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## Problem-Based Learning in Human Growth & Development Counselor Education

### Cover Page Footnote

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# Problem-Based Learning in Human Growth and Development Counselor Education

Javier F. Casado Pérez, Elliot Witherspoon

■ As a core curricular standard that applies to all entry- and doctoral-level counselor education programs (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2015), human growth and development can present unique challenges for the teaching professional. In this article, we present an in-class activity grounded in problem-based learning that uniquely lends itself to the task of supporting medium-to-large classrooms in learning about human growth and development.

**Keywords:** problem-based learning, human development, counselor education, teaching and learning

Instructional practice and learning theory are both emerging topics in counselor education (Barrio Minton, Morris, & Bruner, 2018; Barrio Minton, Morris, & Yaites, 2014; Malott, Hall, Sheely-Moore, Krell, & Cardaciotto, 2014). A longstanding dialogue has existed within the discipline around the need to better prepare doctoral students for instructional practice (Hall & Hulse-Killacky, 2010; Hunt & Gilmore, 2011), with some significant contributions being made toward that need (e.g., West, Bubenzer, Cox, & McGlothlin, 2013). As a core curricular standard that applies to all entry- and doctoral-level counselor education programs (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2015), human growth and development can present unique challenges

for the teaching professional. Human growth and development is commonly covered in a single course, and, as a core course for CACREP-accredited programs, all entry-level counselors are required to enroll. Consequently, these requisite courses often present educators with the challenges inherent in large classroom sizes, such as student anonymity, difficulty giving formative feedback, and heavy grading loads (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010). Moreover, human growth and development counselor education is not a light subject, pedagogically or cognitively speaking.

The amount of content covered in human growth and development courses can often require educators to ascertain prior knowledge,

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break down mastery, avoid cognitive overload, and respond to diversity in student learning processes and cultural differences regarding conceptions of growth and development. For example, a cornerstone of human growth and development counselor education involves learning about the biological, neurological, and physiological factors affecting human development and functioning (CACREP, 2015).

Thus, students must not only acquire new knowledge from three fields of study but also integrate this knowledge with counseling theories, personality and identity development theories, and emerging conceptualization skills. Preventing learner fatigue requires educators to be instructionally creative and versatile. To maintain learner endurance, we present an in-class activity grounded in problem-based learning (PBL) that uniquely lends itself to the task of supporting medium-to-large human growth and development classrooms. Our hope is to continue the conversation on the usefulness and applicability of PBL in counselor education, specifically growing counselor educators' familiarity with this evidence-based teaching practice in human growth and development.

### **Problem-Based Learning**

Emerging from medical schools (Allen, Donham, & Bernhardt, 2011), the PBL approach to instruction involves "learning in ways that use problem scenarios to encourage students to engage themselves in the learning process" (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004, p. 3). Defining characteristics of PBL include complex, real-world situations with no single right answer as the focus of learning, group work as a component of the learning process, self-directed learning, the application of theory to practice in refining conceptualization skills, and the practice of peer assessment and interpersonal skills (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004; Silva, de Araujo Bispo, Rodriguez, & Vasquez, 2018). In addition, PBL can support the development of "research skills, negotia-

tion and teamwork, reading, writing, and oral communication" (Allen et al., 2011, p. 23). PBL has not been previously applied to human growth and development counselor education, but its effectiveness with student engagement and student-directed learning may help mitigate the challenges of human growth and development counselor education described above.

PBL utilizes continuous complexity and complication as a learning and engagement strategy, drawing from Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cognitive theory of learning, specifically the zone of proximal development and scaffolding (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004). The zone of proximal development exists between a student's capability to accomplish a task and sufficient challenge presented by the instructor (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). The learner has the core skills to succeed in solving increasingly complex problems presented by the instructor without being tested beyond their readiness or capacity. The instructor can grow this zone via scaffolding, a supportive process in which the educator collaborates with the learner to provide new knowledge at the more advanced edges of the zone (Allen et al., 2011; Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004). For example, an instructor can direct counselors-in-training toward additional theories and resources when they experience client bereavement for the first time. Core skills in empathic response and active listening may be present, but the instructor helps expand the zone by scaffolding learning about grief and loss, providing avenues to new information. Students generate myriad solutions to problems, compare new information with prior knowledge, seek to holistic understanding, and give meaning to solutions (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2004).

PBL can also be considered an engaged pedagogical strategy when all ideas, both from the students and the instructor, are brought into the classroom dialogue and the process of conceptualization and problem-solving (Fong, 1998; hooks, 1994). As a teaching practice grounded in constructivism and socio-cognitive theories of learning, PBL ties in the

valuable aspects of contextual and student-led learning described by Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) and Granello (2000), including case-based knowledge application and jointly constructed strategies and explanations. Carone (2017) applied a PBL strategy to rehabilitation counselor education, specifically in a Career Counseling and Selective Placement course, by implementing a case study for rehabilitation counselors-in-training who worked in groups and produced questions for continued study at home. The author received positive feedback from learners and emphasized the importance of continued applications and investigation on examples of PBL within counselor education. Rather than rely on traditional lectures, content reviews, and examinations, PBL motivates self-directed learning by recruiting students into the learning and teaching process through group work and investment strategizing for solutions to increasingly complex issues (Ambrose et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2011).

### **Instructional Practices in Counselor Education**

While more recent reviews have shown an increased focus on learning theories (Barrio Minton et al., 2018), counselor educators have long critiqued the lack of instructional training in counselor education doctoral programs (Hall & Hulse-Killacky, 2010; Hunt & Gilmore, 2011), which continues to be a challenge (Barrio Minton et al., 2018). Counselor education instruction has been considered from a variety of viewpoints, including engaged pedagogy (Fong, 1998), constructivist and student-led instruction (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998; West et al., 2013), and contextual developmental teaching and learning (Granello, 2000; Granello & Hazler, 1998). West et al. (2013) presented an excellent resource for the implementation of teaching practices, and Malott et al. (2014) and Minton et al. (2014) provided an exceptional review of instructional practices in the counselor education literature. Malott et al. (2014) provided an excellent description of PBL:

Problem-based learning uses student groups

to attend to multistage, real-world problems, whereby under the guidance of the instructor, students begin with identification of a problem's boundaries and scope, drawing from prior knowledge. They must also identify the gaps in knowledge, to be researched outside of class, with such tasks shared among team members. (p. 298)

### **Developmental Foundations of Counselor Education**

CACREP (2015) includes Human Growth and Development as the third common core area in counselor education curriculums. Competency in human growth and development is essential to the conceptualizations of a competent, effective professional counselor; moreover, developmental theories are a cornerstone of counselor identity and practice (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Kottler & Shepard, 2014). Human growth and development counselor education constitutes teaching and learning focused on human growth and development, including a) individual and familial development across the lifespan; b) learning theories; c) personality and identity development; d) substance dependency; e) the neurobiological, physiological, environmental, and cultural factors influencing the development of functioning and behavior; and f) the effects of trauma and crises on whole human development (CACREP, 2015). This expansive learning terrain engenders a great deal of material to review in time-limited courses.

