Assessing Impacts of a Hybrid Orientation on Counseling Students' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

This manuscript presents results from a quantitative exploratory study of how a faculty-led hybrid orientation impacted the self-efficacy and readiness to engage in hybrid learning of incoming master's students in a nationally-accredited counseling program in the U.S. Median difference analyses did not indicate that participants' post-orientation scores differed significantly on the measures used to assess self-efficacy (i.e., CSES, PEU, LMSE). While participants' self-efficacy ratings did not change significantly as a result of orientation activities, scores for 89% of participants increased or stayed the same. Implications for future research and for the preparation of graduate students in pre-professional programs with a hybrid format are offered.

Keywords: Hybrid learning, Pedagogy, Self-efficacy, CACREP, Counselor education

Students are often drawn to online educational programs because their employment schedules, geographic locations, or community/family responsibilities do not permit them to attend classes on a traditional, weekly basis (Van Doorn & Van Doorn, 2014). Hybrid learning, which combines online and in-person synchronous instructional methods, can give learners the combination of flexibility and interpersonal skills they need to thrive in higher education. Additionally, by teaching learners to navigate through the learning process, hybrid programs better equip learners for careers in a technologically advanced society (Raes et al., 2020).

Despite the increased attraction that learners have expressed to online and hybrid learning in counseling programs, there is a paucity of research on factors related to graduate students' adjustment to these environments. For example, little is known about how learners gain self-efficacy when navigating an online or hybrid learning environment. The current study examines the impact of a hybrid orientation on the self-efficacy of learners entering a master's program in counseling. Literature related to our inquiry exists in three related topic areas: (1) what we know about self-efficacy in academic settings; (2) what we know about hybrid learning; (3) how social location identities influence academic self-efficacy; and (4) how online technologies have been used pedagogically in counselor education.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual holds the capacity to achieve or produce a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). In an academic environment, self-efficacy can play a significant role in the outcome of academic performance because learners believe in their ability to achieve their academic goals. Several

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studies have reported that a student's academic self-efficacy is strongly associated with academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Richardson et al., 2012).

Academic self-efficacy in the online learning environment has shown a strong correlation to academic performance as well (Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007; Joo et al., 2013). Studies in higher education have demonstrated the positive impact of short-term faculty-led interventions on learners' academic self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (Walter et al., 2015); noted the positive impact of academic self-efficacy on resilience (Keye & Pidgeon, 2013); and demonstrated the value of information-seeking self-efficacy to increasing online learners' competencies and senses of academic self-efficacy (Valencia-Vallejo et al., 2016).

Additionally, individual student factors have been positively correlated with success in online learning environments. Such factors include high levels of academic self-efficacy, computer self-efficacy, information-seeking self-efficacy, learning management system (LMS) self-efficacy, psychological safety, and information literacy (Ho, 2017; Valencia-Vallejo et al., 2016; Woodcock et al., 2015). The exploration of these constructs provides valuable foundational knowledge that informs our current inquiries.

Hybrid Learning

Hybrid course delivery has the potential to offer a learning experience that harnesses the best aspects of in-person and online learning environments. Hybrid learning environments increase accessibility, offer some self-paced learning, and scaffold flexibility, while simultaneously valuing the interpersonal nature of quality pedagogy (Gedik et al., 2012; Ho, 2017). Meta-analyses have demonstrated that the learning outcomes of learners in hybrid learning environments often exceed the learning outcomes of learners in traditional face-to-face (F2F) courses (Bernard et al., 2014; Means et al., 2013).

Hybrid learning environments offer specific advantages to learners in helping professions, e.g., counseling, nursing, and social work (Viola et al., 2019). Hybrid classes prompt learners to build relational connections and demonstrate in-person interpersonal skills (Ho, 2017). Some scholars have reported that hybrid learning environments can also increase inclusivity and promote equity (Bower et al., 2015). The availability of online and hybrid instruction is increasing in pre-professional programs in counseling (Snow et al., 2018) for a variety of reasons, likely reflecting the desire of learners in these fields to increase online literacy (Nicholson & Galguera, 2013) and develop skills using technologies in their counseling practice (Woodcock et al., 2015).

