustrating social identity categories as mutually exclusive entities in time,
history, and social location, instead referring to multiple intersecting dimensions of
identities (Bowleg, 2008; Chan, 2017; Chan & Erby, 2018; Cor & Chan, 2017;
Corlett & Mavin, 2014; Smooth, 2013). Intersectionality also critically examines
interconnected relations of power resulting in structural positions of hierarchy,
subordination, and marginality for historically minoritized communities (Bowleg,
2017; Bowleg & Bauer, 2016; Chan & Erby, 2018; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Grzanka
et al., 2017). Moreover, intersectionality is axiologically oriented toward social justice
since a commitment to intersectionality requires scholars to dismantle and
problematic social structures emerging with multiple overlapping forms of
oppression and social inequity (Bowleg, 2008, 2012, 2017; Chan et al., 2017; Collins
& Bilge, 2016; Cor & Chan, 2017).

Like intersectionality, queer theory emphasizes social justice and the disruption of
barriers for historically minoritized communities. Queer theory’s central tenets
include (a) disrupting of binaries; (b) complicating diversity in identity categories
central to sexuality and gender; (c) politicizing identities to enact initiatives for
social action and activism; and (d) challenging definitions of normativity
Murphy, 2014; Mayo, 2017). Combining these two theoretical frameworks initiates
a foundation for critical thinking around limitations and erasure of expansive
language for sexual, affectional, and gender diversity within counselor education
curricular and pedagogical practices.

Contextualizing the Counselor Education Curriculum

Our goal is to propose a queering of the counselor education curriculum. We
situate such a curriculum as a product of institutional discourse. Counselor
education curricula contain very little variance since all counselor education
programs must meet the standards of the Council for the Accreditation of
Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Understanding these
standards establishes the foundation of our critique and our recommendations for
how educators can queer curriculum.

The CACREP 2016 Standards

The curricular standards for counselor education are primarily shaped by CACREP.
CACREP exerts considerable power over the instruction and preparation of
professional counselors, lobbying state licensure boards to approved licensure for
those who graduate from CACREP-accredited programs. As a result, counselor
education programs push to develop curricula that are eligible for CACREP
accreditation. In order to guarantee CACREP accreditation, counselor education
programs must provide courses that cover and assess overtly stated requirements,
including (a) professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, (b) social and
cultural diversity, (c) human growth and development, (d) career development, (e)
counseling and helping relationships, (f) group counseling and group work, (g)
assessment and testing, and (h) research and program evaluation (CACREP, 2015). CACREP requires that graduate-level programs include the expectation for “a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter credit hours of all students” (p. 7). Admittedly, this approach to standardization ensures that professional counselors are similarly and rigorously trained, that clients will be able to predict the services they will receive, and that licensure boards can appraise a professional’s educational preparation adequately.

CACREP accreditation is rendered when a counselor education program meets specific and extensive requirements in the areas of: institution, academic unit, faculty and staff, and professional identity (CACREP, 2015). While the 2016 CACREP Standards state that they “delineate accreditation requirements, [but] they do not dictate the manner in which programs may choose to meet standards” (p. 4), the risk of losing CACREP accreditation weighs heavily over counselor education programs. Consequently, regardless of where they go to school, counselors-in-training will experience a curriculum that aligns with CACREP standards. Counselors-in-training are exposed to concretized, recurrent core narratives as they enter a program, and are then assimilated into the organizational status quo: a CACREP-accredited counselor identity.

The thesis of queering the counselor education curriculum invites the question: How do counseling curricula currently address sexual orientation and gender identity beyond heteronormativity and cisnormativity? The CACREP standards essentialize multiculturalism as a guiding standard for representing forms of othering in counselor education programs’ curricular developments. CACREP (2015) defines multiculturalism as a term “denoting the diversity of racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage; socioeconomic status; age; gender; sexual orientation; and religious and spiritual beliefs, as well as physical, emotional, and mental abilities” (p. 46). This vague definition of multiculturalism is neither interdisciplinary nor critical. The historical and liberal use of multiculturalist language has been critiqued for functioning to essentialize both difference and minoritized communities (Back & Solomos, 2000; Stokke & Lybæk, 2018).