Human growth and development counselor education is as much about training counselors in prevention and the promotion of healthy development as it is about intervention and the amelioration of problems (Akos & Galassi, 2004). As such, counselor educators must balance a great deal of content with best practices in instruction and supporting student learning, i.e., knowing what is essential to teach and how to teach it. This balance is referred to as pedagogical content knowledge in instructional literature

(Gess-Newsome & Lederman, 1999; Shulman, 2004). Shulman provided a succinct description of pedagogical content knowledge: “[K]nowledge of the ways of representing and formulating the subject that makes it comprehensible to others... understanding what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult” (p. 203).

Without effective pedagogical content knowledge, the instructor risks overburdening students’ cognitive loads or their capacity to maintain equilibrium between effort and productivity. Excessive cognitive load can hamper, and even stop, a student’s learning process (Feldon, 2007). Counselor educators must rely on their pedagogical content knowledge and instructional practices to integrate topical information with students’ learning abilities.

### **Problem-Based Learning in Human Growth and Development Counselor Education**

PBL provides an avenue for counselor educators to support students’ learning in expansive courses such as human growth and development. Since human growth and development covers the progression of the human lifespan, PBL provides a uniquely complementary model for human growth and development counselor education. PBL relies on continuous complication and complexity as an agent of learning and student engagement. Students encounter a problem that is within their capacity to solve but is also challenging. Working together, students begin the process of research and solution-finding. Instructors can choose to further complicate problems, beginning the research and problem-solving anew. Malott et al. (2014) argued that PBL engages counselors-in-training in active learning, promotes cohesion among students, increases comfort with peer teaching and feedback, and draws on higher-order thinking.

#### **A Progressive Case Analysis**

Given the first author’s familiarity with PBL,

we decided to implement the strategy in two sections of Developmental Foundations of Counseling. We wanted to leverage the progressive and continuous nature of PBL in a course focused on lifespan development and human growth. While we were not aware of Carone’s (2017) use of PBL in rehabilitation counselor education when implementing our activity, we identified similar themes in our post-course discussions, which are discussed below. Following Malott et al.’s (2014) recommendations, we created small diverse groups that remained together throughout the academic quarter. Rather than provide one static case study with guiding questions (Carone, 2017), we decided to follow a more distinctive application of PBL, presenting students with an evolving, or progressive, case.

The Loren/Innes family was formed as the focus of what we called the progressive case analysis (PCA). The Loren/Innes family consisted of two same-sex female partners seeking relationship (Case 1) and individual counseling (Cases 2 and 3); a college-age son coming out as queer (Case 4); a middle-school-aged child (Case 5); a kindergarten-aged child in the process of being adopted by the family (Case 6); a grandfather, a cisgender straight male in late adulthood, living with the family who is in conflict with the college-aged son’s queer identity (Case 7); and a grandmother, a cisgender straight female in late adulthood, living alone and beginning a new relationship after divorcing the aforementioned grandfather (Case 8). In addition, one group worked with the case manager tasked with the kindergarten-aged child’s foster-to-adopt placement (Case 9). Each case was assigned to a small group of students, who began conceptualizing presenting concerns and identifying possible directions for counseling.

Every two weeks, groups were provided with a new development in their case after they submitted biweekly case analyses (see Appendix A for each case). Groups were given the opportunity to adjust their conceptualizations in their biweekly analyses or continue their service plans as previously planned.

The biweekly analyses and their final PCA submissions were graded on a rubric (see Appendix B). The rubric and in-class discussion questions were designed to primarily reflect the CACREP standards on human growth and development. Specifically, the PCA required students to integrate counseling and personality development theories (CACREP, 2015, 2F.1.3.c), individual and family development theories (2F.1.3.a), biopsychosocial factors (2F.1.3.e), and conceptualization skills to differentiate given development, ecology (2F.1.3.h), and cultural considerations (2F.1.3.i).

Groups were responsible for continuously summarizing the case given new information, with in-classroom support from the instructors. They used developmental theories in their overall conceptualizations and counseling theories to plan their service delivery. Integrating these three dimensions, each group submitted their principle findings and prognoses for their case each week. At the end of the course, group representatives presented their final conceptualizations of their case and their anticipated service plans to the other groups in a treatment team format facilitated by the instructor. Given that each group had one individual or subsystem in the family, this final treatment team meeting produced dynamic, fascinating discussions.

### Student Reflections

We asked students ( $N = 26$ ) in one of the course sections to provide feedback on the PCA assignment to highlight the PCA's benefits in teaching and learning complex and comprehensive material. Similar to Carone (2017), the aim in providing student feedback is to contribute a supportive case example to a growing dialogue on the benefits of PBL.

According to the students, benefits of the PCA included the group format, treatment team meeting, practice, and scaffolded information. Of the 26 students enrolled in the course, 24 students provided feedback on the PCA in our Class Activities Sur-

vey. Of these 24 students, 58% referred to learning about conceptualization and theory as beneficial. The application of conceptualization skills and theory to a case example that evolved over time was central to the PCA, so this response from students was invigorating to post-course considerations about maintaining the activity. One student stated, "I LOVED this assignment. Felt it was the perfect preparation for a client treatment team – and particularly helped in practice of conceptualizing a client through a counseling theory and developmental approach – which will be extremely applicable for our work!!"

Of the 24 students, 38% expressed that the group format benefited their work and identified the collaboration, teamwork, and consensus building in solution-finding helpful to their learning. Like the treatment team meeting, continuous group work challenged the students to find common ground among divergent ideas and points of view, allowing them to practice skills essential to a community practitioner. One student described this real-world connection: "This got us thinking like counselors, helped to teach us how to conceptualize both developmentally and from the counseling theories course. It was also helpful to work as a group." Carone (2017) described a largely positive response to their application of PBL in a case study format. We were excited to receive such positive responses from students, who genuinely expressed enjoyment about learning through this activity.

Of the 21 students who made recommendations, 43% recommended improving or abandoning the use of the group format. Students expressed frustrations surrounding cooperation between group members, schedules and time conflicts for out-of-class work, and unequal distributions of group work. This was an interesting split in the feedback we received regarding the PCA, which we continually considered as we refined the activity. One student noted, "[I] found the group aspect of this assignment to make it too complex with time and schedules. It was one of my most stressful assignments during the week because of

these logistical aspects.”

