Carolina Counselor

Fall 2020

Official Newsletter of the North Carolina Counseling Association
## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Welcome to the 2020-2021 Academic Year!
- The North Carolina Counseling Association rejects racism, systemic oppression, and white supremacist ideologies.
- COVID-19 Considerations in Place Since March 2020
- Partnership with LPCANC Halted

**Have a Contribution for the Newsletter?**
Email your submission to: nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

**We're on Social Media**
Facebook: NorthCarolinaCounselingAssociation
Instagram & Twitter @nc_counselors

### Inside This Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the President</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Happenings</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and Advocacy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division News</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives From the Field</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2020-2021 Executive Officers

- President: John Nance
- President-Elect: Dominique Hammonds
- President-Elect-Elect: Sharon Webb
- Past President: Mark Schwarze
- Secretary: Taryne Mingo
- Treasurer: Rebecca Blanchard
- Member-at-Large Government Relations: Allison Crowe
- Member-at-Large: Courtney Walters
GREETINGS TO ALL NORTH CAROLINA COUNSELORS AND COUNSELING ASSOCIATION MEMBERS,

How to even begin writing this letter… Stepping into the President’s role with the North Carolina Counseling Association, I follow an important legacy of leadership, tradition, and wisdom within our state. Our immediate Past-President Mark Schwarze leaves a legacy behind of growth, unity, hope, and excellence. Thanks to his intense work over the past year, we are in excellent standing as an organization and I am placed in an excellent position to follow his vision. Thank you, Mark for all you have done for NCCA and for me personally.

Writing in the middle of a global pandemic, revitalized civil rights movement, and polarized political wrangling,…

...words will fail me in the complexity of our work as an association and profession. I am very excited to transition into the president role with NCCA as we step toward uniting the North Carolina counseling profession. We continue the unity conversations with the Licensed Professional Counselor Association of North Carolina with hope to join once again as a unified and stronger counseling association.

I come into the role with a professional identity as a counseling practitioner focusing on trauma and individuals suffering the symptomatic effects of Dissociative Identity Disorder, an educator
who worked with three universities over the last decade finally arriving as an assistant clinical professor at UNC Charlotte, a clinical supervisor in hospital, school, agency, and private practice settings, and lifelong student. I also serve as president elect for the ACA division or AADA. I truly love the counseling profession.

WE ARE STRONG BECAUSE OF 'US'

One of the most attractive aspects of NCCA is community. We are strong because of ‘us’. As a result of our strength in community, I hope we expect to take on the work of confronting racism, social injustices, and histories of discrimination on many fronts. The greater challenge is utilizing our strengths and gifts in building unity and healing the world around us as we look to the future. Our multifaceted diversity and commitment as a group and individuals has the potential to positively impact the entire state of North Carolina.

We live in a time of great division and adversity which North Carolinians experience and know first-hand. My passion focuses on Human Rights and Social Justice. I hope you will see that in how we develop through this year.

Our Goals for This Year Include:

- Develop, reinforce, and grow our leadership roles on the executive committee, executive council, committees, and divisions
- Introduce possibilities to upcoming leaders in NCCA Expand membership inviting professionals into the strength of our organization and community
• Become a vital and necessary resource for the members of NCCA through educational resources, professional advocacy, on-going continuing education, as well as mentoring leaders

• Find potential systemic racism within our organization and practices of our community, expose these practices, policies, and traditions with hope to create new and stronger philosophies and practices

Thank you for your continuing hard work and devotion to our profession!

SINCERELY,

JOHN

JNANCENCCA@GMAIL.COM

WWW.JOHNNANCEPHD.COM

NCC Virtual Conference the Week of February 22, 2021

https://nccounselingassociation.org/2021-annual-conference/
Carolina Counselor Sections

Branch News:
News about the North Carolina branch of the American Counseling Association

Campus Happenings:
News concerning student projects and student work in the department, university, community, and/or professional organizations such as local chapters of CSI and/or state, regional, and national counseling organizations

Diversity and Advocacy:
Discussion of issues related to diversity, multicultural competency, and advocacy; may address the helping professions directly or indirectly

Division News:
Any news related to NCCA division projects

Higher Education in NC:
Comments on the state of higher education in North Carolina and tips for effective teaching/counseling

Legislative News:
State and national news concerning enacted and proposed policy changes related to professional counselors in any setting