CACREP’s use of the term requires that programs address difference, but does not account for systems of power and oppression, social justice, lived experience, or processes of emancipation: an important critical read of multiculturalism and its implications (Stokke & Lybæk, 2018).

This unannounced use of multiculturalism engenders a superficiality in language and discourse that is apparent when we consider sexuality and gender in the CACREP standards. A simple key word analysis reveals implicit hetero- and gender-normativity. The terms ‘sexual’ and ‘sexuality’ appear only three other times in the 52-page standards, and in every case the term denotes the development of persons as sexual-beings. The term ‘sexual orientation’ appears only in the definition of multiculturalism. Finally, the term ‘gender’ appears only two other times in the CACREP standards, and in both occasions the term appears in relationship to the traditional sense of gender roles (i.e. cisgender male, female). Terms alluding to gender identity and gender diversity do not appear in the standards.

These textual silences symbolically annihilate queer and trans people. As such,
CACREP’s standards communicate that queerness and gender-expansive identities are not essential to counselors’ training in the same way as other skills and theories are. CACREP’s definition and use of multiculturalism takes for granted that counselor education programs will address or instill responsiveness and critique. Instead, counselors-in-training move through a curriculum that perpetuates Wittig’s “straight mind” (p. 54, 1990): an essentialist, totalitarian, and dichotomous ideology premised on heteronormativity and cissexism.

Existing Curriculum

Responses to critiques of CACREP’s curricular rigidity have included arguments for the necessity of standardization, rigor, and competence as well as the claim that satisfying the interests of all parties is impossible (Smith & Okech, 2016a, 2016b). Meeting our commitments to multiculturalism, social justice, and social and cultural diversities requires stronger reasoning. Without intentionality, counselor education curricula may include peripheral mentions of queerness, without substantial understanding. Social and cultural diversity courses might include the mention of gay and lesbian clients and ‘multicultural’ considerations in working with them, neglecting heteronormativity, queerness, and gender-expansive identities. As a counselor-in-training, I (Javier) completed a course on human growth and development that included no mention of sex, sexual orientation, and gender. Later, as a counselor educator, I found myself revising a human growth and development course that had previously overlooked queer and gender-expansive development. This is the consequence of taking for granted that curriculums will change and evolve to reflect the student and community.

As a result of the systemic and structural requirements of CACREP and licensure boards, counselor education programs may aim to meet curricular requirements solely for the purpose of maintaining accreditation. This has resulted in counselor education course titles that reflect CACREP standards almost verbatim. As stated above, fidelity to the CACREP standards is important for various reasons. However, the standards do not go far enough to create representative curricula. Rather than dictating coursework and in-class topics, we offer an intersectional queering of the curricula that promises to take programs beyond the minimum standards established by CACREP.

Applying Queer Intersectional Curriculum and Pedagogy in Counselor Education

We offer the following strategies to consider regarding innovative practices and implementing a queer intersectional approach into counselor education pedagogy and curriculum development. The following strategies operate as launching points to consider the enhancement of curricular and pedagogical tools. Although these strategies amplify counselor education, they are intended to be transdisciplinary and to be taken up in a variety of other spaces.

