

Exploring Counselor Self-Efficacy Through a Service-Learning Project among Youth with Unique Abilities

Caitlin Frawley
University of Central Florida

Laurie O. Campbell
University of Central Florida

Viki P. Kelchner
University of Central Florida

Kathryn Babb
University of Central Florida

Service-learning has been employed in higher education both within and outside of courses as a teaching method and instructional approach (Salam et al., 2019). Fields of study that employ service learning include nursing (Gresh et al., 2021; Hart, 2015; Mumba et al., 2022), teacher education (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2021), science (Sewry & Paphitis, 2019), medical (Tiako et al., 2021), and social work (Claes et al., 2022). While not all higher education curricula utilize service-learning, some programs, such as counselor education, can incorporate service-learning through individual counseling, group counseling, social emotional instruction, career planning, and other field work experiences. Service-learning has been embraced in higher education (Bettencourt, 2015).

The robust nature of service-learning moves beyond a teaching approach to engaging in service to the community (Geller et al., 2016). However, communities are not necessarily defined by a geographical location but can be a group of people who share the same characteristics. One such community is individuals with intellectual disabilities. Since, counselors aim to increase the mental health and social wellness of individuals across the neurodiversity spectrum, service-learning has been identified as a potential powerful instructional approach for counselors-in-training (Langellier et al., 2020).

Counselors-in-training have noted they felt ill-prepared to counsel individuals with intellectual disabilities due to the counselors' lack of preparation and encounters with this diverse population (Rivas & Hill, 2018). Feelings of self-doubt or other expressions

ABSTRACT

A service-learning project was conducted with counselors-in-training to increase self-efficacy for interacting with individuals with unique abilities/intellectual disabilities. Counselors-in-training ($N=27$) completed a semester-long service-learning project and took a pre and post assessment. The results indicated that self-efficacy improved for all counselors-in-training. The paired samples *t*-test identified that the mean increase in self-rated self-efficacy was statistically significant with a medium to large effect size, $t(26) = -4.052, p < .001, d = .742$. However, the increase of self-efficacy was greater among the counselors-in-training who had no prior experience with individuals with unique abilities/intellectual disabilities.

of low-self-efficacy can affect how counselors intersect and interact with clients (Mitran, 2022). More specifically, low-self efficacy is connected to motivational issues. If a person lacks confidence that they can complete a specific task, it is likely that the task will either be avoided or resisted, or an attempt will be made superficially. The impact of low self-efficacy can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of failure and contributes to learned helplessness (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Self-efficacy refers to the belief one holds about their ability to execute behaviors necessary to complete a specific task (Bandura, 1977). The development of self-efficacy can be accomplished several ways by: (a) practicing and receiving positive regard for completing the task or behavior appropriately, (b) observing others successfully completing the task or behavior, (c) listening and acting on others' encouragement about personal capabilities, and (d) being intentional about practicing positive emotional, physical, and physiological states of mind (Bandura, 1977; 2008). Therefore, the following exploratory pilot study examined the effect of service-learning on counselors-in-training self-efficacy.