Member Spotlight:
NCCA members who deserve the spotlight! Please provide a photo of the nominee, a short summary of the member’s accomplishments, and contact information/photo of your nominee

Perspectives From the Field:
Professional and ethical issues in counseling, counseling theory/practice, and/or reflections on work as a student, professional counselor, counselor supervisor, and/or counselor educator

NCCA membership is required for all Carolina Counselor authors.
Inside This Issue

Campus Happenings:
- Webinars 101: CSI Chapters and Professional Development
  Erik Messinger
  Page 9

Diversity and Advocacy:
- Ethnic Racial Identity Theory and Counseling Adolescent Black Females
  Mechell Guy, Deborah Braboy, & Courtney Evans
  Page 12
- Depression, Anxiety, and Black Women: A Clinician’s Perspective
  Shakeerrah D. Lawrence
  Page 16

Division News:
- ACAC-NC: Advocating in Uncertain Times
  Courtney Evans
  Page 21
- North Carolina Addictions and Offender Counselors Association
  Stephanie Robinson
  Page 24

Perspectives From the Field:
- Counseling Children, Adolescents, and Their Families in the Midst of COVID-19
  Andrea Barbian
  Page 26
- Undisclosed Infidelity
  Russ Curtis & Elizabeth Likis-Werle
  Page 29

Published September 2020
Vanessa Doran, MAEd, LCMHC, NCC currently works at Jodi Province Counseling Services, PLLC in Wilkesboro, NC serving a rural community with an array of mental health needs. As a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and National Certified Counselor, she works with children as young as 2 years old to adults ages 40+, and everyone in between. Vanessa thoroughly enjoys working with middle and high school age kids and utilizing CBT, Person Centered, and Existential Theory in her counseling office. She graduated with an MAEd in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of North Carolina Pembroke in 2016, and her BA in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Vanessa enjoys learning about Expressive Arts therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Play Therapy.

Nicole Stargell, Ph.D., LCMHCA, LSC, NCC, BC-TMH is the Director of Information and Technology for the North Carolina Counseling Association. Nicole is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling at the University of North Carolina Pembroke. She serves as the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Field Placement Coordinator, the Counseling Programs Testing Coordinator, and Chapter Faculty Advisor for the Phi Sigma Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota. She is a member of the UNCP Institutional Review Board, the ACA Practice Brief Advisory Group, and the editorial board for Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation.

Back to School!
The Nu Sigma Chi Chapter of CSI at North Carolina State University has more than 50 active members including current students, alumni, and faculty. Over the past few years, the counselor education program at NC State has undergone some significant changes, including the implementation of an online counselor education program; this is in addition to the already established master’s and doctoral programs. As the program grew, so did the CSI chapter; now including members all throughout the state and surrounding areas. As the program and CSI chapter grew and developed, so did the interests of the students being served. In order to help meet the growing need of interests of students in the Ph.D. program and all three separate tracks in the master’s program, faculty virtually approached the leaders of Nu Sigma Chi to propose a collaboration to produce a professional development webinar series. This series would help expose students to the various areas of counseling that may not be discussed in-depth throughout coursework.

Erik Messinger, MA, LCHMCA, NCC, is a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University. He is the past Co-President of Nu Sigma Chi and the student coordinator of the webinar series. His research focuses on the mental health perceptions of first responders.
CSI is the cornerstone for professional development, yet with so many students in the surrounding areas, the Nu Sigma Chi chapter struggled to make events accessible for all members. In the past, the chapter attempted to engage in professional development, but attendance wavered. In order to reach more students, the chapter partnered with faculty to bring online webinars to the community. These webinars served as a way to connect online and on-campus students in one virtual place while exposing students to topics, such as: crisis, licensure, insurance, and online counseling. These webinars also functioned as a bridge between students and established professionals in the counseling field.

The partnered faculty had assisted in finding the first guest speakers and then chapter leaders began networking to continue adding webinar presenters. Webinars were conducted on a monthly basis over Zoom consisting of various themes. Nu Sigma Chi utilized professional committees within the chapter to delegate responsibilities such as creating and distributing flyers, utilizing Google forms (to track attendance), and assist in monitoring webinar attendance and questions. Additionally, these Google forms were used to compile suggestions of what attendees would like to see in future webinars. Since attendance was open to all current and past students of NC State, these webinars also served as a recruiting effort for the CSI chapter.