Author Identities and Roles: Intersectional Reflexivity and Meaning

We believe that if we are to explore the necessity and urgency of an intersectional framework in Counselor Education, we must acknowledge and incorporate our identities into this reflexive practice (Chan, 2017; Chan et al., 2018). Our identities,
particularly our areas of power, privilege, and oppression, invariably shape how we educate future counselors (Collins, 1986, 2004). Grounded especially in the queer intersectional framework, this strategy continues to be an ongoing interrogative effort. I (Cor) identify as a White, queer, upper-middle class woman, temporarily able-bodied, with no religious affiliation, who is employed by a public university as an assistant professor in counseling. The order in which I disclose my identities elucidates the saliency of those identities in this work. As a White person, I recognize that my experience of racial privilege will always influence my work and requires an on-going, intentional process of exploring the unearned benefits I have received as a result of my skin color. My identities as a queer woman highlight my intimate knowledge around areas in which I have been (and continue to be) institutionally and individually oppressed. As a result of my access to education, I hold a Ph.D. Thus, I have both educational privilege and institutional privilege as someone employed in a tenure-track position that provides me with financial security and allows me to reside in the upper-middle class. This socioeconomic privilege affords me power and access to institutions not readily available to those from less privileged economic backgrounds. While the salience of these identities is contextual, it is vital that I explore the intersections of these identities and how they influence my work. Viewing these experiences as independent of each other would be incomplete (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

I (Chan) recognize my positionality, social location, and social positioning are frequently woven together centripetally by requiring my own interrogation and reflexivity associated with navigating power, privilege, oppression, and social identities. Central to my own personal and professional interpretations of intersectionality, I identify primarily as a queer person of color. Speaking to other social identities, I specifically identify as a queer, multiethnic Asian American with Filipino, Chinese, and Malaysian heritage, a cisgender male, and an able-bodied person. Additionally, I identify as a pluralistic Catholic grounded in values and tenets of liberation theology. Although I grew up as the child of two immigrants in primarily urban and suburban areas of southern California, I grew up in a middle-class family with access to economic and educational opportunities, which often expanded the amount of choice and freedom I experienced in my own career development journey. Reflecting contextually and politically on my identities and social location, I find myself gripped in the intersections and interstitial spaces between identities, navigating the coexistence of privilege and oppression. I can capture my experiences of marginalization and oppression as a queer person of color, but I must not ignore the privileges afforded to me on the basis of my education with a PhD, gender identity, social class, and ability status. As a result, I reflect actively and iteratively on the possibilities of recasting narratives in a manner that can also perpetuate marginalization (Chan et al., 2018; Cor & Chan, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 2012). In this active negotiation, I have the capacity to empower and disempower. This recognition imbues me with the responsibility to involve privilege as the capacity to alter systems of inequity from within (Collins, 1986, 2004). This recognition alerts me to the manner in which my own use of queer to describe my experiences and identities elicits personal meaning and empowerment for me, but can inadvertently reauthor narratives and recapitulate erasure for other communities grounded within the expansive framework of LGBTQ+ (Rumens,
My goal is not to position my privilege in the frame of normative experience, but rather to accentuate an authentic lens of identity to bolster solidarity and unique lived experiences (Lugg & Murphy, 2014).

Finally, I (Casado Pérez) identify as a queer Brown Puerto Rican cisgender man raised below the poverty line. These interlocking marginal identities have led to the experience of multiple oppressions, as well as uniquely significant experiences of empowerment (Collins, 2004, 2015). My identities have informed much of the work I do as a counselor and counselor educator, interweaving into my scholarship and teaching practices. I identify as a critical race feminist practitioner and educator, and position myself in continuous critique and challenge of traditional educational practices and expectations. At the same time, I engage in continuous and compassionate self-appraisal and sociocultural reflection in order to maintain critical consciousness, while centering equitable and just action that is responsive to my own privileges. As someone who identifies as a cisgender queer male, and presents with darker-skinned and non-hegemonic masculinity, these intersections of identity have precipitated much pain, discrimination, and self-exploration. My standpoint makes the topics discussed here especially important for me, as I continuously examine my teaching practices from the lenses of queer theory, critical race theory, and feminist theory.