The application of PBL regularly includes outside work and take-home questions to be addressed by the small task groups. While adult learning and second-career students often juggle multiple life demands, we believe this recommendation was a consequence of our own instructional practice and first-time application of a PBL-based activity. Instruction around PCA procedures were continuously clarified to be more specific and accessible for students, so we expect this push against group work might have been due to our failure to articulate the role and benefit of group work in PBL. One student articulated possible support for this suspicion: “At times, I wasn’t sure if I was ‘doing it right.’ Seemed like with all the class time and information dedicated to it, that we were supposed to be doing more than just answering the questions.” This student’s recommendation is highly relevant and useful for the continued use of PBL and this PCA activity in developmental counselor education. Students’ sense of ownership in the learning process is essential for the self-directed elements of PBL. Searching for a “right” approach to the PCA by any group is worth considering pedagogically, even if not generally.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

The ongoing dialogue between the learner and the educator and the importance of valuing student expression and worldview are central to engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). In our own implementation of PBL and work with students to promote its success, we realized the significant impact PBL can have on student motivation, self-directedness, and engagement in the learning process. PBL impacted our teaching in a manner that empowered students to care for the clients assigned to them and continue learning how to help their assigned clients. This level of empowerment is not common in traditional teaching methods, but it is a principal aim in engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994). We also learned how complementary PBL can be for human growth and development counselor

education. Human growth and development happens progressively over the course of a lifespan, and PBL emulates that process. This parallel did not escape the students, as evidenced in the feedback. Finally, we benefited from the shared learning inherent in PBL and engaged pedagogy as we worked closely with the students to learn how to best support and challenge them and feed our own sense of well-being as teachers (hooks, 1994).

After implementing the PCA and receiving the aforementioned recommendations, we began to consider expanding the activity into a more comprehensive learning strategy similar to the flipped classroom. Students reported noticeable benefits in terms of engagement and enjoyment and provided some important recommendations for advancing how we use PBL in the classroom. For example, more class time could be dedicated primarily to the PCA, and students would be expected to continue their conceptualizations and theory building outside the classroom using targeted questions. We previously presented the CACREP standards used to develop the rubric and in-class questions, and the PCAs provide further opportunities to strengthen the alignment between the standards and the classroom and to use the standards to guide the use of take-home questions.

In addition to the benefits and recommendations reported by the students, we identified some significant limitations to the PCA activity. While we were not aiming for empirical findings through the collection of feedback on the activity, we aimed to make a practical contribution informed by multiple perspectives. The small number of students involved in the activity and the lack of more systematic collection of student feedback warrants empirical investigation. In addition, the PCA did not incorporate take-home work effectively since students were expected only to submit their biweekly reports for the PCA outside class. Allen et al. (2011) and Carone (2017) suggested that instructors generate questions for continued study outside the classroom. While we



created questions to be addressed in students' biweekly reports, their reflections show that the questions did not have the intended effect of bolstering self-directed learning as much as the group work and interest in their assigned clients.

Silva et al. (2018) found some important limitations for counselor educators to consider in the use of group work when disseminating PBL, including passive involvement, lack of buy-in, and difficulty in consensus building. Silva et al. also identified available time as limiting factor, especially in content-heavy courses. We encountered these same limitations in our implementation of the PCA in human growth and development counselor education. While students did not report any difficulty building consensus, we did see a lack of buy-in, passive involvement, and time restrictions in the classroom as issues to be addressed in the future. We anticipate these challenges may continue as common aspects of group work in PBL, but providing structured instruction during implementation may help us better support how students work together.

We recommend that counselor educators consider providing ample time for in-classroom group work, conduct team-building activities for the groups during class, and reinforce the importance of active involvement from all members of each group. Anticipation and reluctance toward group work is to be expected, but it can be detrimental to PBL. Following the principles of engaged pedagogy, counselor educators can circumvent this by finding strategies for empowering hesitant students in their own learning process. The counselor educator remains the content expert, but the student is the expert in their learning process. For example, instructors can introduce PBL group work with assigned tasks and roles for each member of the group. As cohesion builds, this task orientation can shift from teacher-focused to student-focused, with groups eventually determining their own tasks for the PCA each week.

More active in-class practice, similar to that of the flipped classroom, could help circumvent passive involvement among group members. The flipped classroom learning model (Merlin, 2016; Moran & Milsom, 2015) also uses group work strategies to scaffold learning in the classroom and allows students to practice knowledge acquired through activities outside the classroom. At the same time, the flipped classroom model emphasizes that class time be used for practice and skill acquisition and not for content review or lectures (Merlin, 2016; Moran & Milsom, 2015). In terms of our activity, integrating this model with PBL would provide considerably more time for students to review weekly cases, consult the literature and their colleagues, and submit their weekly reports.

### Conclusion

Applying a PBL learning strategy required considerable preparation before the course but resulted in a widely positive student response that continued beyond the course. Given the nature of educational programs, both authors have worked with students involved in the PCA since the developmental course, and we have continued to hear positive feedback about the PCA. The activity continues to be implemented in the Developmental Foundations of Counseling course, and, while not part of our discussion, students continue to report investment in their assigned cases and enjoyment of the activity. Moving forward, we will explore ways to improve the implementation of the PCA and consider strategies for systematically assessing its effectiveness in improving human growth and development counselor education learning outcomes

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## Appendix A

### **Case 1: Couples Counseling with Parents**

**Part 1** | Loren and Innes have come to couples counseling due to increasing levels of stress and a breakdown of communication between them. Loren and Innes, both cisgender women, are married; their relationship has lasted 22 years. Loren, who identifies as Black, is in her mid-forties; Innes, who identifies as White, is in her late forties. Loren and Innes have three children: two are biological children conceived through in vitro fertilization, and one was adopted through a local adoption agency after the family fostered them for several months. Innes is a pediatric surgeon at the local hospital, and Loren is an attorney for the district office. Loren and Innes mentioned in their phone screening that their family “has not been getting along.” Innes’ parents have also recently divorced after 47 years, and her father, Neil, is moving in with them. This is your first meeting with Loren and Innes.

**Part 2** | This is Loren and Innes’ second marital counseling session. At this meeting, you begin to gather more information about the rest of the familial relationships. Loren and Innes disclose that their children are a college-aged cisgender and queer-identifying male (Jon), a middle-school-aged male (Ibram) and a kindergarten-aged female (Maya). Loren and Innes also discuss Innes’ father, Neil, moving in, which continues to cause tensions between them. Loren explains that Neil has never accepted Innes’ sexuality, and he now overtly demeans Jon. Innes admits that she and her father have had conflicts, but she disagrees with Loren’s characterization of Neil’s attitude toward Jon. This causes immediate tension between the couple, and Loren expresses frustration at Innes’ lack of confidence in her understanding of the family. Innes retorts, “You are never even home! You’re always working, how would you know how dad treats Jon!?”

“Me!? You’re the one that will agree to take on another case, or travel for work, without even telling me,” Loren responds.

Loren and Innes’ schedules are usually full, making your attempts at scheduling sessions where both of them can attend very difficult. Loren and Innes describe their relationships with their children as close, but they do not agree on whom Jon feels closer to. The relationships between the siblings are also strong, except that Ibram has bonded closely to Neil, which Loren and Innes think frustrates Jon.