This continuing education webinar series was originally scheduled to be over the lunch hour to accommodate those working full time jobs and attending school. Another goal was to include topics of interest to all students from the doctoral program to all various tracks in the master’s program. Beginning topics included presentations about: personal and professional wellness, starting a private practice, gaining licensure, and finding appropriate supervision post master’s degree. Beginning webinars would gain attendance between 10-20 participants.

esmessin@ncsu.edu
Spring semester topics included: Trauma 101, Equine Therapy, Health at Every Size, and Social Emotional Learning, and Counseling Children and Adolescents. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way academia worked; the professional development webinar series saw a doubling of participants in the spring semester. Further feedback suggested the lunch time slot had not traditionally worked for many professionals and students, as many noted they would commonly meet with clients during lunch hours.

The Nu Sigma Chi leadership team and faculty saw the first year was a success, and is working on ways to engage even more of the CSI and NC State community. Current developments include a way to offer CEUs (for current and graduated counselors), and marketing to students taking practicum and internship. Webinars are being advertised as a way for counselors-in-training to receive indirect hours. Another way Nu Sigma Chi is looking to connect our community is by recruiting more students (current and alumni) to the program. Current doctoral students and past graduates all have unique experiences and certifications that appeal to the student body. The goal of incorporating past and present students is to highlight the work and accomplishments of the counselor education department at NC State. Webinars for the new academic year include: racial disparities and broaching, queer and trans cultural competence, and trauma focused CBT. In addition, the leadership team hopes to provide webinars in conjunction with awareness months and gain visibility within the counseling profession. While this model continues to grow and expand, it is Nu Sigma Chi’s hope that other CSI chapters can use this community model of online professional development webinars to encourage and incorporate their own chapter participation, development, and growth.
Across the country young women are regularly exposed to messages of presumed gender-appropriate behavior, appearance, and role expectations. Adolescent Black females, in particular, are exposed not only to these messages faced by the general female population, but potentially even more scrutiny. There are recurring reports in the news of issues involving discrimination of the Black female’s appearance, mainly targeting their clothing, hairstyles, and social behaviors in school.

Amid today’s issues that include a global pandemic, racial protests, and economic downfalls, it’s also a time of conflict, despair, and anxiousness as it relates to a Black adolescent girl’s developmental struggles. Young Black girls see mainstream media’s damaging stereotypes of Black womanhood. Behind the mask of an adolescent Black girl’s stereotypical high self-esteem and ethnic-racial identity, emerges socially constructed negative images of traditional Black femininity from days of slavery including Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, Angry Black Woman, and Strong Black Woman stereotypes (Collins, 2000). Devaluing of Black feminism is common with popular movies such as “Madea”, whereby the

Mechell R. Guy, ED, LPC-S is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas. She earned her Doctoral of Education in Community Care and Counseling in Marriage and Family. Her clinical expertise is in the areas of marital issues, family relationship problems, conflict resolution, anger management, adolescent, trauma, anxiety, depression, and life coach. She is certified facilitator for SYMBIS and Prepare/Enrich to provide marriage enrichment training and workshops.
images are depicted as a disrespectful, aggressive “Angry Black Woman.” Add to this the historical branding of products illustrating “Mammy”, depicting Black females as domesticated and servant to White families (i.e., Aunt Jemima). Even reality TV shows negatively portray Black females as loud, rebellious, rude, self-centered (“Sapphires”), controlling, “strong Black women.” There are numerous hip-hop music videos of sexy, seductive, and promiscuous “Jezebels” (i.e., Real Housewives); such stereotypical images highlight current racism and gender oppression (Collins, 2000).

The impact of these conventional stereotypes on a Black adolescent girl’s prosocial behaviors and psychological functioning is significant (i.e., risky sexual behavior, poor ethnic-racial identity development, low self-esteem, lack of self-efficacy, poor academics, maladaptive social behaviors, and psychological disorders; Taylor & Walton, 2011). It is imperative for young Black girls seeking counseling to be heard and understood. Counselors should seek to deeply explore messages about ethnic identity and Black femininity.