Social Location and Academic Self-Efficacy

Learners who hold one or more marginalized identities are underrepresented in CACREP-accredited graduate programs in counseling (Shin et al., 2011), and enrollment of learners who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in graduate programs has not kept pace with the representation of these racial groups in the general population (Silverstein et al., 2022). Researchers have suggested that learners with intersectional identities (i.e., "the confluence of multiple [marginalized] identities in each individual"; Dee Watts-Jones, 2010, p. 406) may struggle more with the competing demands of graduate program and family/community responsibilities than learners with socially privileged identities Learners with marginalized identities can benefit from mentoring (Silverstein et al., 2022), financial management resources (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2016), and the skill development that accompanies managing multiple responsibilities (Zellner, 2014).

One example of an intersectional identity that could either promote or inhibit academic self-efficacy and personal wellness is parental status (Muzacz et al., 2022). Student-parents have suggested that there are parts of managing family life and academic responsibilities that promote mental health (Zellner, 2014). If fostered, academic self-efficacy can ameliorate the effects of societal oppression on educational outcomes (Peguero & Shaffer, 2015). However, most accounts focus on time scarcity and the challenges facing this group (Gavin, 2017), with more acute stress experienced among learners who are single parents (Romick, 2017) and greater debt burden among BIPOC graduate students with low to moderate incomes as compared to White graduate students with comparable incomes (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2016).

Hybrid Learning in Counselor Education

The field of professional counseling has acknowledged that distance counseling is growing in popularity as a treatment modality (Pipoly, 2013). The field's attention to this paradigmatic shift reflects counseling learners' need to be experienced with remote technologies. In recognition of this need, the *ACA Code of Ethics* (American Counseling Association, 2014) and the *2016 CACREP Standards* (Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2015) describe counselors' ethical obligations to understand the impacts of technology on confidentiality and the counseling relationship. Preparing counselors-in-training for these realities of professional practice can begin within graduate training programs.

Previous publications specific to counselor education have described applications of hybrid learning to counselor training (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011; Ilieva & Erguner-Tekinalp, 2012; Renfro-Michel et al., 2010); identified current trends in online counselor education programs; and made recommendations for improving the quality of online counselor education programs (Snow et al., 2018). Additionally, guidelines from the national accrediting body for the counseling profession (i.e., the *2016 CACREP Standards;* CACREP, 2015) state that an orientation to program policies, procedures, and expectations should be provided to all incoming learners. However, little is known about the impact that participating in the orientation to a counseling program has on master's students entering online or hybrid programs. To our knowledge, investigation into the impacts of counseling programs' orientations is limited to a single study of an orientation designed for Ph.D. students in a F2F counseling program (Cusworth, 2001). No studies to date have examined self-efficacy among master's students in a hybrid counseling program or counseling students' acquisition of the competencies required of them in an online learning environment (e.g., basic computer skills, performing online searches, using features within an LMS). Thus, there is a need to understand the function and outcomes of a hybrid orientation offered to learners entering a nationally - accredited counseling program, specifically in the area of fostering learners' self-efficacy in a hybrid learning environment.

Rationale for Current Study

The current study explores the impact of a hybrid program orientation on learners' development of self-efficacy with online learning management systems (LMS), information seeking, and information literacy. Learning more about the impacts of a hybrid orientation can help programs' faculty and staff support learners entering graduate programs. Identifying the impacts of a hybrid orientation on learners' self-efficacy could apply to any CACREP-accredited counselor education program currently employing or considering adopting an online or hybrid format. Given what is currently known about hybrid learning in counselor education and what remains to be discovered, investigators aimed to explore two related research questions about self-efficacy among master's-level counseling students who participated in a hybrid orientation:

1.   What impact does a faculty-led orientation have on students' assessment of their self-efficacy with computers, information-seeking, and learning management systems?

2. What impact does an orientation have on students' readiness to engage in programmatic tasks necessary for their success in a counseling program?

Method

Research Design

This project was part of a larger study supported by internal funding at a large public university in the western region of the United States. The larger study examined the impacts of a hybrid orientation on the self-efficacy and wellness of learners newly enrolled in a master's-level counseling program with a hybrid format by employing a pre-experimental (Frey, 2018), nonrandomized, one-group, pre-post intervention design. This manuscript presents quantitative inquiries into the impact of a hybrid orientation on the self-reported self-efficacy of learners entering a master's program in counseling. Our study spanned one month, which included a week-long hybrid orientation as the intervention.