Critically Examine Syllabi

Given that each of the authors are currently counselor education faculty members, we believe that in order to integrate a queer intersectional framework, we must first interrogate the existing curricula. Reflecting elements from our queer intersectional perspective, problematizing contextual and systemic changes requires a deeply immersed awareness in our identities and how curricular development can frame particular communities’ experiences as normative (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; Rumens, 2017). Developing course materials also requires forethought on how and which histories and contexts are integrated into particular classes (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Our first suggested strategy is for all educators to examine the syllabi and course materials for every course offered in a given program. Significant time should be dedicated to acknowledging one’s positionality and potential biases, soliciting critical feedback from colleagues within and outside of your department, and examining lectures and assignments based on a queer intersectional framework. The goal of reviewing these materials is to recognize which identities and communities are featured in one’s pedagogical tools, with appropriate attention to the context and history guiding the language associated with limitations in the course (Hancock, 2016). For example, educators may be perpetuating specific dated beliefs and language about certain queer communities while implicitly valuing some identities over others. A course could tacitly illustrate a substantial focus on gay and lesbian clients without attending to other communities (e.g., pansexual, same-gender loving, heteroflexible, homoflexible, demisexual, omnisexual, polyromantic). While reviewing syllabi and course materials, we suggest asking the following questions:

- What recent professional development have I intentionally sought out to learn about others’ lived experiences of this topic?
• If I do not have knowledge, awareness, or skills in a particular area, how can I seek out experts to provide this missing education without engaging in tokenism?

• When was the last time I sought out training in areas where I have previously gained “expertise”? Do I need to reexamine the privilege related to an expert role?

• Who is represented in my syllabi, lectures, assignments, and readings? Who is omitted?
  • Are any absences purposeful, or do they represent a “hidden spot”?

• If someone outside of my field reviewed my syllabus, would they agree that a queer intersectional framework is infused throughout?

• How can I center the voices of non-dominant individuals and communities in all course materials rather than offering one specialized lecture, assignment, or reading?
  • For example, how can I incorporate these materials in core curricula such as an ethics or theories course in addition to a multicultural or gender-focused course?

• Due to existing power dynamics in the classroom as well as the potential risk involved in sharing one’s thoughts and lived experiences, students with minoritized identities may be silent or silenced in the classroom. Students who are not out about their sexual/affectional and/or gender identity may be rendered unable to speak up during classroom discussions. Instructors who can attend to these dynamics in real time by creating opportunities for students to be seen, but not forcing them to be out, will likely have a positive impact. Thus, it follows that a question instructors should pose for themselves is: How am I considering the non-dominant voices of my students, even if they do not or are not able to engage verbally?

• How do I rely on examples that reflect my own identities or those of the dominant culture? How can I adjust my classroom examples to represent diversity in race/ethnicity, ability status, relational identity, expansive queer identities, documentation status, faith affiliation, and other salient identities?

• How can I incorporate an Equity Literacy Lens into all areas of my courses (Gorski, 2013)? More than cultural competence or diversity awareness, equity literacy prepares us to see even subtle ways in which access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors. By recognizing and deeply understanding these conditions, we are prepared to respond to inequity in transformational ways in the immediate term. We also strengthen our ability to foster longer-term change by redressing the bigger institutional and societal conditions that produce the everyday manifestations of inequity.
Gather Resources

All students can benefit from hearing narratives that are representative of diverse voices and can challenge a students' own worldview. These additional perspectives can assist in preventing heteronormative, gender binary, racially privileged, hegemonic traps that render minoritized voices as invisible (Lugg, 2003; Lugg & Murphy, 2014; Misgav, 2016). This particular outcome is counterintuitive to the primacy of a queer intersectional approach, which aims to shed light on multiply marginalized communities and maintain critical voices against sustained structures of power (Chan et al., 2017; Cor & Chan, 2017). We also know that we as educators are susceptible to this issue (Chan et al., 2018). To avoid these stalemates, we strongly suggest incorporating course readings, lecture examples, and assignments that represent differing perspectives. We suggest that a minimum of 50% of all course readings should be authors of color, queer authors of color, and trans and gender nonconforming authors, for example. It is also common for educators to include resources that breed significant familiarity or comfort (Chan et al., 2018). A queer intersectional approach refutes this idea, considering normative experience and social location of identities shift across time, history, and location (Cole, 2008, 2009; Smooth, 2013). Discourse grounded in a queer intersectional approach operates continuously to reform boundaries around which language and identities are privileged (Few-Demo, Humble, Curran, & Lloyd, 2016). If educators are incorporating guest speakers into the class discussion, incorporate the same minimum percentage.