Deborah Braboy, PhD, LPC-S, NCC is an LPC-S in Arkansas and Oklahoma. She is an Assistant Professor in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate program at Liberty University. Her clinical expertise is with adolescents and adults primarily with grief and loss issues, depression, and anxiety. She enjoys mentoring and training individuals as they enter the counseling field. Areas of Expertise: Grief and Loss, Multicultural/Race Relations, Supervision, and Trauma

mguy2@liberty.edu
Fundamentals of Ethnic-Racial Identity (ERI) Theory

Ethnic identity development includes how an individual self-categorizes and psychologically attaches to an ethnic group; it is a part of one’s self-concept and identification. Studies suggest that racial identity is formed before gender identity in Black women (Jones-Thomas et al., 2011). According to Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2014), Ethnic Racial Identity Theory focuses on the process through which beliefs and attitudes develop. When considering a Black female’s ethnic-racial identity formation, ethnicity and race may even influence development. Black females who possess a strong ethnic-racial identity may be protected from the negative effect of racial discrimination.

Implications for Counselors

Counselors have an ethical responsibility to learn how to handle issues of racism, ethnicity, and cultural diversity with clients. As such, counselors should educate themselves about the ERI theory and other evidence-based practices to meet the unique needs of adolescent Black female clients. Many non-minority counselors...
working with the Black population, especially teenage girls, may need to partner with minority counselors as a sounding board to establish best practices to educate, advocate, and foster confidence in multicultural sensitivity to establish a proper treatment plan. In comparison, counselors who are people of color must consider the risk of being Black and managing their personal biases, judgments, and disclosures of racial experiences with impressionable young clients. In general, there are insufficient studies that consider feminine stereotype endorsement among Black females, comparative to their self-esteem and, even less attention toward identifying factors that may help buffer the adverse effects. Counselors can empower teenage Black girl clients when incorporating Ethnic Racial Identity theory into their theoretical orientation to elevate awareness of their thoughts and feelings, strengthen coping skills, reduce adverse reactions to how others see them, and how they see themselves.

References

mguy2@liberty.edu
As a clinician, when I ask a Black woman, “How are you doing,” she may simply respond with “Fine.” Those words can mask a myriad of underlying issues, as “fine” may mean “sad,” “hurting,” “worried,” “grieving,” or “depressed,” just to name a few. Two types of mental health disorders commonly diagnosed are depressive and anxiety disorders (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2018; Neal-Barrett et al., 2011). Symptoms of depression and anxiety present themselves differently in Black women. Examples include fatigue, insomnia, loss of interest in activities, worthlessness, worry, irritability, self-medicating, and nervous habits (Jones, 2015; Neal-Barnett & Crowther, 2000; Sosulski & Woodward, 2013). Black women report lower rates of depression than White women; however, they endure poorer health outcomes due to experiencing symptoms for more extended periods (Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). Symptoms become more debilitating for Black women for a variety of reasons, which include limited knowledge about diagnoses, denial, and a desire to remain self-reliant. Black women with these diagnoses are also either underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed (Bronder et al., 2014; Waite & Killian, 2008). These factors also coincide with

Shakeerrah D. Lawrence, MAEd, LCMHC, PVE is a doctoral candidate in the Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education program at North Carolina A&T State University. She has worked in the clinical mental health and rehabilitation counseling field for over eight years as a licensed clinical mental health counselor and vocational assessment specialist.

sdlawren@aggies.ncat.edu
barriers to treatment, as Black women may feel invisible or unheard while trying to convey their unique symptoms. As widespread as these issues were in previous years, concerns began to escalate because of the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened racial unrest, bringing systemic racism to the forefront of society (Watson et al., 2020).

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), labeled as a global pandemic in March 2020, has disproportionately affected communities of color (Balasubramanian et al., 2020). Weaknesses in the healthcare system, such as the inability to seek adequate care and lack of insurance, intensified during the pandemic (Torales et al., 2020). Physical distancing practices, stay-at-home orders, and event cancellations posed a threat to routines and increased the need for mental health services. As services transitioned primarily to telehealth, families with limited resources (e.g., lack of internet access, no insurance) continue to fall behind. Also, with continuous barriers and a changing climate, the intersection of race, gender, and class have new implications for mental health treatment.