To conduct a pre-experimental examination of the impact of a program orientation on self-efficacy in this group of learners, we sampled participants using a single-stage sampling design where we could directly access members of the population. Our convenience sample consisted of the entire group of 43 learners participating in the orientation. Mandatory participation in the orientation, combined with the short duration of the study, eliminated the option to include a comparison group. Random assignment of participants was not possible given the size of the potential participant pool. Consistent with Coleman (2019), we hold that pre-experimental designs such as ours are viable options when ethical considerations do not allow for random assignment, independence, and a comparison group. Additionally, these designs are encouraged as exploratory approaches in counseling (Sheperis et al., 2017).

Procedures

Following IRB approval, participants were recruited from the incoming cohort of learners accepted to the master's degree in Counseling (M.Coun) program before the required orientation. Participants were advised that to be able to participate they must be of a legal age to consent and able to read and speak English. They were further informed that they would be asked to do the following: (a) complete an online questionnaire in Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com) about social location; (b) provide consent for researchers to access information from their student record, including social location indicators; (c) complete an online questionnaire in Qualtrics three times – before orientation, after orientation, and approximately nine months after orientation; and (d) complete an online questionnaire in Canvas (https://learn.canvas.net), once before and once after orientation. The third Qualtrics survey was never administered, considering participants' cognitive fatigue due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the consent process, participants were asked to create a unique personal code made up of alphanumeric characters that did not contain their first or last name. This personal code served to mask student identity from program faculty/co-investigators and thereby maintain student confidentiality. Personal codes were used exclusively to collate data and were only accessible by the first author, who was not a faculty member or advisor in the counseling program. The recruitment email, which included a link to a consent document in Qualtrics, was distributed through University email addresses to each of the 43 students in the incoming master's cohort. Of these, 25 students consented to participate in the study, resulting in a consent response rate of 58%.

Participants

See Table 1 for details of participant demographics. The majority of our 25 participants ($n = 23$) identified their gender identity as female. Chronologic ages ranged from 22 to 60 ($M = 35.92$, $sd = 11.12$). Over half

of the participants ($n = 15$) self-reported race and ethnicity as White without indicating any other identity. The remaining 40% ($n = 10$) reported Asian and/or Asian American, Mexican American, and American Indian identities. Almost half of the participants ($n = 12$) were from urban areas, slightly fewer from suburban areas, and very few from rural areas. Household yearly incomes ranged from $20,000 to over $150,000, with the median income being in the $50,000–$ 60,000 range. Over half of the participants identified as parents ($n = 15$). Additionally, over half ($n = 14$) identified as married. Most participants ($n = 14$) identified as first-generation college students. Most participants' ($n = 20$) highest degree earned was a bachelor's degree. Approximately one-third of participants had no prior experience with any LMS, one-third had some experience with any LMS, and one-third had considerable experience with any LMS.

Intervention: Hybrid Orientation

All learners, regardless of their participation in the study, had the opportunity to engage in all orientation activities. This series of week-long activities began with one 60-minute synchronous Zoom meeting facilitated by counseling faculty advisors, followed by six modules of asynchronous, competency-based learning activities in Canvas. Following the initial meeting, learners were given access to six asynchronous online learning modules. Learners had one week from that time to complete all modules.

The Canvas modules were informed by the principles of Quality Matters, which adhere to the Guidelines for Universal Design Learning (CAST, 2018). The learning objectives for each module were consistent with program requirements as outlined in the student handbook, the university's student conduct code, and the *2016 CACREP Standards* (CACREP, 2015). Module topics included the following: (1) getting to know cohort members; (2) program expectations and degree requirements; (3) counselor dispositions and faculty advising; (4) University resources and policies; (5) counselor wellness and self-care; and (6) APA writing style.

Measures

Self-efficacy was measured using three existing instruments, i.e., the Computer Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Howard, 2014), the Perceived Ease of Use Scale (PEU; Saadé & Kira, 2007), and the Learning Management Self-Efficacy Survey (LMSES; Martin et al., 2010). Participants' readiness to engage in hybrid learning was measured using survey questions created by the second and third authors for this study. For all measures, higher scores reflect increased self-efficacy or readiness to engage. See Table 2 for the psychometric properties of these measures, including the Cronbach's alpha from the original studies and the current study, and the Readiness to Engage items.

Computer Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES)

The CSES (Howard, 2014) is a 12-item computer self-efficacy measure developed to update and generalize previous self-efficacy scales created by Compeau and Higgins (1995) and Murphy et al. (1989). Item responses are measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Sample items include "I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected computer events," and "There are few things that I cannot do on a computer."