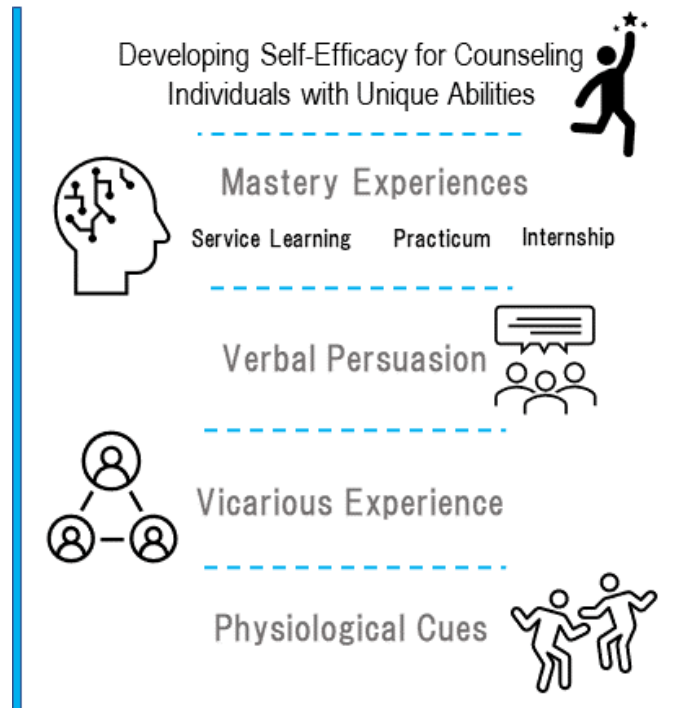
Counselors-in-training' Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy has been linked to counselors' performance, interest, and levels of comfort in a therapeutic role (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Lent, Hill & Hoffman, 2003). Therefore, counseling programs have designed curricula to build counselors' knowledge and skills (CACREP, 2016) which can lead to improved self-efficacy. Pragmatically, for counselors-in-training, self-efficacy can be fortified through active learning training exercises, service-learning, practicum, and internships (Ikonopoulous et al., 2016). Mastery experiences such as service-learning activities, practicum, and internship can contribute to building self-efficacy for counselors (Bandura, 2008). Further, self-efficacy relates to an individual's self-evaluations which influence behaviors and experiences, including expenditure of energy towards reaching a goal, and the likelihood of attaining that goal (Carey & Forsyth, 2009).

Prior research of counseling programs' curriculum has noted deficits in providing training to work with individuals with unique abilities (Mitran, 2022; Smart & Smart, 2006). Deroche and colleagues (2020) recommended that counselor educators devote equal instruction related to disabilities in multicultural counseling classes to increase counselors-in-training preparedness. Bandura (1997, 2001) noted, preparedness and mastery experiences leads to self-efficacy (see Figure 1). Therefore, in the following section, we provide a review of service-learning, followed by an overview of how this approach can increase counselors'-in-training self-efficacy for interacting with diverse populations, including youth with unique abilities.

Figure 1

Developing Self-Efficacy



Service-Learning

Calls for employing service-learning opportunities in counselor education acknowledge the potential for the learning to increase awareness and advocacy for diverse client populations (Langellier et al., 2020). Benefits for counselors-in-training can be personal and professional. Counselors-in-training who engage in service-learning experience growth in (a) self-awareness (Langellier et al., 2020; Merrell-James et al., 2019), (b) clinical self-efficacy (Bjornestad et al., 2016; Midgett et al., 2016), (c) empathy (Keim et al., 2015; Merrell-James et al., 2019), and (d) understanding of their counseling advocacy roles (Farrell et al., 2020; Lee & McAdam, 2019; Lloyd-Hazlett et al., 2022).

Ehrlich (1996) provided a framework for service-learning, stating service-learning links community service to academic studies. Arnold and McMurtery (2011) explained, counselors-in-training who enter the profession without experiences or involvement with “real” people often express apprehension and uncertainty about their counseling skills. Specifically, service-learning is a beneficial tool for counselors-in-training to engage in

realistic counseling work prior to practicum experiences (Gehlert et al., 2014; Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009).

Service-learning should include a structured time for counselors-in-training to engage in self-reflection (Thanasiu et al., 2018). The process of self-reflection allows for counselors-in-training to connect their experience to their professional knowledge, distinguishing service-learning from simply community service (Thanasiu et al., 2018). Participating in service-learning has been found to promote ongoing civic engagement (Langellier et al., 2020). Through participation in service-learning, there are multiple opportunities to engage and interact with clients. Service-learning should provide a reciprocal benefit for both learners and the community.

