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The ARC Newsletter

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2024-25 Reflections and Projections for 2025-26

by the Anti-Racism Committee

As the 2024-25 academic year comes to a close, there comes a natural opportunity to reflect on the year and consider our program's continued commitment to equity and inclusion. Among this year's highlights was a program photoshoot, intended to capture the energy and culture of our program. These images are one small part in our ongoing efforts to revitalize and update the program website to reflect our program's values; ensuring that our digital presence communicates how our field of school psychology contributes to equity, inclusion, and anti-racist practices.

This year also marked continued efforts to improve program curriculum in efforts to ensure course content is equitable and representative of diverse voices. Ongoing course evaluations have played a critical role in helping the Anti-Racism Committee assess how program courses promote equitable practices, both in content and instruction. These evaluations, described in greater detail later in this newsletter (see *Development and Pilot Use of the Equity and Anti-Racism Curriculum Review Tool*), inform continuous improvement.

Students across the program continue to make meaningful contributions to advancing equity within the field. Through both coursework and research, many have sought to improve their own anti-racist practices. One such effort, highlighted in a later article (see *Development and Use of the C.L.E.A.R.*), features a student-developed assessment review tool designed to ensure culturally and linguistically equitable assessment practices.

Looking ahead, the Anti-Racism Committee is excited to build on this momentum in the 2025-26 academic year. In the fall, we plan to produce a series of program videos that highlight key aspects of our program and training model, such as what it's like to be a graduate student in our program, the work we do in schools, and most importantly, how we center equity and anti-racism in everything we do. These videos will serve as another platform to authentically represent the work and values of our program. We look forward to student participation in the development of these videos in the fall!

As we wrap up the semester, we want to remind students of the importance of completing the upcoming course evaluations. In particular, these surveys include questions that ask students to reflect on the equity of the course content and the instructor's practices. Your feedback is essential in helping the program identify areas for growth and affirm practices that are working well. By taking a few moments to share your experiences, you are directly contributing to the program's ongoing commitment to equitable and inclusive education.

Development and Use of the Culturally and Linguistically Equitable Assessment Review (C.L.E.A.R.)

by Tara Lovas

This semester, I have engaged in several projects aimed at advancing equity in school psychology by addressing discriminatory practices in assessment and educational environments. Drawing inspiration from my involvement with the Anti-Racism Committee (ARC), my work has focused on promoting culturally responsive practices, reducing implicit bias, and fostering more inclusive school systems.

One of my key projects was the development of the Culturally and Linguistically Equitable Assessment Review (C.L.E.A.R.), a tool designed for my academic assessment course to improve problem-solving processes within schools. I wanted to create a resource that ensures fairness in assessment administration for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. The result was a checklist that helps schools critically evaluate their assessment practices across five key areas:

Cultural Fairness – Evaluates whether the assessment avoids stereotypes and biases in its content.

Linguistic Accessibility – Ensures clear, accessible language, provides multilingual support, and reviews available language accommodations for CLD students.

Equitable Interpretation – Examines administration methods and grading procedures to ensure fairness in student evaluation.

Appropriate Norms & Comparisons – Assesses whether the norms used in the assessment reflect diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and identify potential performance disparities.

Review & Reflection – Encourages multiple ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge beyond dominant cultural practices and ensures equitable assessment outcomes.

Recognizing that school staff may have varying levels of understanding regarding cultural responsiveness and implicit bias, I designed C.L.E.A.R. to include resources on culturally responsive assessment techniques and implicit bias reflection guides. This tool aims to foster more equitable assessment practices and create a more inclusive educational environment for all students. I look forward to further refining this tool and supporting schools in their efforts to ensure fair and culturally responsive assessment practices. Stay tuned for more updates!

My work in equitable assessment also helped me with another project earlier this semester, a presentation in my cognitive assessment course titled *Considerations for Administering Cognitive Assessments for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. In this presentation, I discussed numerous existing racial inequities and discriminatory practices in intelligence testing within the United States by highlighting influences such as eugenics, the impact of acculturation, and key legislation that continues to shape the field. Specifically I examined landmark cases, including *Larry P. v. Riles*, *Diana v. State Board of Education*, and *Lau v. Nichols* to showcase their ongoing impact on the field of school psychology and CLD students nationwide. While research shows that substantial efforts have been made to ensure fairness in cognitive assessments, ongoing challenges persist in achieving true equity. However, my examination into the literature gave me hope, as there remains a strong commitment in the field to reform racist and discriminatory assessment practices and advocate for more comprehensive, student-centered evaluations.