**Part 3** | This is Loren and Innes’ third session. In this session, Innes and Loren share that their week has been “a nightmare.” You learn that Ibram, Maya, and Neil live with Loren and Innes. Jon lives away at college. When you inquire where the couple would like to begin this week, Innes immediately starts to cry. Loren immediately grows irritated, offering Innes very little physical comfort or reassurance. Loren explains that Jon visited from college this past week and that he and Neil “got into it.” She describes that Jon came home wearing a shirt with a Pride flag design and sporting new piercings in his ears. “His grandfather immediately had to say something,” Loren says. “He told him he wasn’t going to get a job with piercings in his ears.” Loren continues to explain that the exchange between Neil and Jon escalated rapidly, resulting in Jon insulting Neil by blaming him for his divorce, and Neil calling Jon “a fairy” in a rage.

Innes responds, “He was angry, Lor, he didn’t mean to hurt Jon. Not like Jon was being very nice.”

“Are you serious!?” Loren exclaims. “You’re really going to defend your father right now?”

“I’m not trying to defend him! I’m just saying he’s old and still hurt by his divorce!”

“Nessy, he blamed *you* for Jon’s sexuality! He blamed *us*!”

Loren explains that while she has a more “authoritative” parenting style, Innes’ is more “permissive” but that it has always worked for them. Innes responds by saying, “Oh yes, because your way of parenting is *always* better.” The partners do not know how to move forward, and there is clear anger and resentment between them. Loren is angry at Innes’ oversight regarding Neil, and Innes is clearly hurt by the events of the weekend.

**Part 4** | This is Loren and Innes' fourth session. After last week and your focus on communication, Loren and Innes seem more interested in continuing counseling. Innes says, "[Focusing on communication] just made me feel like we can actually get through a conversation." Loren adds, "I felt that at least Innes was interested in knowing how I've been feeling." They add that not much has changed since the events of the last week. However, Loren comments that Innes *has* been making an effort to reach out to Jon and to have a conversation about his and her disclosure processes in relation to his grandfather. Together, they agree to five more sessions in relationship counseling, and, when asked about goals, Loren says, "To feel more trusted, or that my opinion is given real weight." Innes says, "To feel less pressured, or less guilty, about missing things with the kids."

### **Case 2: Innes**

**Part 1** | Innes has come to you for individual counseling due to increased anxiety and relationship stress. Innes identifies as a White, gay, cisgender woman in a long-term same-sex relationship with her wife, Loren. Innes has three children: two biological children conceived through in vitro fertilization (a college-aged cisgender boy carried by her and a middle school-aged male carried by her wife) and one kindergarten-aged female adopted through a local adoption agency. Innes works as an attorney for the district office. Her job currently requires a full schedule, and Innes was passed over for a promotion to partner. Innes' parents (Neil and Susan) recently divorced after 47 years, and her father is moving in with the family. She hopes that by coming to counseling she can get her feelings of being "out-of-control" in check, and she presents as highly organized and a concrete thinker. This is your first meeting with Innes.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Innes. In this session, you find out more about Innes' familial relationships. She discloses that her children are a college-aged cisgender and queer-identifying male (Jon), a middle-school aged male (Ibram), and a kindergarten-aged female (Maya). Innes also discloses

es that she has begun marital counseling with her wife Loren due to communication issues. She explains that their son, Jon, has recently disclosed identifying as queer, and she thinks Loren knew beforehand. Innes explains that she does not feel that Loren understands her; instead, she feels like Loren judges her and is condescending. As an example, she says her father, Neil, has finished moving into the home with them and Loren continues to characterize him as unaccepting and judgmental toward Jon despite Innes' experiences. She discloses that Neil has not been completely accepting but that he *has* been present for his grandchildren. Innes describes having an argument with Loren at marital counseling, and she now feels unsure of how to proceed reconnecting with Loren.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Innes. Almost immediately, Innes begins to cry in the session. After a few moments, she collects herself and explains that the past week was extremely stressful. Innes tells you their oldest, Jon, visited from college this past week and got into a "shouting match" with Neil. She tells you her father commented on Jon's clothing (a t-shirt with a Pride flag design) and new piercings the moment he saw Jon. She explains that the exchange escalated quickly because "Jon already thinks his grandfather hates him," and it resulted in Jon blaming his grandfather for his divorce from Susan, Jon's grandmother. Innes begins to cry harder as she says this resulted in Neil becoming enraged and calling Jon names, including "not normal" and "a fairy." Innes says she is dumbfounded by her father's statements, and Loren is not speaking to her after an argument during marriage counseling. "She keeps saying that she's always seen that Neil was prejudiced and that I just didn't want to admit it," Innes explains. The incident has really thrown Innes off, and she missed work today to come to this emergency session. She explains that her own disclosure process was not characterized by upheaval, like Loren's, but that her mother was surprised and her father was "cold." With this past week's event, she says she does not know what to do to begin rebuilding the relationships with her wife or son without ostracizing her father.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth session with Innes. Upon arrival, she seems more relaxed and engaged with you. She says Loren has agreed to continue relationship counseling, and the relationship counselor really focused on communication last time they met, which helped during the week. She also shares, “Your focus on some of my beliefs about my family’s response to my coming out was really helpful. You just let me vent last week while connecting it all back to today.” Innes shares that she would like to terminate counseling at this time. She shares that she feels relationship counseling will be particularly helpful, and talking about her father last week helped her know how she felt about his fight with Jon. She insists you helped her restabilize and says, “That’s all I *really* needed.”

### **Case 3: Loren**

**Part 1** | Loren has come to you for individual counseling due to high levels of stress and an increased sense of restlessness about her life. Loren identifies as a Black, bisexual, cisgender woman in a long-term same-sex relationship with her wife, Innes. Loren has three children: two biological children conceived through in vitro fertilization (a college-aged cisgender boy carried by her and a middle school-aged male carried by her wife) and one kindergarten-aged female adopted through a local adoption agency. Loren works as a pediatric surgeon at the local hospital, and her work regularly demands long hours and the occasional overnight shift. Innes’ parents recently divorced after 47 years, and her father is moving in with the family. Loren has been in regular contact with both parents, who look to her to vent. She has recommended they both pursue counseling. Loren hopes that by coming to counseling she can improve her feelings toward her family. This is your first session with Loren.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Loren. In this session, you find out more about Loren’s familial relationships. She discloses that her children are a college-aged cisgender and queer-identifying male (Jon), a middle-school aged male (Ibram), and a

kindergarten-aged female (Maya). Loren also discloses that she does not speak to her parents or extended family. She explains that this is due to a falling out related to her disclosure about her sexuality when she was in her late teens, but she *does* maintain a close relationship with her brother and sister. Loren tells you she has entered marital counseling with her wife, Innes. She explains that her wife does not believe “the truth” about her own father, Neil. In their second session, Loren and Innes argued because Innes did not believe Neil was overtly judgmental of Jon. This made Loren frustrated with her wife and unsure of how to reconnect. Loren feels that she is parenting alone since Jon disclosed his sexuality to her before he told anyone else and that she is carrying the family by herself.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Loren, and she has arrived in a fiery mood. When prompted, Loren begins a long tirade against her father-in-law and her wife. Loren explains that this past week, Jon visited from college. She says he was excited to see his siblings but almost immediately, her father-in-law “just had to say something. Jon came home wearing his Pride shirt, eager to tell us about the activism work he’d been doing in school. His grandfather just *had* to take that away.” Loren explains that Neil commented on Jon’s t-shirt and on his new piercings, and “because Jon knows that his grandfather doesn’t like him, he said something.” Loren explains that Jon blamed Neil for his divorce from Susan, Jon’s grandmother, and says that, enraged, Neil called Jon “abnormal” and “a fairy.” She tells you Jon went back to college earlier than planned after spending some time with his siblings.