Youth with Unique Abilities/Intellectual Disabilities

For the purpose of this study, youth with unique abilities are those individuals under the age of 18 who have an intellectual disability. Throughout the rest of this paper, we have chosen to adopt assets-based verbiage (i.e., unique abilities) to describe youth with intellectual disabilities. United States Census Bureau (2022) data indicated that nearly 41 million Americans were living with a disability between 2016-2020. Additionally, one in six children have one or more disabilities (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022).

Youth with unique abilities have the propensity to develop mental health challenges such as ADHD, conduct disorder, and anxiety (Lambros et al., 2016). Further, anxiety, depression, anger, loneliness, and rejection are more common in youth with unique abilities than youth without unique abilities (Hatch, 2009; Shechtman & Pastor, 2005). While a high proportion of youth with unique abilities endure mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, trauma; Lever & Geurts, 2016), researchers revealed that only 10% of youth with unique abilities living with mental health diagnoses received mental health interventions (Einfeld et al., 2006). Therefore, it is likely that many counselors will interact with youth with unique abilities in their career, and thus, need to be prepared to support them. However, counselors' self-efficacy in working with youth with unique abilities may be low.

According to Kahveci (2016), counselors have historically had limited experience working with youth with unique abilities for a variety of reasons. First, working with clients with unique needs may be challenging for many counselors (Arman, 1998; Glenn, 1998). Second, some counselors may feel uncomfortable working with youth with unique abilities (Kahveci, 2016) due to bias because of inaccurate information or perceptions. Third, counselors may apply theory, skills, and interventions in varying ways, especially when working youth (Arman, 1998; Glenn, 1998; Reis & Colbert, 2004). When roughly 17% of children and 25% of adults living in the United States have a disability, counselors need to have the appropriate skill set to work with this population to ensure best outcomes for youth and families (CDC, 2022; Zablotsky et al., 2019).

Service-Learning with Youth with Unique Abilities/Intellectual Disabilities

Counselors-in-training expressed a lack of readiness and formal preparation for counseling individuals with unique abilities (Williams & Haranin, 2016). Mitran (2022) noted counseling preparation programs rarely address (and sometimes neglect) the unique abilities population. One reason that some programs may not incorporate the

unique abilities population may be related to accreditation standards. The CACREP (2016) *standards* for clinical mental health preparation programs do not directly reference the need for fostering counseling competencies related to servicing individuals with unique abilities, or other populations across the neurodiversity spectrum (Irvine, 2019).

However, counselors must be prepared to work with individuals with unique abilities, as they often endure high levels of co-occurring mental health disorders, such as depression, trauma, and other mental health disorders (Lever & Geurts, 2016). Therefore, it is important that counselors-in-training engage in service-learning programs to increase confidence and knowledge regarding working with youth with unique abilities. Service-learning is a promising approach to providing counselors-in-training with knowledge and realistic supervised clinical experiences working with youth with unique abilities. Through service-learning, counselors-in-training can apply their new knowledge toward working with youths with unique abilities.

The Present Study

It is important to investigate if adjunct service-learning programs can support counselors-in-training learners' self-efficacy for working with individuals with unique abilities. The aim of this study was to explore the self-efficacy of counselors-in-training to work with individuals with unique abilities before and after completing a service-learning program designed to support interaction with individuals with unique abilities. The research questions that guided this investigation were:

RQ1 - How do counselors-in-training self-efficacy to work with individuals with unique abilities scores change after volunteering in a semester-long service-learning program for individuals with unique abilities?

RQ2 - Do counselors-in-training with previous work experience serving individuals with unique abilities report differing self-efficacy levels, as compared to counselors-in-training with no experience?

RQ3 - What are the differences in perceived knowledge, competence, and confidence responses for counselors-in-training and by subgroups?