Generate Dialogue on Diversity within Identity Categories

hooks (2003) makes clear that for students to build critical consciousness, pressure from the educator is not required; instead, students need the distinct opportunities to think critically about the world surrounding them. To foster a consciousness and literacy surrounding intersectionality and the diversity inherent within queer communities, educators must engage students in critical dialogues as a foundation, especially to present context and history as shaping the complexity of language and identities (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Rodriguez, Boahene, Gonzalez-Howell, and Anesi (2012) point out how making the expectation explicit that students will engage in systemic conceptualizations and critical analyses, and presenting them with repeated opportunities to practice these skills, can help to transition them from dismissal of and toward engagement with difficult sociopolitical material. Critical dialogues can support students in expanding essentialist and traditionalist understandings of queerness to include positions at the margins of the acronym. In other words, critical dialogues can help students not only engage with concepts of intersectional queer theory, but also with the process of queering knowledge.

King and Baxter-Magolda (2005) note that students’ positions along a multidimensional developmental spectrum of intercultural maturity must also be taken into account. Perez, Shim, King, and Baxter Magolda (2015) define intercultural maturity as a student’s ability to “understand the complexities of intercultural issues and dynamics, and to act in ways that are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate” (p. 760). Understanding students’ developmental positions can help tailor dialogues on the diversity and intersections of identity in
ways that support student learning while simultaneously challenging their preconceptions.

**Target Opportunities to Dismantle Intersecting Forms of Oppression**

Counselor educators could drive their readings, the structure of the curriculum, and pedagogical activities to initiate strategies for social action, community organizing, and activism (Ratts, 2017; Ratts et al., 2016). This particular strategy attunes to philosophical underpinnings in a queer intersectional approach by garnering possibilities and sites for a social justice agenda (Bowleg, 2012, 2017). Educators implementing such an approach must be concerned with action as much as dialogue (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Cor & Chan, 2017). Similarly, educators must also implement pedagogical strategies to highlight multiply-marginalized communities often invisible in unilateral perspectives considering one form of oppression at a single moment (Cole, 2008, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). One example might include the use of a lab component in the class that dedicates an entire hour to group dialogue, which is a useful method to navigate the group as a microcosm of society in association with the interactions generated across group members’ complex social identities (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Using a group dialogue format to highlight intersecting oppressions may help students connect the complex organization of oppression to form coalitions rather than competition (Cole, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2012). Group work can provide a space to generate strategies for action, disentangle intersections of social identities, and work through emotions emanating from difficult dialogues.

**Prevent horizontal oppression.** Members of historically minoritized communities can exact their own forms of oppression on other members within the same communities. Queer communities are not immune to this dynamic (Ansara et al., 2013; Moe, Bower, & Clark, 2017). To move beyond creating a hierarchy of oppression while also using intersectional approaches, we suggest becoming more aware of ideas around homonormativity (Cor & Chan, 2017). Homonormativity addresses privilege within queer communities. Current events can also spark discussions surrounding horizontal oppression within queer communities. For instance, the film *Stonewall* (2015) attempted to recreate the history of the Stonewall riots as a hallmark of LGBTQ+ history. However, the film excluded other communities vital to the history of Stonewall, including queer people of color, women, and trans communities. As a result, the film contributed to the erasure of other communities central to liberation in LGBTQ+ history while substantiating a history of White gay male dominance in queer communities. Another example to highlight is the most recent Women’s March, which was marked particularly in advocacy and activism for women, but did not necessarily prioritize the needs of women of color and trans women.