Loren is visibly tense and angry in the session, wringing her hands and repeatedly bouncing her foot. She tells you she feels “completely stupid” for assuming Innes would see the problem with her father and discloses that she and her wife fought during their last marriage counseling session and have not spoken since then. She shares that she remembers disclosing her sexuality to her parents and that, due to their prejudice and refusal to accept her, she chose to cut off ties with

them. Instead, she says, “Nessy just keeps trying to believe in him.” In her anger, Loren discloses that she has met someone else, a nurse at the hospital where she works as a surgeon. She says she has not acted on her attraction but “that’s becoming harder and harder not to do now.”

**Part 4** | This is your fourth session with Loren. Loren is calmer this week and is interested in being present with you. She shares that she and Innes had a more successful session with the counselor this week, and they have agreed to continue relationship counseling for five more sessions. Loren believes Innes is genuinely interested in addressing some of her own assumptions about her father and her lack of confidence in Loren. “I really do love Innes, and the couple’s session—and maybe that she finally saw how uninvolved she is with Jon—made me think we have a shot,” she shares. When asked about the person she met at work, Loren shares, “She’s been there, but I’ve tried to put some distance between us. I’m actually hoping coming here can help me refocus on my marriage and family.” Loren is interested in continuing counseling with you.

#### **Case 4: Jon**

**Part 1** | Jon has come to you for counseling at your university counseling clinic. Jon is a mixed-race, college-aged cisgender man who identifies as queer. Jon is in the midst of the process of sharing his sexual identity with his friends and, reluctantly, his family. Jon was encouraged to come to counseling by friends who, he says, had noticed he is “not happy anymore.” Jon’s parents are still married, and Loren (Black, mid-forties) and Innes (White, late forties, carried Jon via in vitro fertilization) both identify as cisgender queer women. He has two siblings, Ibram, with whom he shares a donor, and Maya, whom his mothers adopted through a local adoption agency. Jon is a rising freshman in college currently majoring in animal science. This is your first session with Jon.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Jon. In this session, he reports that school is going ok and that he likes his classes ok, but one instructor

just seems to have it out for him and doesn’t get what it’s like to be a new college student. This instructor did not understand at all that he had to miss his lab after a really difficult conversation on the phone with his family. He had wanted to finally talk to both his moms together about coming out as queer (currently only Loren knows), but they were distracted. He could hear his little sister in the background playing with his grandpa, Innes’ father. When mentioning his grandfather, Jon physically tenses up then notes that he knows he should be patient with his grandfather like his moms (especially Innes) have said, but his grandfather is and always has been so condescending about being the “man of the house.” While he was on the phone with his moms, he could hear the tension between them, and he could tell they were annoyed at each other because Loren was annoyed at his grandpa. He’d asked if they could talk seriously, and they were focusing more on Maya and his grandpa than on what he was saying. He felt separated, alone, and unimportant. His friends have encouraged him to be social, but a lot of the time he’s been staying home and not feeling like going out.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Jon. In this session, he discloses that he visited home last weekend and had a huge falling out with his grandfather, Neil, who has been living with Jon’s parents since his grandparents’ recent divorce. During this heated argument, Jon took offense at his grandfather’s comments that he would be unable to get a job if he was himself and that Jon had been coddled his whole life and that’s why he’s now coming out. Jon reacted by yelling at his grandfather about having to pretend throughout his childhood so his grandfather would accept him and saying, “It’s no wonder your wife left you.” According to Jon, his grandfather became enraged, yelling that Jon is not “normal” and calling him “a fairy.” They still are not speaking. Jon reveals that he felt closer to his brother Ibram after the big fight because they went outside and played soccer together, which they used to do before he left for college. He departed shortly after this, talking only briefly to his mothers. He says he tried to talk to Innes about her

own disclosure process to her dad, but he was too angry. He admitted that he's always shared more with Loren due to Innes' father's views, but he is trying to change that; he just doesn't fully understand Innes' acceptance of her father.

In this session, Jon explores his identity further; he has always been comfortable being seen as a studious person and has perhaps used that as an excuse to not explore other interests (e.g. relationships, taking more risks) or create waves. He discusses the tension he feels when his grandfather is around, revealing that from a very young age, he understood the expectations to be the son his grandfather never had. He felt safe and accepted being smart and studying science, and now as he is exploring more, he feels nervous and self-doubting.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth session with Jon. He indicates that things have settled down a bit since the last time you met. His grandfather wrote him an email apologizing for calling him a fairy and saying he wants a relationship with him. Jon is still thinking about what he wants and how he wants to respond. He discloses that after his last visit home, he spent some quality time with Innes, and they talked quite a bit about her experiences with her dad. Jon reveals this connection with his mom was so helpful in helping him understand his grandfather a bit more. He admits that he looked to his grandfather for so much of his sense of belonging while growing up—aiming to please—and now that has changed; he just hadn't come to terms with it. Jon indicates that all this turmoil in his family has made him realize how much he's been looking for validation outside himself, and now he has to find it within himself and discover who he really is. Coming out sort of inspired that thinking, and he wants to work on that more. He discloses that he went to a queer student meetup last week and met some new friends who seemed really fun. He also mentions that he received a message from a friend/almost more than friend that he met a few years back at an outdoor camp, and he is excited and nervous about pursuing that friendship because of what it could mean and because they attend different colleges.

### **Case 5: Ibram**

**Part 1** | Ibram is a middle-school aged male who has been referred to you as the school-based counselor due to externalizing behaviors in class. Ibram's teacher described him as "disruptive" and "oppositional." Ibram is a mixed-race child whose parents are married; Loren (Black, mid-forties, carried Ibram via artificial insemination) and Innes (White, late forties) both identify as cisgender queer women. Ibram has two siblings, Jon, with whom he shares a donor, and Maya, who his mothers adopted through a local adoption agency. Ibram's overt behaviors are a new development, but he was previously diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactive disorder by the school psychologist and referred to a primary care physician. He is angry that his mothers have decided to pull him from the soccer team until he can get his grades in order. This is your first session with Ibram.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Ibram. He comes in wearing his soccer jersey, and he appears to be happy and a tad indifferent. He discloses that he'd just talked to his older brother, who just started college, and that his brother seemed quiet. He notes that he misses him even though they fought quite a bit. Ibram requests that you play a game together and sets up a Jenga-type game while sitting on a yoga ball chair. He answers questions that you ask but also discloses that he's still really mad that he's not playing soccer, and he's confused as to why his parents would take the one thing he loves away. He recently started checking in with the school counselor, and that's going ok because they go outside and walk around or play basketball when they talk. Ibram discloses that he feels stupid because he gets so distracted, especially when his teachers move him around to different spots in the classrooms, and he feels like he's always in trouble.