Participants

We recruited 27 practicum-level counselors-in-training from a large university in the Southeast United States who sought a service-learning opportunity to interact with youth with unique abilities. Demographic data identified that all participants were women. We shared information about the service-learning program with students in the University counselor education program, and counselors-in-training volunteered to participate in the service-learning and data collection processes. The participants' ages ranged between 22 and 50, and most identified as being between the ages of 21 and 30 ($n = 25$; 92.6), and fewer participants were between ages 31-40 ($n = 1$; 3.7%) and 41-50 ($n = 1$; 3.7%). In terms of previous experiences, 13 participants (48%) reported having no previous experiences working with youth with unique abilities.

Procedures

We obtained approval from the university institutional review board prior to data collection procedures to ensure compliance with ethical research practices. We developed a Qualtrics survey that included the following (1) informed consent, (2) the 9-item self-efficacy for working with individuals with unique ability scale (Authors, 2022), and (3) a demographic questionnaire. We asked participants to create de-identified research participant identification numbers to support our abilities to match participants' pretest and posttest responses. Participants completed the first survey one week prior to the service-learning experience, and the posttest survey was distributed via email one week after the program was completed. We exported the Qualtrics survey data as a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; Version 29) data file for the purpose of data analysis.

Self-Efficacy for Working with Individuals with Unique Abilities Scale

We developed the *Self-Efficacy for Working with Individuals with Unique Abilities/Intellectual Disabilities Scale* ([SE-UA/ID]; Authors, 2022), a 9-item instrument that measures counselors'-in-training self-reported levels of self-efficacy as it relates to working with individuals with unique abilities. The SE-UA/ID includes items worded in statements, including the following sample items: (a) "I feel comfortable working with individuals with unique abilities." and (b) "I am confident that I am resourceful in finding solutions to unexpected problems when working with individuals with unique abilities." The SE-UA/ID includes three domains, *Knowledge* (Respondents indicated the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with each statement across a seven-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"). In the current study, the SE-UA/ID demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .928$).