Building up on those themes, I'm currently working on a paper for my ethics course that examines racial socialization in schools. This paper will explore major themes in the literature, including the role and responsibility of schools in facilitating racial socialization and the ways in which these processes impact student development. I also aim to incorporate parental perspectives, discussing how schools and families can collaborate to foster positive racial identity development and create more affirming educational environments for students.

Collectively, these projects have broadened my understanding of the experiences of CLD students and reinforced my commitment to promoting equitable practices in school psychology. They have also shaped my research interests, guiding me toward work that ensures fairness and inclusiveness in schools. I look forward to continuing to contribute to this important work and advocating for meaningful change!

Development and Pilot Use of the Equity and Anti-Racism Curriculum Review Tool

by Danielle German

As U.S. schools serve increasingly diverse student populations, it is imperative that school psychology training programs equip future practitioners to address social inequities, racism, and bias. Course syllabi provide a valuable starting point for examining the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles within graduate training programs. In response to this need, the Anti-Racism Committee within the School Psychology Doctoral Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, developed the Equity and Anti-Racism Curriculum Review (E&ARC-R) tool. This tool allows students and faculty to evaluate and assess course syllabi and content based on principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The E&ARC-R tool was developed by adapting and combining elements from the Council of Chairs of Training Councils' Academic Course & Internship/Post-Doctoral Seminar Audit Tool (CCTC, 2021) and the "Equity Review Tool" from Every Learner Everywhere (Holiday & Gable, 2022). The Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) pilot-tested the tool in spring 2023, with faculty and student representatives reviewing and rating the syllabi of core courses using Likert-type responses (0 = needs development, 1 = making progress, 2 = indications of success) with additional space for comments as well. After the initial pilot-test, the E&ARC-R was shared with all currently enrolled graduate students in the school psychology program, inviting them to rate and review any or all of the four core courses from the first year of the program (i.e., PSYC701, PSYC705, PSYC710, and PSYC725). The initial pilot test of the E&ARC-R indicated a need for student reviews to include information beyond the contents of course syllabi. Items were added to reflect instructor characteristics (i.e., my instructor uses students' preferred names and pronouns, including learning the correct pronunciation of student names) as well as course content (i.e., the curriculum includes content on how bias and stereotypes in the discipline have impacted the experiences of marginalized groups). This modified version of the E&ARC-R was used for subsequent curriculum reviews and utilized a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

To broaden the scope of the curriculum review, subsequent reviews were conducted in spring and fall semesters of 2024. During these periods, the E&ARC-R was distributed to graduate students to evaluate additional courses within the School Psychology Doctoral Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The following section will provide an overview of the key themes identified across the course reviews.

General Themes

Across the courses reviewed, a number of strengths within course syllabi and instructor characteristics were identified by currently enrolled graduate students. Instructor inclusivity and support was a particular strength, with scores on reviews across semesters indicating strong ratings for instructors using students' preferred names and pronouns, building flexibility into their classroom policies, and providing opportunities for students to engage with them and each other. Also rated highly across ratings was representation and awareness of bias within curriculum and syllabi, with representation of diverse identities and content addressing bias in psychology scoring consistently high across reviews.

While many strengths were identified across courses within the program, some areas for future growth were identified as well. One marked weakness across reviews related to incorporation of diverse voices within course readings and assignments. Additionally, choice in demonstrating mastery within courses received lower ratings in both semesters, suggesting that current students may want more flexibility in how they demonstrate their learning.

Implications

Given the importance of preparing future school psychologists to work effectively in diverse educational settings, intentional efforts should be made to expand the integration of diverse voices within course readings and assignments. Faculty could engage in regular syllabus audits using the E&ARC-R tool, ensuring that course materials reflect a broad range of perspectives, particularly from historically underrepresented groups. Additionally, collaborative discussions between faculty and students could help identify specific gaps in representation and inform future course development.

To enhance choice in demonstrating mastery, instructors might explore alternative assessment strategies that allow students to showcase their learning in ways that align with their strengths and professional goals. This could include offering a mix of traditional assessments (e.g., research papers, exams) alongside more flexible options such as presentations, case study analyses, or applied projects. Incorporating student feedback loops—where students provide input on assessment formats—could further ensure that course evaluations reflect diverse learning styles and needs.

Lastly, ongoing use of the E&ARC-R tool will be essential for tracking progress and refining curriculum adjustments over time. By maintaining a commitment to equity-driven course evaluation and adapting instructional practices accordingly, the program can continue to cultivate a training environment that is both academically rigorous and socially responsive.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Want to get involved?

Let us know!