**Foster identity and language as source of resilience.** Grounded in a queer intersectional approach, using language to claim intersectional social identities can inform personal meaning and offer a foundation for resilience (Cor & Chan, 2017; Singh, 2013). Collins highlighted intersections as a pathway to affirm resilience and possibilities to change inequities within education, the academy, and social structures (1986, 2004, 2015). This strategy is particularly pivotal in using
minoritized experiences to augment representation and problematize historical misconceptions (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Lugg, 2003; Lugg & Murphy, 2014). Educators can specifically discuss self-identification for students as a method for building resilience. Educators can highlight the creativity of language referring to social identities, especially when categories were historically predisposed to signify binary classifications. For instance, gay and lesbian was historically used to classify the difference between heterosexual and non-heterosexual, although the development of language over time and history has attempted to dismantle this particular binary (Cor & Chan, 2017; Goodrich et al., 2016). This language also did not feature gender identity and failed to include transgender communities within the dichotomy of heterosexual and non-heterosexual (Chan, 2018).

Disrupting binary classifications can reposition power back to members minoritized within queer communities (McCall, 2005). Affirming identities beyond those represented in the LGBT initialization is a way to center voices not often heard, even in ostensibly queer organizations, programs, and publications (Cor & Chan, 2017). For example, counseling and counselor education students will have clients using multiple terms to refer to their identities (e.g., pansexual, homoflexible, heteroflexible, omnisexual, polysexual, fluid). Each of these terms relates to bisexuality, but clients who use one of these terms rather than “bisexual” have specific reasons for doing so. Students training to be counselors would err in conflating these diverse identities with bisexuality. Counselor educators can also connect this information to how clients and students served by counselors may feel more authentic with the use of a more specific term to claim their sexual or affectional identity (Cor & Chan, 2017).

Directions for Future Research

Future research can benefit from a queer intersectional approach as a research paradigm. To integrate these paradigms for research designs and studies, researchers must consider the purpose, research questions, and sample involved across tools for data collection and data analysis. Similarly, researchers can use tenets underscoring these theoretical frameworks and paradigms, but must consider the utility with a given phenomenon of interest. Frequent issues in research paradigms relate to the misinterpretation of paradigms (e.g., intersectionality, queer, queer intersectional) without fully illustrating the core tenets and histories involved to realize the overarching purpose of the philosophical underpinnings in the design of the study (Bowleg, 2017; Bowleg & Bauer, 2016; Corlett & Mavin, 2014). Additionally, there is a particular preexisting dearth of research surrounding gender identity in confluence with the phenomenon of exploring specific sexual and affectional identities (e.g., pansexual, bisexual, demisexual). Conversely, contemporary research has historically had a tendency to collapse identities within queer communities together without illustrating the necessary nuances and listening to the voices of historically minoritized subgroups within the overarching population (Griffith, Akers, Dispenza, Luke, Farmer, Watson, Davis, & Goodrich, 2017; Goodrich, Farmer, Watson, Davis, Luke, Dispenza, Akers, & Griffith, 2017).
Conclusion

In sum, we believe that traditional pedagogical assumptions and approaches regarding queer narratives, experiences, and identities fall dangerously short. It is not enough for educators to refer to themselves as inclusive without intentionally utilizing an expansive framework. We have provided an overview of a queer intersectional lens to apply to all aspects of education and curriculum. Our strategies offer concrete methods for implementing this approach that requires intentionality, awareness, and time. While these strategies are not exhaustive, they allow for engagement in a process that offers an authentic and increasingly transparent examination of our biases, worldviews, and at times, confining perspectives. In counseling as well as other disciplines, we are called not only to “do no harm” but to “do good.” This framework helps us achieve such a call to action.

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