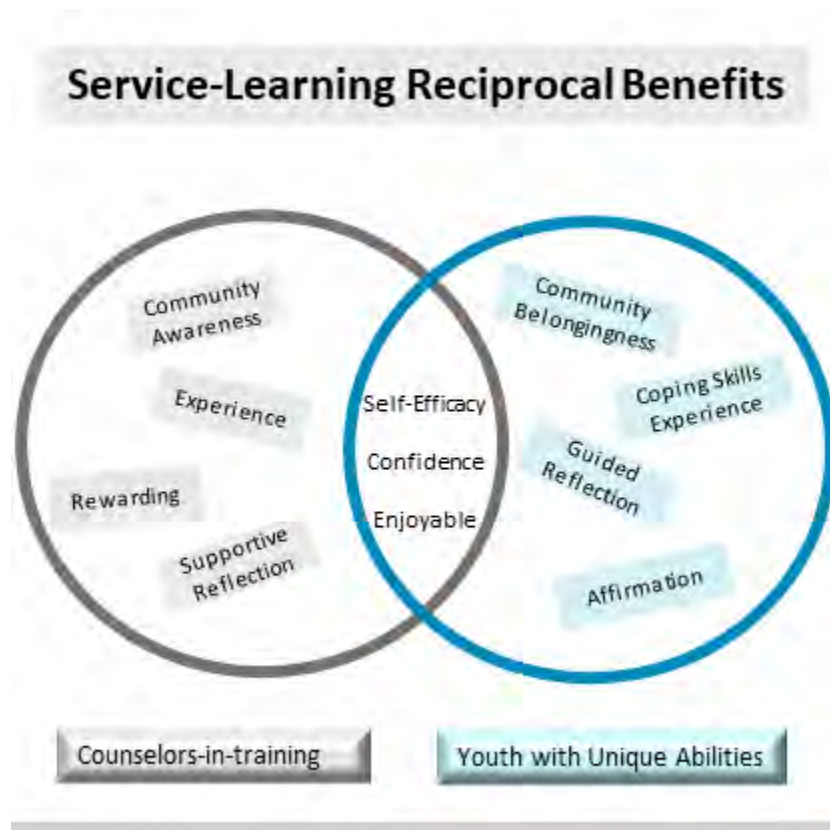
Service-Learning Project

We fostered a community-university partnership with an organization focused on promoting the wellness of youths with unique abilities. In establishing the partnership, we aimed to develop a service-learning project that offered reciprocal benefits for counselors-in-training and youths in the community with unique abilities. We identified a need for this project after a comprehensive review of counseling literature, as we found that a strong majority of counseling trainees feel unprepared to counsel and interact with youth with unique abilities upon graduation (e.g., Kahveci, 2016; Mitran, 2022; Williams & Haranin, 2016). In promoting counselors'-in-training development, we tailored the service-learning project to provide the following benefits to counseling trainees: (a) increased awareness of the unique ability community; (b) gain real world experience counseling youth; (c) attain personal fulfillment/reward through interacting with youths; (d) learn through supported reflection within encouraging supervisory relationship. For the youth receiving the service learning, we developed a program to support youths' increased: (a) community belonging, (b) coping skills development, (c) guided reflection, and (d) identity-affirmation. Through this service-learning project, we

aimed to promote self-efficacy and confidence through an enjoyable experience for both counselors-in-training and youth (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Venn Diagram of Service-Learning Reciprocal Benefits



Prior to the counselors'-in-training service-learning experience working with youth with unique abilities, a counselor educator who specialized in counseling with individuals with unique abilities facilitated a pre-programming training. The counselor educator provided instruction related to counseling facilitation strategies needed for competent clinical work with youths with unique abilities. The counselor educator covered the following critical content areas prior to the start of the service-learning program:

- 1) How to honor neurodiversity in the counselor-client relationship
- 2) Specific neurological considerations for service delivery (e.g., youths' attentiveness, social capacities)
- 3) Facilitating developmentally appropriate counseling approaches with pre-adolescents and adolescents (e.g., expressive arts and youth-friendly mindfulness exercises)

- 4) How to foster a neurodiversity-affirming therapeutic environment to help youth feel connected and capable
- 5) Exercising flexibility and adaptability while utilizing expressive arts with youth who are neurodivergent (e.g., choice-giving, respecting sensory processing differences such as sensitivities to textures or sounds).

During the pre-service-learning training, counselors-in-training were encouraged to ask the facilitators questions to ensure that they understood the content and training. Further, the counselor educator provided space for the counselors-in-training to process their reactions to the training and share their feelings about starting the service-learning program. Thus, in addition to providing training, the counselor educator focused on cultivating a safe and caring supervisory relationship with the supervisees - consistent with students' developmental levels as practicum level counseling students. Because these students were practicum-level counselors-in-training, the counselor educator considered developmental needs, including their needs for clear, concrete, and consistent feedback and instruction (Lambie & Stickl Haugen, 2021).

The Service-Learning Experience

The counselors-in-training facilitated seven expressive arts groups for youths with unique abilities over the course of one semester during their practicum. The service-learning program served as an additional learning experience for the counseling trainees to gain realistic clinical counseling experience servicing youth in the community. The counselors-in-training facilitated these groups under the supervision of a licensed mental health counselor and qualified supervisor with expertise related to counseling with youth and therapeutic work with individuals with unique abilities. The service-learning program was developed through a university-community partnership between the researchers' university and a community-based program dedicated to supporting wellness for individuals with unique abilities and neurodiversity. The counselors-in-training facilitated the 1.5-hour expressive arts groups in a private counseling space at the university. Each week, the facilitators started the groups by introducing and practicing a youth-friendly mindfulness exercise and/or meditative activity to help ground the youth and to introduce exercises that the group members could utilize outside of the group (e.g., at home, school, etc.).