Perceived Ease of Use Scale (PEU)

The PEU is a four-item scale developed by Saadé and Kira (2007) to measure the strength of participants' belief in their ability to locate, navigate, and use online course components without difficulty. A sample item is "I think that learning to navigate the on-line (sic) course components will be easy for me". In the original study, the PEU was administered with other questions measuring participants' levels of anxiety,

computer experience, and internet experience (Saadé & Kira, 2007). Item responses are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

Learning Management Self-Efficacy Survey (LMSES)

The LMSES is a 24-item scale developed by Martin and colleagues (2010) to measure student self-efficacy in four domains of navigating learning management systems: Accessing Information, Posting Information, File Management, and Advanced Features. Item responses are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not Confident at All) to 4 (Very Confident). This study utilized only the eight items from the Accessing Information domain (e.g., "I would feel confident to access the course calendar and tasks assigned") and the four items from the Posting Information domain (e.g., "I would feel confident to create a new thread in the discussion group"). In addition to the composite score combining these two domains, these domain scores were used in the study's analyses.

Readiness to Engage

To measure participants' readiness to engage in programmatic tasks necessary for their success in the program's online learning environment, the second and third authors developed a set of six survey items (see Table 2 for a list of these items). Item responses were scored on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent).

Data Collection

Before starting the program's orientation, participants responded to two online surveys, one administered online through Qualtrics and the other through Canvas. After completing the hybrid orientation, participants again responded to two online surveys administered through Qualtrics and Canvas. Additional data on student demographics was collected for all 25 participants from the University's graduate school. These data were used solely for descriptive purposes.

The pre-orientation Qualtrics survey consisted of eight questions about participants' social location identities (e.g., estimated income levels, year of birth, parental status, gender identity), four validated psychometric scales, two domains of another validated psychometric scale, and one question asking for the personal code the participant created. Given the online format, the scales were not counterbalanced. However, the social location questions were placed first and followed by the scales in the following order: CSES, PEU, two domains of the LMSES, and an additional scale measuring wellness that was studied separately (Muzacz et al., 2022). This survey had an estimated completion time of approximately 12 minutes. Twenty-four of 25 participants (96%) completed this survey; one participant (4%) did not respond to the survey until after attending orientation.

The pre-orientation Canvas survey contained nine questions which allowed participants to self-assess their knowledge of the content included in the orientation. One question asked learners to indicate their prior experience with Canvas and other LMSs, six questions asked them to rate their readiness to engage in programmatic tasks, and one question asked participants to provide their personal code. The remaining question asked participants about their self-care practices; those data were reported elsewhere (see Muzacz et al., 2022). The pre-orientation Canvas survey had an estimated completion time of less than one minute. Twenty-two of 25 participants (92%) completed this survey; one participant (4%) did not respond to the survey until after attending orientation, and two participants (8%) did not respond to the survey at all.

The post-Orientation Qualtrics survey consisted of the same scales previously administered and a question asking participants to provide their personal code. This survey had an estimated completion time of approximately eight minutes. All 25 participants completed this survey.

The post-Orientation Canvas survey contained 10 questions which allowed learners to self-assess their knowledge of the content included in the orientation. One question asked study participants to provide their personal code. Six questions elicited the same ratings collected earlier of learners' readiness to engage in programmatic tasks. Two additional questions gathered qualitative information on aspects of the orientation, and one question pertained to wellness (see Muzacz et al., 2022). This survey had an estimated completion time of less than one minute. Twenty-two of 25 participants (88%) completed this survey.

Analysis

Preliminary analyses of measures and measure items were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Mac, Version 26 (2019). Preliminary analyses of the self-efficacy variables from the CSES, PEU, LMSES, and the LMSES' Accessing Information and Posting Information domains showed adequate internal consistency to create indices for each scale by averaging values across each scale's items. See Table 2 for the psychometric properties of each scale.

Further, the analyses revealed the differences between paired post- and pre-orientation score indices to be approximately symmetric for the CSES, moderately skewed for the PEU, and highly skewed for the LMSES and its Accessing Information and Posting Information subdomains. Preliminary analyses of the six survey items developed to gauge participants' readiness to engage showed the differences between paired post- and pre-orientation item scores to be approximately skewed for items Tracking Program Completion, Explaining Faculty Roles, Understanding University Resources, Understanding Program Policies, and Distinguishing APA Style. Differences between scores were moderately skewed for the item Understanding Non-Curricular Requirements. See Table 3 for skew values of each scale, domain, and item; see Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn (2013) for interpretation criteria.