**Part 3** | NOTE: Prior to your third session with Ibram, you received an email from his parents informing you that they have decided to medicate Ibram for his ADHD to see if that improves his academic and behavioral performance. They are concerned for



his self-esteem, and they want him to feel successful in the high-performing/high-achievement school he attends in their neighborhood. His parents have discussed this with Ibram, and they say he seems open to the idea.

This is your third session with Ibram. He arrives with his hoodie pulled up over his head and sinks into the couch, shrugging when asked questions. As coloring supplies are offered, he seems to warm up, and he discloses that the school counselor was absent, so he didn't get a break that day and got a referral for getting up in class too many times. Ibram recalls his educational history of always seeming to be a class clown, but it only became a problem last year when he started middle school. His best friend, another person of color, moved away, and his grandparents got divorced. Upon further prompting, he reveals that he feels lonely at school and like his only friends, students from around the district, are at soccer. He wants to figure out how to convince his moms to let him play again since he loves the game, his coach, and his teammates.

When prompted, he talks about his moms wanting him to take medication to help him concentrate. He discloses that he feels excited about it and hopes it'll help him not get in trouble so much. Ibram also mentions that his brother visited over the weekend, which was great for him because they played soccer together, but only after Jon and his grandfather got into a huge argument.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth meeting with Ibram. Last week, he had a difficult time when his family was fighting, but he disclosed his excitement that he gets to rejoin his soccer team. He also reconnected with the school counselor today and shared that he has started eating lunch once a week in their office with a few other kids who seem interesting to him. He mentions that it is nice to not be in the loud cafeteria and that he's sort of glad he's meeting other kids who might not like the cafeteria either. Ibram discloses that he didn't feel lonely after lunch and that he even played soccer with a few of them.

Ibram discloses that he started taking med-

ication, and he doesn't really feel a difference even though it's been four days. It is close to the end of the semester, and Ibram will be changing teachers. He will get to take a math class and a science class with a teacher who has been really nice to him; the teacher is a male person of color.

### **Case 6: Maya**

**Part 1** | Maya is a five-year-old female who is part of the Loren/Innes family. She came to live with them as an infant, and her adoption was finalized last year. She is in kindergarten, transitioning from a private Montessori preschool classroom she attended for three years into their neighborhood public school. Her parents note in her intake that since the beginning of the school year, she has become withdrawn and has experienced a lot of anxiety when it comes to going to school. During drop-off in the morning, whichever parent drops her off must stay in the classroom for about 45 minutes to help Maya acclimate. They're hoping that some play therapy can help Maya feel more confident in her classroom. This is your first session with Maya.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Maya. Her mom, Loren, brings her to her appointment and joins her to get her settled. Loren explains that Maya's other mom, Innes, got called into surgery at the last minute so she couldn't make it to this appointment. Maya initially sits on her lap and engages in baby talk when asked any questions. Eventually, she sees the basket of crayons and paper and asks if you can all color. She wants her mom to sit with her. When prompted, she draws a picture of her moms, her big brothers, her grandpa, and her friend, Emilia; Emilia is her caseworker, who has worked very closely with the family. When asked, she explains that her forever mamas and grandpa with the broken heart are the grown-ups in her house; her big brother is away at college; and her brother Ibram, who is in middle school, is in trouble and can't play soccer. She discloses that Emilia comes over and takes her on special dates. Maya eventually seems to enjoy exploring the office and eventually moves off her mom's lap to look

through a basket of toys.

**Part 3** | NOTE: Prior to your session you receive an email from Maya's parents, sharing what has happened in their home. Their eldest son visited the past weekend and engaged in a loud argument with Innes' dad, which Maya witnessed. Maya is very close with her grandfather, who has been doing some caretaking for her when her moms are on call or at work.

This is your third session with Maya. Both moms are present, and Maya is cuddled up between them. Innes begins to apologize for missing last session due to being called into surgery, and Loren tensely reminds her they're there for Maya. Maya explains her moms' occupations as a doctor and a lawyer and says her grandpa plays with her a lot when her moms work; she continues to nestle in. When invited to play, Maya appears to be timid but begins to explore and play with the dollhouse in the office. Her moms stay on the couch while she plays with the dolls. She acts out a scene in which two figures yell at each other, and she coaches them individually to work things out. Her mothers refer to the email sent prior to the session. Maya talks about school and her teacher and reenacts lining up with her friends and other kindergarten activities. She explains she does not like the noise in the cafeteria. It is evident she has a developmentally appropriate conceptual framework for her adoption as she discusses her family as well as her friends' families. In this session, Maya describes her brothers and how they play. She appears to be comfortable and engaged in play while continuously looking back to check in with her mothers throughout the session.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth session with Maya. Her parents are in the room with her, and Maya is once again nestled between the two. Her moms seem visibly calmer, and Maya invites them to stay to check in but reminds them that it's her time to play and that they can leave. Her moms say goodbye and leave without Maya reacting. She quickly moves to the dollhouse, picking up an older male doll and a younger male doll. She picks up a younger child doll and creates a scene in which she hugs them both, re-

minding them that they still all love each other. Maya said she was very sad that her brother and grandfather were fighting but that her grandfather said that is just what happens sometimes and that he still loves her brother and her brother loves him.

As you move forward with the dollhouse play, Maya talks about going to the museum with her grandfather, the zoo with her friends after school, and dance class at school. When you check with her mothers, you discover that Maya walked into school with a friend and transitions have gone much smoother. Her mothers report she is connecting with her classmates, and Neil has been getting involved in the PTA and feeling more connected to her school community. At the end of the session, Maya helps clean up the dollhouse and hugs you.