Each week, the facilitators met with the counselor educator and a doctoral-level counselor education student to review group curriculums and provide feedback to counselors-in-training. The counselors-in-training worked together to plan sessions, choose expressive arts activities, and discuss objectives and goals for each group. The counselor educator encouraged counselors-in-training to provide rationale for their expressive arts activity choices, as well as list clear objectives associated with each activity, to promote counselors'-in-training understandings of the importance of selecting expressive activities with intentionality. During these weekly meetings, the counselor educator and doctoral student focused on encouraging the counselors-in-training efforts and communicating their trust in the counselors-in-training capacities and developing competencies related to servicing youths with unique abilities.

Data Analysis

To calculate the *Self-Efficacy for Working with Individuals with Unique Abilities/Intellectual Disabilities Scale* score, all responses were summed. Higher scores indicated a great level of self-efficacy. Assumptions were evaluated and all assumptions were met. An examination of a histogram indicated that the data was normally distributed and there were no outliers. Next, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the pre-assessment to the post-assessment. Next, scores were calculated for knowledge (2 items), competence (3 items), and confidence (4 items) questions and analysis included the pair samples *t*-test. Finally, the cases were split on those who had previous experience working with individuals with unique abilities ($n = 13$) and those that did not ($n = 14$). Paired samples *t*-test were calculated based on the split cases of the pre and post assessments and the knowledge, competence, and confidence questions.

Results

To examine whether participants experienced changes in self-rated self-efficacy for working with individuals with unique abilities after the service-learning program, we conducted a paired-samples *t*-test of the two administrations of the self-efficacy scale. We identified a mean increase in students' self-rated self-efficacy scores from pre-assessment ($M = 49.4074$, $SD = 8.55866$) to post-assessment ($M = 54.5556$, $SD = 4.81451$). The mean increase in self-efficacy was 5.15 with a 95% confidence interval (CI) ranging from 2.54 to 7.76. The paired samples *t*-test identified that the mean increase in self-rated self-efficacy was statistically significant with a medium to large effect size, $t(26) = -4.052$, $p < .001$, $d = .742009$.

To answer RQ2, we created a new variable titled *First Time* (i.e., prior experience working with individuals with unique abilities and those who did not). First, we examined group-level differences at the pretest point to examine whether participants with prior experiences entered the service-learning program with stronger levels of perceived self-efficacy. Descriptive statistics indicated that participants with prior working experiences reported higher perceived self-efficacy at the pretest point ($M = 53.29$) than participants with no prior working experience ($M = 45.23$). The results indicated that counselors' previous experiences impacted pretest perceived self-efficacy ratings.

Next, we computed the paired samples *t*-tests while splitting the data by previous work experience. Individuals with no prior experiences working with youth with unique abilities demonstrated the most significant self-efficacy gains. For participants with no prior experiences, our results suggested a mean increase in their self-rated self-efficacy scores from pretest ($M = 45.23$, $SD = 9.2$) to posttest ($M = 52.85$). For individuals with no prior experiences, the mean self-efficacy increase was 7.62 ($SD = 8.38$, $p = .003$), and the mean increase was statistically significant, $t(12) = 3.276$, $p = .003$. For the participants who reported having previous working experiences with youth who have unique abilities, these participants experienced mean increases in self-efficacy from pretest ($M = 53.29$) to posttest ($M = 56.143$). For participants with previous working experiences, the 2.86-point mean increase in perceived self-efficacy was statistically significant, $t(13) = 3.285$, $p = .003$.