Exposure to higher rates of racism, sexism, and poverty put Black women at higher risk for depression and anxiety. Numerous incidents of discrimination increase the risk of racial battle fatigue, which is a psychosocial stress response that occurs while in predominantly White environments (Barbee, 2002). Constant encounters with prejudices, biases, and microaggressions exacerbate racial battle fatigue in Black women. Additionally, the risk for physical and psychological issues are heightened, such as hypertension, headaches, self-isolation, and withdrawal. Different types of race-related stressors (e.g., microaggressions) also influence racial battle fatigue. Racism-related life events reflect personal experiences of bias by others, such as harassment by the police or housing discrimination.
Vicarious racism occurs through witnessing discrimination towards another person. Prominent examples of vicarious racism include replays of the Rodney King beating or coverage about the dragging death of James Byrd (Barbee, 2002; Humn & Craig, 2009). A sociocultural perspective involves an approach to mental health and related experiences that emphasize environmental factors of society, culture, and social interaction (APA, 2018). This approach is also beneficial when considering culturally appropriate treatments for Black women.

Stigma about seeking services remain a hindrance in the Black community. Many Black women hesitate to express past and present challenges, as “being depressed” or “having anxiety” can represent weakness, a troubled spirit, or lack of self-love (Waite & Killian, 2008). As a clinician, it is crucial to reassure Black women of the importance of seeking treatment. Mental health should is an essential part of the holistic approach. There are several ways clinicians can provide support to Black women during the counseling process. Clinicians should seek to understand and allow Black women to be fully understood. A push for greater understanding also allows for a validation of feelings. It is essential not to suggest that injustices associated with racism are no longer an issue or imagined, as this would cause significant damage to the therapeutic relationship (Jones & Guy-Sheftall, 2015; Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). Clinicians may also consider incorporating a systems-based and strengths-based approach, which helps interpret behaviors through select environmental factors (e.g., work issues, financial difficulties). A theoretical perspective can help define the type and level of treatment for Black women. Competence-centered mental health, along with psychosocial competence, focuses on improving personal strengths and skills. Likewise, intersectionality and Black feminist theory seek to shift the narrative and discover how social identity intersects with systems. These theoretical perspectives may help clinicians with the most appropriate treatment options for Black women.

sdlawren@aggies.ncat.edu
women (Hood et al., 2017; Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). Support is imperative for success. The therapeutic alliance should be one of mutual respect and understanding. Showing kindness, being genuine, and meeting Black women where they are, provides them with a safe space to flourish, positively impacting their personal and professional lives.

References

sdlawren@aggies.ncat.edu
Depression, Anxiety, and Black Women: A Clinician’s Perspective


We are not only facing a pandemic in regard to COVID19, but the world around us is infiltrated with systemic racism, civil injustice, and oppression. As counselors, we are called to take a stand; specifically, counselors working with children and adolescents must consider how this affects this specific population. Those who are the direct victims of such acts, those who witness these acts directly, and even those who hear about what is going on in the news. The world we live in is full of stress and potentially traumatic events for adults; let alone the potential impact on children and adolescents.

So, what can we do? Oftentimes, I believe people fail to act because they don’t know where to start. However, this is not an excuse. As counselors, I assume we sought training in the counseling profession out of a desire to help others. As such, we have been trained to be self-reflective, thoughtful, mindful of the psychological impact of events; as well as empathic to the world around us. Advocacy is at the heart of our very profession.

Courtney Evans, PhD, LCMHC-QS, NCC, RPT, ACS, BC-TMHC works as core faculty in the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies at Liberty University. She also works in private practice. Dr. Evans is President of the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling-North Carolina.
As such, it is my hope that each of you will engage in intentional reflection about what you can do to help; helping can start at the smallest systemic level, ourselves. As individuals, we should be mindful of what we speak to those around us, including our families and children. As counselors, we should not steer away from bringing up these topics with our clients, but rather, check in with our clients and bring these issues up with intentionality. It is important to acknowledge the impact of these uncertain times on each of our clients; especially our minority clients. As counselor educators, it is vital these topics are brought up in class to educate future counselors; it is our duty to seek change. By engaging in self-reflection and coming together as a group, we can be collective catalysts for change.

https://nccounselingassociation.org/ncca-divisions/acacnc/

cevans75@liberty.edu
Upcoming Webinar

Registration Opening Soon!