### **Case 7: Neil**

**Part 1** | Neil, 72, is a White cisgender man who recently divorced his wife of 47 years. During the transition into being newly single, he has moved in with his daughter, his daughter's wife, and their three children. Upon moving, Neil learned that his grandson, Jon, has disclosed identifying as queer. Neil always struggled to accept his daughter's sexual identity, and he now finds himself struggling with what he views as his grandson's choice regarding sexuality. In addition, Neil's ex-wife has started dating again, and Neil has become angry, believing his ex-wife may have met the man prior to the marriage ending. Neil was encouraged to enter counseling by his daughter's wife, Loren, a pediatric surgeon, who believes it will be helpful for him. In your phone conversation, she noted that Neil has become increasingly irritable and that he has confronted and ridiculed Jon (his grandson) several times about his sexuality. This is your first session with Neil.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Neil. He seems uneasy and makes a few jokes about seeing a "shrink." He discloses that he has had a hard time since his divorce, disclosing that she threw it all away to be with a guy she met at work. Though the divorce was final before his ex-wife, Susan, started

dating, it all seemed so sudden. Neil says he is confused, hurt, and angry; he admits that he calls Susan regularly, sometimes yelling at her for the pain she's caused. Neil discloses that he is not sure where or how to start over like his wife has. He's been living with his daughter and her wife, Loren, and their two children at home—the oldest is a freshman in college. He discloses that being a grown man and living with his daughter and her family is not ideal, but it keeps him close to his grandchildren and safe from himself. He does not have any suicidal or homicidal ideation. When asked about his relationship with his daughter-in-law, he sighs and says she's pushing everyone in the family to go to counseling but she means well so he may as well try.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Neil. In this session, Neil appears rather agitated and reveals his eldest grandson, Jon, was home visiting from college over the weekend. He describes Jon's entrance into the house as disrespectful and lazy, "flaunting his gay lifestyle." Neil shares that Jon was coddled, and his mothers were overly permissive. He explains that he tried to "give him some wisdom" about his prospects of getting a job while wearing piercings and political Pride t-shirts. "He lost it!" he explains. "He told me the divorce was my fault!" Neil was shocked by Jon's reaction and his feelings that he'd never felt accepted by his grandfather, even though Neil recounts spending endless hours trying to engage Jon in fishing, hiking, and other outdoor endeavors. Neil offers some familial history and says he grew up with very little but made a good life for his family by working hard and enduring hardships. He shares his disappointment in his daughter's sexuality, saying it was so difficult to watch her navigate being bullied as she struggled to "find out who she was." He states that he knows the same thing will happen to Jon. After Jon's accusation, Neil discloses that he became angry and "called him some names" before leaving the room. They are still not speaking. Immediately following the argument, Neil reveals he was upset and called Susan for support, but she was too busy to talk and that made him angrier. "Why can't anyone just be normal?" he

laments.

When pushed about his comments about being safe from himself, Neil brushes it off, saying he feels like he can't do anything right in the family, from being a husband to being a parent and grandparent. As a former executive, he finds retirement lonely and all the transitions overwhelming, hence his decision to move in with his daughter. He feels underappreciated for all the work he did to give his family a good life and resents Susan for moving on without him. Playing with his granddaughter gives him hope and helps him feel needed.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth meeting with Neil. Something seems to have shifted with Neil. He presents as less defensive and takes some deep breaths instead of immediately filling the space by talking. Neil discloses that his week was hard, but he thought a lot about his life. He's been so used to being in charge and now he's not. As an executive he had the final word, and it seems like that was how it worked at home, too. Now he's realizing that is not how it probably was, which is why he and Susan grew apart like they did.

After the big argument with Jon last week, he said he talked to Loren for a while and she helped him understand a lot. Neil reflected that he might not understand a lot about their lifestyle but times are changing, and he just has to get on board whether he likes it or not. Neil discloses he wrote Jon an email and apologized for calling him a name and said he hopes they can talk again the next time Jon visits. He hasn't heard back yet from Jon. Neil chuckles as he shares that he went to the PTA meeting last week at his granddaughter's school. He says they were really grateful to have him there to volunteer. He also went to the park after school with another grandparent who was picking up their grandchild, and he says it was fun to see the kids play and to have someone else his age he could converse with.

Neil was quiet at one point, and he reflected that he was really grateful to be able to "let it all out—the good, bad, and the ugly." He recognizes that he has a lot to do and a lot to work on.

### **Case 8: Susan**

**Part 1** | Susan, 68, is a White cisgender woman who recently divorced her husband of 47 years. Susan has come to counseling at the suggestion of her daughter's wife, Loren, who believes it will be helpful for her. In your phone conversation with Loren, she mentioned that Susan seems to be expressing increasing guilt about the divorce from Neil. Loren believes Neil has been regularly contacting Susan and confronting her about her new relationship with Daveed. Daveed and Susan met before Susan retired from her work as a faculty member at the local university. Loren also suspects that Susan divorced Neil to pursue her relationship with Daveed. Susan hopes that by coming to counseling, she can feel more capable of confronting Neil and drawing boundaries regarding their divorce. This is your first session with Susan.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Susan. In this session, you find out more about Susan's multiple roles. She discloses that as a young parent, she raised Innes mostly on her own while her husband worked long hours and traveled a lot for work. She also worked as a teacher, and she was very involved with everything in which she possibly could have been involved. She also discloses that she is quite close with her daughter, Innes, and her wife, Loren, and that Loren often reaches out to her as a mother since she doesn't speak to her own parents. Susan discloses that she and Neil are still good friends; they just grew apart and finally decided to end their relationship. She is currently in a relationship with Daveed, who had been her colleague for years and who supported her while she mourned the emotional detachment from her husband. She and Neil still talk regularly, but lately it seems that Neil has been more aggressive toward her, accusing her of abandoning him. She tears up and discloses that for the first time in a long time, she feels happy and adored but simultaneously guilty.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Susan. In this session, she discloses having a wonderful weekend away with Daveed, but she says it was interrupted by Neil calling to complain about an argument

he had with Jon, her eldest grandchild, while he was home visiting from college. She typically answers the phone when Neil calls, but she is rethinking that practice as she sets better boundaries. Daveed was concerned, and he seemed annoyed since Neil's phone calls tend to put a damper on their time together. Susan admits that she continues to be concerned. She attempted to call her daughter, Innes, to clarify what happened, but her daughter had been too upset to explain.

Susan explores her family history and roles during this session, explaining her role as primary caretaker for Innes. Susan went back to work as a part-time teacher while Innes was young, and she eventually went back full-time when Innes went to college. She describes her role as a mother and wife being central to keeping the family together since Neil worked and traveled a lot. They both engaged in traditional roles, i.e., he was the breadwinner, and she was the homemaker, but she started to engage in her interests more as she grew. In this session, she explores her sense of feeling obligated to care for everyone before pursuing her own interests. She expresses gratitude for Loren and the way she encourages Susan to do what is right for her. Though their divorce is somewhat amicable, Susan feels uncomfortable being together with her and Neil's children and grandchildren since she feels herself slipping back into a role in which she acquiesces to Neil's needs and demands. This has put a strain on her relationships with her grandchildren because she has to time her visits for when Neil is not at home.

She is planning a surprise getaway for Daveed and herself, which she has never done before.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth meeting with Susan. Susan reports that she feels refreshed after a weekend away with Daveed. They both agreed to turn their phones off so they could focus on their time together. Susan describes their time away as restorative and connecting; she says they hiked along a river because she wanted to and not because she felt obligated to, which is how she often felt when Innes was growing up.