Next, we conducted a series of median difference analyses using Microsoft Excel 365 for Windows, Version 2015, to determine whether pre- and post-orientation median scores were statistically different. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used for approximately symmetric and moderately skewed distributions of difference scores, and exact sign tests for highly skewed distributions. During analysis, tied scores (i.e., difference scores of zero) were addressed by randomly assigning each a positive or negative sign. When analysis would include an odd number of zeros, one was randomly dropped, and the sample size was reduced by one. Resulting test statistics T or K were compared to the critical values for those test statistics corresponding to two-tailed α-values, ranging from .1–.6 in increments of .1, for the self-efficacy scales and domains. For Readiness to Engage items, test statistics T were compared to the critical values for those test statistics corresponding to two-tailed α-values ranging across .0005, .0025, .005, .0125, .025, .05 and .1. Any participant who did not complete these scales pre- and post-orientation was excluded from analysis. Final median difference analyses included matched pairs data from 24 participants for the self-efficacy data and from 20 participants for the Readiness to Engage data.

Results

Impact of Orientation on Self-Efficacy

Wilcoxon signed-ranks test did not indicate that the CSES post-orientation (Mdn = 5.63) ranks were statistically significant from the CSES pre-orientation (Mdn = 5.71) ranks, T = 120, p < .600. Likewise, for the PEU, a Wilcoxon signed-ranks test failed to uncover evidence that the post-orientation (Mdn = 4.75) ranks were statistically significant from the pre-orientation (Mdn = 4.88) ranks, T = 116, p < .400. Similarly, an exact sign test did not indicate that post- and pre-orientation number of signs were statistically significant for the LMSES (post- and pre-orientation $Mdns$ = 3.83, 3.75), S = 11, p < .500, or its Accessing Information (post- and pre-orientation $Mdns$ = 3.75, 3.56), S = 11, p < .600, or Posting Information dimensions (post-

and pre-orientation *Mdns* = 3.75, 3.75), *S* = 11, *p* < .500. See Table 3 for detailed results of these median difference analyses.

Impact of Orientation on Readiness to Engage

Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests indicated that each of the post-orientation ranks were statistically significant from pre-orientation ranks. The post- and pre-orientation medians, test statistics, and significance levels are as follows: Tracking Program Completion (*Mdns* = 4, 3), *T* = 27, *p* < .005, *r* = .75; Understanding Non-Curricular Requirements (*Mdns* = 4, 3), *T* = 21, *p* < .001, *r* = .80. Explaining Faculty Roles (*Mdns* = 4, 3), *T* = 14, *p* < .001, *r* = .86; Understanding University Resources (*Mdns* = 4, 2), *T* = 25, *p* < .005, *r* = .75.76; Understanding Program Policies (*Mdns* = 4, 3), *T* = 31, *p* < .001, *r* = .67; and Distinguishing APA Style (*Mdns* = 4, 3), *T* = 33, *p* < .01, *r* = .69. See Table 3 for detailed results of these median difference analyses.

Discussion

Our results on the CSES, PEU, and LMSES and its domains were not statistically significant. However, this was pre-experimental, exploratory research with a small sample size. As such, it is warranted to look at the results of the tests on these measures with a more granular lens. Before we do, however, we would like to draw attention to one factor which may have impacted our number of statistically significant results: participants' pre-orientation self-efficacy scores were high. For example, on the PEU the pre-orientation median was 4.88 on a scale ranging from one to five. With incoming numbers as high as these, it is unlikely that we would see a statistically significant increase in participants' post-orientation scores.

Results on the CSES and PEU showed that participants' ratings of their self-efficacy performing computer-related tasks did not change significantly as a result of their participation in orientation activities. This is evidenced by the fact that the median ranks did not change in statistically significant ways from pre-orientation to post-orientation on the CSES (Mdns = 5.71, 5.63) or PEU (Mdns = 4.88, 4.75). One interpretation of these findings is that participants' perception of their self-efficacy actually decreased over the course of the orientation, as shown by observed declines in the median ranks on those scales. A possible explanation for these findings is that as participants' familiarity with terminology about technology competencies increased, their awareness of how much they have yet to learn also increased, and their self-ratings of self-efficacy decreased.