November 7, 2020
1.5 CEUs available

**Topic:** Aging Well in Multiple Global and Societal Crises

**Presenter:** John Nance, PhD, LCMHC-S, NCC

Dr. Nance is an assistant clinical professor at UNC-Charlotte. He is currently NCCA President and President-Elect of the national AADA division of ACA.

[https://nccounselingassociation.org/ncca-divisions/ncaada/](https://nccounselingassociation.org/ncca-divisions/ncaada/)
Division News

North Carolina Addictions and Offender Counselors Association
Stephanie Robinson

The 2020/2021 North Carolina Addictions and Offender Counselors Association (NCAOCA) board would like to welcome all past, present, and future division members to be a part of the association's growth over this upcoming year. Modeled after the International Association of Addiction and Offender Counselors (IAAOC), a division of ACA, NCAOCA’s goal is to advance the services provided to clients with addictive use disorders and/or those involved in the criminal justice system by supporting research and professional practice. As the current President of the NCAOCA board, I am excited to share several goals the board plans to accomplish.

The NCAOCA board is committed to supporting NCCA President John Nance and his newly formed NCCA Presidential Task Force on Systemic Racism & Oppression. As a division of a state branch, we will explore ways our division might have supported practices that may have perpetuated racism and oppression. Once identified, we will make a concerted and purposeful effort to abolish and change these practices. We will also begin working on identifying ways that the

Stephanie Robinson is an Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where she is the Graduate Certificate in Addictions Counseling (GCAC) Coordinator. She is licensed as both a LCMHC-S and LCAS-CSI. In addition to being a counselor educator, she has worked in various agency settings and has maintained a private practice for several years. A few of her research interests include addiction specialist's licensure policy and addiction counseling supervision.

stephanie.robinson@uncp.edu
division can promote practices to support equality. The members of the board also plan to submit a presentation proposal for the 2021 NCCA conference that supports the focus of the task force.

The board is also working towards updating the NCAOCA bylaws to be more consistent with the NCCA and IAAOC bylaws. Once updated, the bylaws will be emailed to all NCAOCA members for review, and uploaded to NCAOCA’s webpage.

NCAOCA will attempt to bolster our member list and member participation this year. We plan to hold a membership drive, with an announcement coming soon. The benefits of being a member of NCAOCA includes access to counseling professionals who are passionate about improving the lives of individuals with addictive use disorders and those involved with the criminal justice system. If you are interested in joining, simply complete the “NCCA Add Membership” form and select “NCAOCA.” The fee to add this division is $12; all new division members will receive NCAOCA promotional items for joining.

Finally, the NCAOCA board would like to solicit suggestions from our members for counselor trainings, events we can sponsor, outreach opportunities, and community involvement. Your participation and feedback will bring a renewed vitality to our shared goals. Please email any ideas or suggestions to stephanie.robinson@uncp.edu.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Robinson, PhD, LCMHC-S, LCAS-CSI, AADC, NCC President, NCAOCA

stephanie.robinson@uncp.edu
Navigating the Unexpected

The outbreak of COVID-19 brought about many unexpected changes and challenges for all of us. I am certain we can all list the myriad of ways that our “normal” routine has changed since last spring. As a mom, I quickly scrambled to accommodate and support my three elementary school kids in virtual learning. As an educator and clinician, I made the abrupt jump to one hundred percent virtual teaching and telemental health. Nothing could have fully prepared me for what laid ahead. Despite not having it all “figured out” myself, I was and continue to be in a position where others rely on my clinical skills and support.

As a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor in North Carolina, I specialize in working with children and adolescents. While the initial transition and adjustment to virtual learning and Stay at Home orders was difficult for many of my clients and their families, many held on to the hope that this was temporary, and we would soon be back to “normal.” However, this hope has faded and was recently shattered with the announcement that North Carolina schools will operate in a

Dr. Andrea Barbian is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies at Liberty University and the owner of Life’s Journey Counseling Services. Additionally, she is the current president-elect of the NC Association of Child and Adolescent Counseling and president-elect-elect of the NC Association of Counselor Education and Supervision. Contact email: apless2@liberty.edu
virtual format, or at best, a hybrid format this upcoming school year. Regardless of personal and/or political beliefs, this news continues to cause turmoil for many of my clients and has been the overwhelming majority of what we discuss in session. So again, as I navigate this upcoming school year as a clinician and mom, there are some important reminders for supporting children, adolescents, and their families in the midst of COVID-19.