When she returned, she and Innes met for tea, which they hadn't done for ages. Innes wanted to talk to Susan about an argument between Jon and Neil, and Innes was seeking Susan's perspective on how it was when Innes first came out to Neil and Susan when she was a teenager. Susan discloses that as difficult as it was to re-experience that heartbreak of seeing her child in anguish, she was grateful they had the opportunity to talk about it as adults. As she reflects on her time with Innes, she talks about the tenderness she feels toward her daughter and how she felt like she got to parent and connect, noting that she's been so caught up with her own old and new lives that she hasn't really checked in as much as she'd like to. Innes shared with her that Jon and Ibram could use some extra support, so Susan is going to put together some care packages for her grandsons. She is also going to try and set aside some time to take Ibram shopping for some new soccer gear.

### **Case 9: Emilia**

**Part 1** | Emilia is a Latina cisgender woman in her early twenties. She has been referred to counseling because of "work-related stress." Her referral states that Emilia has become overly attached to a recently adopted child she has worked with. Emilia is employed as an adoption services case manager, providing supportive counseling to young children in the adoption system. Emilia received her undergraduate degree in rehabilitation and human services from the local university, and she has been working at this agency ever since. You learn that her referral is also a disciplinary referral, meaning her employment is contingent upon successful completion of the counseling process. The child, Maya, aged 5, was under Emilia's case management care for years, and her employers note in the referral paperwork that Emilia has taken it upon herself to contact the Loren/Innes family post-adoption for unnecessary and uninstructed follow-ups. They hope working with you can help Emilia disentangle some of her countertransference and attachment to the child *before* the parents express concern. This is your first meeting with Emilia.

**Part 2** | This is your second session with Emilia. After your first session, Emilia's supervisors contacted you. They explained that for Emilia to continue working at the adoption agency, she needs to demonstrate awareness about ethical boundary crossing and, most importantly, an authentic "understanding of the danger in over-attachment to clients and strategies for maintaining boundaries." Emilia disagrees; she claims that she should not have been referred to counseling and that it has put her graduation from her graduate program in counseling in jeopardy. Emilia asserts that her supervisors do not understand how Latinx people relate to others. She says she sees Maya as an "hija" or "hermana," and *that* is why she regularly wants to check in. Emilia tells you she is not close to her parents but is not specific about the cause. Emilia discloses, with sadness, that she always liked the Loren/Innes family and worked with them since Maya was an infant, but she did not expect them to ever adopt Maya "so quickly." Loren and Innes are both cisgender women in an interracial marriage; they are employed and raising two other children: Jon, a college-aged cisgender queer-identifying male, and Ibram, a middle-school-aged male.

**Part 3** | This is your third session with Emilia, and you've received a note from Emilia's supervisors that states, "Emilia has made an official request to terminate sessions with your practice. Request has been denied, and Emilia has moved to file an official complaint with the agency. Counseling continues to be a condition of continued employment."

Emilia comes to the session visibly upset. She discloses, "I know they sent you the letter denying my request to terminate. Nothing against you, but I just think they're not seeing the real problem." She explains that the Innes/Loren family is a "mess" and that Maya disclosed to Emilia that the family is fighting. She tells you the family's grandfather, Neil, and Jon got into a shouting match. She does not know why, but she suspects the family is not a good fit for Maya's adoption. She also admits to requesting to conduct a home visit and consultation with the family, which her supervisors denied. "They don't see how

that family is a problem,” Emilia says. She says she was interested in adopting Maya from the moment the infant entered the system, but the Innes/Loren family had been determined to be a more appropriate home for the baby. “My parents weren’t any good to me,” she discloses. “They don’t know how good of a parent I would be.” She becomes physically upset now, starting to cry as she shares that she and her partner were considering having children when they found that he was sterile. The pressure and stress of the news caused ruptures and rifts in their relationship, resulting in the relationship ending.

**Part 4** | This is your fourth session with Emilia. Your last session really stuck with Emilia, and she’s come to this week’s meeting contemplative of your last conversation. “I just wanted to start with, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have snapped at you,” she says. “But that question you asked me, about my professional role and Maya, really hit me. Made me think about my own family and my own case managers.” Emilia proceeds to explain that she had child welfare involvement when she was very young and that her case managers were never helpful. She shares that upon her breakup with her ex, she thought, “Maybe I could still be helpful for Maya since I’ve got nothing.” Emilia grows sadder, and her eyes focus on the floor. “When Loren and Innes adopted Maya,” she says, “I just thought, ‘Well, there goes my chance!’ I couldn’t have a baby, and now I can’t even be that *good* case manager.” Emilia is unsure of the connection between this and her employer’s perceptions of her unprofessionalism or overinvolvement, but she admits that they are things she had not thought of before.

**Appendix B**

<b>Progressive Case Analysis</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Case Summary</b>	Report summarizes information from the most recent case analysis process, mainly the current presenting issue.	Report summarizes information from the most recent case analysis process, including client demographic data, the current presenting issue, and dimensions of the clients' current life (e.g., work, health practices).	Report summarizes relevant information from the length of the case analysis process, including client demographic data, family-of-origin information, the presenting issue, how long the issue has been occurring, dimensions of the clients' current life (e.g., work, health practices)	Report summarizes relevant information from the length of the case analysis process, including client demographic data, family-of-origin information, the presenting issue, how long the issue has been occurring, dimensions of clients' current life (e.g., work, health practices) - <i>Report draws connections between demographic data, family-of-origin information, the client's current life, and the client's main concern.</i>
<b>Developmental Case Conceptualization</b>	Report does not utilize a developmental theory or approach.	Report utilizes a developmental theory to conceptualize and structure the client's presenting concern.	Report utilizes a developmental theory to conceptualize and structure the client's presenting concern, the role of the client's social systems, and choice of counseling theory.	Report utilizes a developmental theory to conceptualize and structure the client's presenting concern, the role of the client's social systems, and the choice of counseling theory. - <i>Report specifies how developmental theory informed the counselors' approaches to practice and theory limitations they encountered.</i>
<b>Counseling Theory Orientation</b>	Report does not utilize a counseling theory.	Report identifies a counseling theory the counselors utilized for their session-to-session counseling practice. The counselors specify the principles of the theory but don't articulate how the theory guided practice.	Report identifies a counseling theory the counselors utilized for their session-to-session counseling practice. The counselors specify the principles of the theory and articulate how the theory guided practice.	Report identifies a counseling theory the counselors utilized for their session-to-session counseling practice. The counselors specify the principles of the theory and articulate how the theory guided practice. - <i>Report specifies how the counseling theory did or did not come together with their developmental conceptualization, stating the goodness of fit between the theories.</i>
<b>Principle Findings &amp; Prognosis</b>	Report identifies the principle findings (i.e., the most salient components of the work, main issues).	Report identifies the principle findings (i.e., the most salient components of the work, main issues) and how they expect the client to progress.	Report identifies the principle findings (i.e., the most salient components of the work, main issues), how the counselors would further address these, and how they expect the client to progress.	Report identifies the principle findings (i.e., the most salient components of the work, main issues), how the counselors would further address these, and how they expect the client to progress. - <i>Report supports their conclusions and directions using their developmental or counseling theory.</i>