Similar to the CSES and PEU, median difference analyses on the LMSES and its subdomains did not show significant changes in participant ratings of their self-efficacy performing tasks in a LMS following participant completion of orientation activities. This finding is consistent with prior research which has demonstrated that task-specific self-efficacy (e.g., performing learning tasks in an LMS) can increase with exposure to these experiences over time. As our sample was comprised primarily of learners who reported prior experience using an LMS (*n* = 17, 68%), this finding was not wholly unexpected. In contrast to findings on the CSES and PEU, however, the LMSES and both its subdomains did not experience a drop in the number of times a participant's score decreased post- as compared to pre-orientation. In fact, for the Composite LMSES and the Accessing Information domain, we saw slight increases in their median scores (Composite LMSES, *Mdns* = 3.75, 3.83; Accessing Information, *Mdns* = 4.56, 4.81). The observed increases provide support for the interpretation that learners' perceptions of their self-efficacy in performing LMS-related tasks, such as those expected of learners in a hybrid program, grew slightly from pre- to post-orientation. There is no way to determine the degree to which these increases were attributable to the intervention itself. It is, however, reasonable to hypothesize that providing learners with a structured, low-stakes opportunity to engage with the Canvas LMS could at least partially explain our findings on the LMSES.

Perhaps the most striking results of this research came from the Readiness to Engage (RTE) items. Each of these items had post-orientation ratings medians that were statistically different from those pre-orientation at the < .01 significance level or less. Additionally, we saw the effect sizes associated with these items ranging from .67 - .86. Practically interpreted, these measures of association indicate that when choosing a participant at random, we have a 67% to 86% chance their ratings of RTE items would increase during orientation. Collectively, these findings suggest that participants' engagement in orientation activities contributed to increases in their readiness to engage in counseling program activities. These findings are not dissimilar to those of Mullen et al. (2015), who noted the developmental importance of fostering counseling students' self-efficacy over time, starting with entry into a master's program. Although their inquiry centered on participants' acquisition of clinical skills rather than readiness to engage in a hybrid program, their finding that participants' self-efficacy ratings increased as their skill development progressed offers an explanation compatible with our current findings.

This study had limitations related to our program's small cohort size and resultant small sample size that constrain the degree to which conclusions can be drawn about the impacts of a hybrid orientation on master's-level counseling students. One limitation was that non-random sampling and lack of a strict experimental design including a control group mean that our findings are not generalizable beyond our participant population. Another limitation was that this study launched during the COVID-19 pandemic and our team faced institutional barriers to engagement in research activities that negatively impacted our ability to recruit study participants within our planned time frame. In a more typical year with more pre-research recruitment time, more participants may have consented to participate; more participation would have allowed greater flexibility with statistical analyses. Lastly, the ceiling effect created by higher self-assessments on participants' pre-tests decreased the likelihood that statistically significant increases would be observed in the post-tests.

Overall, this study demonstrated why further research in the area of counseling students' orientation to hybrid programs is warranted. A logical next step would be to replicate this study across cohort years and pool the responses across years or to collect data at an institution with larger incoming cohorts so that statistical analyses for larger samples could be employed. Targeted replication within a fully online program could serve as an interesting point of comparison, as learners who choose fully online programs may have greater confidence in their self-efficacy than learners who choose hybrid programs (Martin & Tutty, 2008). Additionally, we found that there are few studies using validated instruments to assess learners' competencies in a variety of computer- and LMS-related tasks. Studies conducted in master's level counseling programs using tools like the CSES, PEU, and LMSES can shed light on the value of these instruments as ways to measure student self-efficacy in programs where learners are heavily reliant on technologies, such as hybrid programs. Longitudinal exploration of how counseling student preparation in orientation correlates to self-efficacy across time (similar to Mullen et al., 2015) could also inform best practices for student evaluation and enhance program development in CACREP-accredited programs.

Conclusion

Hybrid learning is becoming more common in counseling programs and appeals to non-traditional graduate students for a variety of reasons. However, there is still much to learn about how graduate students acclimate to hybrid learning. Specific to counselor education, more needs to be understood about the role of self-efficacy in a hybrid learning environment and the various forms of self-efficacy needed for learners to be successful in hybrid counseling programs. This study examined a subset of these forms of self-efficacy to explore the impacts of participation in a hybrid orientation on learners entering a hybrid counseling master's program.