**Reminders for Clinicians**

It is important to remember that all of our clients are unique and have differing experiences. However, for many of our child and adolescent clients, school is an important asset. Not only do schools provide a safe and nurturing environment and access to resources (i.e. nutrition, mental health and social services, supports for those with disabilities, etc.), schools are also critical in the role of social and emotional development. As clinicians, we must advocate for our clients and support them in finding additional services and supports during this time. While there are a number of restrictions to navigate, we can be creative and assist our families in finding ways to promote social and emotional development.

Clinically speaking, we must be diligent in our professional development and seek to learn how to engage our clients in telemental health. For example, incorporate art therapy by asking parents to provide their child with paper and crayons during their session, then discuss what the child is creating throughout the session. With the increase in virtual lessons and meetings that our young clients are engaging in their attention spans may be suffering. Consider doing two 30-minute sessions a week instead of one standard session or breaking the session into two parts (half for the child and half for the parents).
Additionally, be vigilant to the increased risks our child and adolescent clients are facing. Be on the look-out for signs of increased stress, anxiety, and depression. Be vigilant in screening for isolation, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, self-harm, and disordered eating. For our younger clients in particular, be aware of signs of neglect and abuse, as teachers and educational staff are generally responsible for reporting a large number of child neglect and abuse cases.

Throughout the next couple months, as our clients and families navigate the beginning of this unique school year, there are a number of tips we can share with parents as we offer support. Encourage parents to:

- Be aware of their own stress, anxiety, and wellness. It is important for parents to model safe and appropriate behaviors for their children. Self-care is essential and there is no shame in seeking mental health care of their own!
- Watch for signs of abnormal behavior from their child and openly communicate with the child and/or counselor if they are concerned.
- Consider a holistic approach to wellness. During this time, it is important to consider eating habits, sleep habits, hygiene, and physical activity in addition to social and emotional wellness.
- Lower expectations of not only their children, but of themselves. It is not realistic to think we will be able to maintain the level of functioning we were at pre-COVID. Many parents are juggling working and facilitating virtual learning. Now is the time to extend grace!

Finally, as clinicians, it is important for us to practice self-care during this unique and challenging time! Many of us are juggling new roles and responsibilities of our own. The work-life balance we once knew is a thing of the past. Take time to engage in activities that promote wellness so that we can be the best version of ourselves, personally and professionally.

apless2@liberty.edu
Let us not waste this pandemic experience. At the root of many of our personal and societal problems is greed and narcissism, the notion that one can take what they want without consideration of consequences. On a macro level, counselors can advocate making much-needed changes in society to eradicate the oppression caused by greed. On a micro level, counselors should examine practices and, when possible, enhance services to clients who experience the deleterious effects of narcissism. Case in point, despite the fact that most adults have experienced the traumatic effects of betrayal, to date, we have found no refereed journal articles related to undisclosed infidelity; which is when one partner suspects an affair but the other partner denies its occurrence. Comparatively, the literature is replete with articles about how to counsel couples dealing with disclosed infidelity. What follows then is a brief summary of information counselors need to know to work effectively with clients who experience undisclosed betrayal and its concomitant lies.

- By the time the betrayed client seeks counseling, they have likely been ridiculed, questioned, and harassed by their partner in an attempt to discredit their perceptions and intuition, commonly referred to as gaslighting.
Consequently, counselors should honor their clients’ intuition while skillfully processing the issue in order for clients to form their own conclusions.

- Betrayed clients need their own personal counselor, but if they decide to go to marriage counseling with their partner, make sure the betrayed client does not share too much personal information or anything about their partner's suspected lover. As the betrayer may share this information with their lover to keep their story straight and accumulate more fuel for gaslighting.

- Conversations with experienced couples’ counselors indicate that very few betrayed clients, if any, consciously attempt to manipulate the counselor into believing a false accusation about their partner. It is more likely for the deception to take place with an attorney in an attempt to gain a favorable divorce settlement. Thereupon, counselors can safely assume that clients are seeking support and a desire to understand if they should trust their perceptions.

- Does the client have a history of accusing their partners, past and present, of cheating? In general, what is the clients’ level of relationship security in current

Elizabeth Likis-Werle  
Assistant Professor  
Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Field Placement Coordinator  
Western Carolina University  
likiswerle@wcu.edu

curtis@email.wcu.edu
and past relationships? Thoroughly processing these two questions can help the counselor and client discover pertinent themes and patterns which may illuminate insight into the current situation.