Next, to answer RQ3, we examined the SE-UA scale by question type: knowledge, competence, and confidence. At the pretest point, participants with previous

experiences working with youth with unique abilities reported higher levels of perceived knowledge (previous experience, $M = 12.07$; no previous experience, $M = 9.15$), competence (previous experiences, $M = 12.92$; no previous experiences, $M = 14.61$), and confidence (previous experiences, $M = 24.28$; no previous experiences, $M = 21.46$). After examining pre-service-learning differences among participants based on their previous working experiences serving youth with unique abilities, we examined whether individuals experienced different efficacy gain levels based on their previous working experiences. We computed three paired samples t -tests and identified that participants demonstrated mean pretest-posttest increases in *Knowledge* ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 2.39$, $p < .001$), *Competence* ($M = 1.04$; $SD = 2.56$, $p = .045$), and *Confidence* ($M = 2.3$; $SD = 3.9$, $p = .003$). Then we examined changes in participants' perceived knowledge, competence, and confidence, accounting for previous experiences with youths with unique abilities. We computed three paired t tests to examine participants' changes in knowledge, competence, and confidence from pretest to posttest, based on previous experiences working with youth with unique abilities. Our results suggested that participants experienced gains in self-efficacy across the three factors; however, participants' previous working experiences influenced the results. For the *Knowledge* domain, participants with no prior related work experience demonstrated stronger gains ($M = 3$, $SD = 2.582$; $p < .001$) than individuals with previous experience ($M = .714$; $SD = 1.55$; $.058$). In the *Competence* domain, the participants with no prior experiences reported more gains ($M = 1.77$; $SD = 3.2$; $.036$) than those with previous experience ($M = .36$; $SD = 1.55$; $p = .202$). For the *Confidence* domain, individuals without previous experience ($M = 2.85$; $SD = 5.0$; $p = .032$) and with previous experiences ($M = 1.8$; $SD = 2.83$; $p = .017$) experienced similar efficacy-related gains.

Discussion

We conducted a quantitative pilot study to examine counselors'-in-training self-efficacy for working with individuals with unique abilities after participating in a community service-learning project. The aim of the program was for the counselors-in-training to provide services to youth with unique abilities inclusive of: (a) individualized support to build affirmation, (b) fostering belongingness, (c) community awareness of others like them, and (d) coping skills experience that transfer from the project to home living.

The counselors-in-training voluntarily engaged in a semester-long project that began completing the pre-assessment, and subsequently completing a training focused on developmentally and ability-affirming ways of interacting with the youth clients. After the training, the counselors-in-training participated in a service-learning program and gained experience facilitating expressive arts counseling groups with youths with unique abilities. These groups included completing an expressive arts activity (e.g., wellness mandalas and safe place collages). Further, there were supported discussion and reflections of their interactions during the day and with others. In turn, the counselors-in-training gained formative feedback on their session planning and treatment objectives. Throughout the program, the counselors-in-training were supported by training, reflection, discussion, and supervision by the counselor educator.

The counselors-in-training in this study experienced growth in their self-efficacy as indicated by the increase in their self-efficacy scores after completing a service-learning program with individuals with unique abilities. These results are similar to other counselor education service-learning experiences found by Thanasiu and colleagues (2018), Long (2016), Zimmerman and Cleary (2006), Richards and Levesque-Bristol (2016), and Gonsalves and colleagues (2019) across multiple disciplines including counselor education, play therapy, nursing, engineering, information technology, world language, and information technology (Richards & Levesque-Bristol, 2016).

The pre-assessment results indicated that counselors-in-training who had not had prior experience working with individuals with unique abilities had lower self-efficacy than those who had prior experiences. Our results are consistent with previous research findings that suggested low self-efficacy for working with individuals with unique abilities stems from lacking supervised clinical experiences and counseling curriculum gaps (Mitran, 2022; Williams & Haranin, 2016). Rivas and Hill (2018) revealed that counselor trainees who lacked instruction felt ill-prepared, anxious, and frustrated, all physiological cues linked to low self-efficacy.

There were differences in domain-specific self-efficacy gains in knowledge, competence, and confidence among counselors-in-training based on their previous working experiences. Our findings suggested that counselors-in-training with no prior working experience with youth with unique abilities evidenced the most significant gains in self-efficacy scores after completing the service-learning project. Interestingly, all participants experienced similar improvements in confidence-related self-efficacy. This is important, as practicum-level counselors-in-training often function at the earliest supervisee developmental levels, which involves low levels of confidence and high levels of dependence and anxiety (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Therefore, service-learning opportunities may help promote counseling trainees' development as clinicians, moving from early developmental characteristics (e.g., low self-confidence, high dependency, low awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses) to high levels of counselor development (e.g., greater autonomy, lower anxiety, increased problem-solving abilities; McNeill & Stoltenberg, 2016).