Our results showed that completing a hybrid orientation had little effect on participants' ratings of technology-related self-efficacy. It is important to note that across the self-efficacy and RTE measures,

participant ratings started out high and, in many cases, increased from there. In contrast, we found that scores on all of the readiness to engage items (e.g., Understanding Program Policies) increased in statistically significant ways. This context-dependent learning is important given the value of developing task-specific self-efficacy when starting a graduate program. The results on the RTE items potentially hold a greater level meaning than the self-efficacy measures for counseling programs considering an online or hybrid orientation format for their learners.

As a pre-experimental design, our study served to raise additional worthwhile questions about counselor preparation in master's-level hybrid programs. For example, what aspects of learners' social location identities might relate to their perceptions of self-efficacy? While a substantial number of our participants hold what are traditionally considered marginalized identities (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity), we could not disaggregate our data by these identities without compromising confidentiality. We believe, however, that understanding the diversity of experiences our students bring into counseling programs can increase our understanding of how better to support all our students in building the self-efficacy so vital to their success. Furthermore, research with such students would enhance our current understandings of the function and outcomes of program orientations in CACREP-accredited hybrid programs.

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Table 1

Numbers of Participants Identifying With Each Social Location Indicator

Social Location Indicators	*n*	%[a]
Gender		
Female	23	92
Male	2	8
Chronologic Age		
< 25 yrs	5	20
26–36 yrs	11	44
36–47 yrs	4	16
> 48 yrs	5	20
Race and Ethnicity		
BIPOC	10	40
White	15	60
Degree of Urbanity		
Rural	3	12
Suburban	10	40
Urban	12	48
Income		
< $50,000	8	32
$50,000– $100,000	6	24
$100,000– $150,000	5	20
> $150,000	3	12
Did not respond	3	12
Parental Identity		
Not a parent	15	60
Parent	10	40
Marital Identity		
Not married	10	40
Married	14	56
Did not respond	1	4
Educational Generation Status		
First Generation	14	56
Continuing Generation	10	40
Did not respond	1	4
Education		
Bachelor's Degree	21	84
Graduate Degree	4	16
Prior Experience With an LMS		
None	7	28
Minimal	7	28
Considerable	10	40
Did not respond	1	4

Note. $N = 25$.

[a] Not all percentages total to 100 due to rounding.

Table 2
Psychometric Properties of Participants' Ratings of Self-Efficacy and Readiness to Engage Pre- and Post-Orientation

Measures	Pre-Orientation				Post-Orientation			
	M	*SD*	*α*	Observed Range	*M*	*SD*	*α*	Observed Range
Computer Self-Efficacy Scale								
Composite CSES	5.60	0.63	.876	4.25–6.83	5.52	0.75	.921	4.17–6.75
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)								
Composite PEU	4.47	0.66	.918	3.00–5.00	4.35	0.83	.961	1.50–5.00
Learning Management Self-Efficacy Survey (LMSES)								
Composite LMSE[a]	3.52	0.52	.974	2.25–4.00	3.55	0.32	.954	1.67–4.00
Accessing Information	3.95	0.25	.957	3.00–4.24	3.56	0.59	.928	2.00–4.00
Posting Information	3.51	0.56	.944	2.25–4.00	3.52	0.72	.906	1.00–4.00
Readiness to Engage								
Tracking Program Completion: *Rate your knowledge of the degree requirements for, and ways to track progress toward completion of, the M.Coun with an option in School or Clinical Mental Health Counseling.*	2.9	0.7		2–4	3.9	0.9		2–5
Understanding Non-Curricular Requirements: *Rate your understanding of the non-curricular requirements of the M.Coun program.*	2.8	0.8		2–4	3.9	0.8		2–5
Explaining Faculty Roles: *Rate your ability to explain the role of Counseling faculty in advising, gatekeeping, and remediation.*	2.8	1.0		1–5	4.3	0.8		2–5
Understanding University Resources: *Rate your understanding of [University] resources available to Ecampus [counseling] students.*	2.6	1.3		1–5	4.0	0.7		3–5
Understanding Program Policies: *Rate your understanding of university and program policies describing expectations of student behavior.*	3.3	1.0		2–5	4.3	0.7		3–5
Distinguishing APA Style: *Rate your ability to distinguish between correct and incorrect applications of APA Style.*	2.6	0.9		1–4	3.7	1.1		1–5

N = 24 for self-efficacy measures and N = 20 for the Readiness to Engage measure.
[a]Values for the combined Accessing Information and Posting Information dimensions.
*Value for all four dimensions of the original scale.