- A common misconception in counseling literature is infidelity being the result of broader relationship issues between the couple, when, in fact, it has more to do with the personality of the betrayer (Williams 2011). Narcissism and the desire for novel sexual gratification is a common determinant of serial infidelity.

- “Never tell; if questioned, deny it; if caught, say as little as possible” (Bercht, 2020, https://beyondaffairs.com/suspicion-confrontation/suspect-your-spouse-is-cheating/). As painful as this may sound to counselors, the aforementioned are common strategies used by people who serially betray and lie to their partners.

- One reason serial betrayers lie to their partners is due to possessing a high desire to appear favorable to others (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001). And the accusation of betrayal is an acute threat to their need to maintain an ideal image to friends, colleagues, and family.

- A psychological process used by people who serially betray is called self-defense-based cognitive restructuring (SDBCR; Afifi et al., 2001). The betrayer uses this strategy as a justification for not telling the truth. Common SDBCRs include, “I was the one who ended the affair; I don’t want my kids to find out, even if it means keeping the lie from my partner; Admitting the affair will cause me to pay more money in a possible divorce.”

- Implicit apologies are when the betrayer attempts to atone for the affair without actually admitting to it (Curtis & Likis-Werle, 2020). A betrayer may, for instance, take their partner on an unexpected vacation, treat them to a nice dinner, or give them gifts.
Keep in mind, the trauma caused by infidelity is as severe as the suffering caused by sexual violence, war, and natural disasters (Roos, O’Connor, Canevello, & Bennett, 2019). As such, counselors need to help clients cope with intrusive images of their partner having sex, anxiety, depression, rage, and self-blame, while also regularly assessing for suicidal and homicidal ideation.

In conclusion, know there are many layers to an undisclosed betrayal to keep the betrayer safe and the betrayed partner traumatized. Consequently, a uniformed counselor can inadvertently cause further harm by discounting a client’s beliefs and intuition about undisclosed infidelity. It is hoped, then, this brief article provides information necessary to support clients effectively. Still, since we all have experienced betrayal in its various forms, counselors must seek adequate supervision when working with these clients.

References
NCCDA Virtual Conference

2020 Virtual Conference

New Beginnings
Going Boldly Forward
Advocating & Innovating for Change

Join NCCDA to Celebrate National Career Development Month
November 18-19

https://tinyurl.com/nccda2020

https://nccdaonline.org/Conference
Do you have a contribution for the Carolina Counselor? Would you like to discuss a potential idea for this newsletter?

email Nicole Stargell at nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

NCCA membership is required for all Carolina Counselor authors.

Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/
North Carolina Counseling Association

Follow NCCA on Twitter and Instagram!

@nc_counselors
The fundamental purposes of the North Carolina Counseling Association shall be:

- To provide a united organization through which all persons engaged or interested in any phase of the counseling profession can exchange ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and stimulate their professional growth.
- To promote professional standards and advocacy for the counseling profession.
- To promote high standards of professional conduct among counselors.
- To promote the acceptance and value of individual differences and the well-being of all individuals.
- To conduct professional, educational, and scientific meetings and conferences for counselors.
- To encourage scientific research and creative activity in the field of counseling.
- To become an effective voice for professional counseling by disseminating information on, and promoting, legislation affecting counseling.
- To encourage and support the divisions and chapters.

Contact NCCA: [https://nccounselingassociation.org/about/contact-us/](https://nccounselingassociation.org/about/contact-us/)

Join NCCA: [https://nccounselingassociation.org/about/member-benefits/join-ncca/](https://nccounselingassociation.org/about/member-benefits/join-ncca/)

President: Dr. John Nance
jnancencca@gmail.com

Executive Administrator: Calvin Kirven
P.O. Box 20875, Raleigh, NC 27619
888-308-6222 (toll-free), 919-256-2521 (local), ckirven@continentalpr.com

Director of Information & Technology
Dr. Nicole Stargell
nccounselingassociationweb@gmail.com

The North Carolina Counseling Association represents diverse interests of its membership through an Executive Council, geographically located members, specialty organizations, and committees. [https://nccounselingassociation.org/](https://nccounselingassociation.org/)