Therefore, service-learning opportunities for pre-practicum to practicum level counselors-in-training may be vital, especially for counselors-in-training with limited previous working experiences with youth with unique abilities. While this study did not focus on the benefits of the program for the youth who attended the program, parental feedback substantiated marked improvement in their youths' social interactions and emotional competence/regulation. Further, the parents noted that their youth looked forward to the program and often replicated what they learned in other settings such as school and at home.

A limitation of the current pilot study was the lack of a control and/or a comparison group. Without a control or comparison group, we were unable to determine whether changes in perceived self-efficacy were specifically due to participation in the service-learning program. Iterations of this study might consider including a control group. While we examined the differences between prior experience and no experience with individuals with unique abilities, we did not consider the counselors-in-training developmental levels. Thus, future researchers might examine the effects of a similar service-learning program when counselors-in-training are compared to others at similar

developmental levels (e.g., pre-practicum, practicum, internship-level, or those who have not received service-learning).

Future implications for counselor education includes employing service-learning activities for multicultural competence such as working with individuals with unique abilities not only as a service to the community but to support the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the counselor-in-training (Arman & Scherer, 2002; Barbee et al., 2003; Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009). While this study focused on the benefit of improved self-efficacy with the counselors, future studies could consider measurable benefits for the youth with unique abilities. Anecdotal evidence from parents continues to support service-learning projects. However, measuring their perceptions of belonging, connectedness, and self-confidence after engaging in a counseling-community service-learning program.

Conclusion

The current study explored the self-efficacy experienced by the counselors-in-training interacting with the youth in a service-learning program. Individuals' self-efficacy were reshaped because of their participation in the service-learning project for youth with unique abilities. Counseling trainees who began their service with no prior working experiences with youths with unique abilities reported lower levels of self-efficacy for working with youth at the start of the service-learning experience. After completing the six service-learning project sessions, the counselors-in-training reported statistically and practically significant increased self-efficacy levels. A large proportion of counselors report low levels of self-confidence and readiness to counsel individuals with unique abilities; thus, counselor educators may strengthen novice counselors' perceived readiness and confidence for working with individuals with unique abilities through service learning, and these competencies may be developed in as few as six weeks.

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About the Authors

Caitlin Frawley

Caitlin Frawley, M.A., Ed.M. is a doctoral candidate in counselor education at the University of Central Florida. Her research interests include play therapy, clinical supervision, evidence-based child counseling, and the psychophysiological impacts of play therapy. Email: caitlin.frawley@ucf.edu

Laurie O. Campbell

Laurie is an interdisciplinary Learning Science researcher who investigates contemporary research questions and whose research foci includes: (a) harnessing instructional design to foster identity and inclusivity among underserved and underrepresented populations especially as it relates to STEM contexts; (b) the development of safe learning environments (e.g. civility, cyberbullying, and psychosocial awareness); and (c) the design and implementation of technology-supported active personalized learning for knowledge building

Viki P. Kelchner

Viki P. Kelchner is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida in the College of Community Innovation and Education in the Counselor Education and School Psychology department and Director of the Community Counseling and Research Center. Viki's research interests and publications focus on families, individuals/families with neurodivergence, and supporting high needs youth and families through school-based family services and intervention programs.

Kathryn Babb

Dr. Kathryn Babb earned her Ph.D. through the Counselor Education and Supervision program at the University of Central Florida. Her prior experience includes working as a public school counselor. Her areas of research include promotion of the school counseling profession, counseling of children and adolescents, and teaching in counselor education.