



# Theoretical Models of Suicide in Counselor Education, Supervision, and Advocacy: An Applied Example

Seth T. Robinson, MS, LPC Associate, LCDC; Devon E. Romero, PhD, LPC, NCC;  
and Claudia G. Interiano-Shiverdecker, PhD, LPC



## Overview

- Literature acknowledges gaps in suicide-related competencies within counselor education.
- CACREP includes requirements for suicide prevention and intervention training, yet programs still need creative strategies to embed this content outside the clinical sequence.
- This poster introduces a novel approach that connects suicide theory with counselor competencies to support counselor educators in addressing this critical training need.

(CACREP, 2024; Montague & Furr, 2025)

## Implications and Advocacy

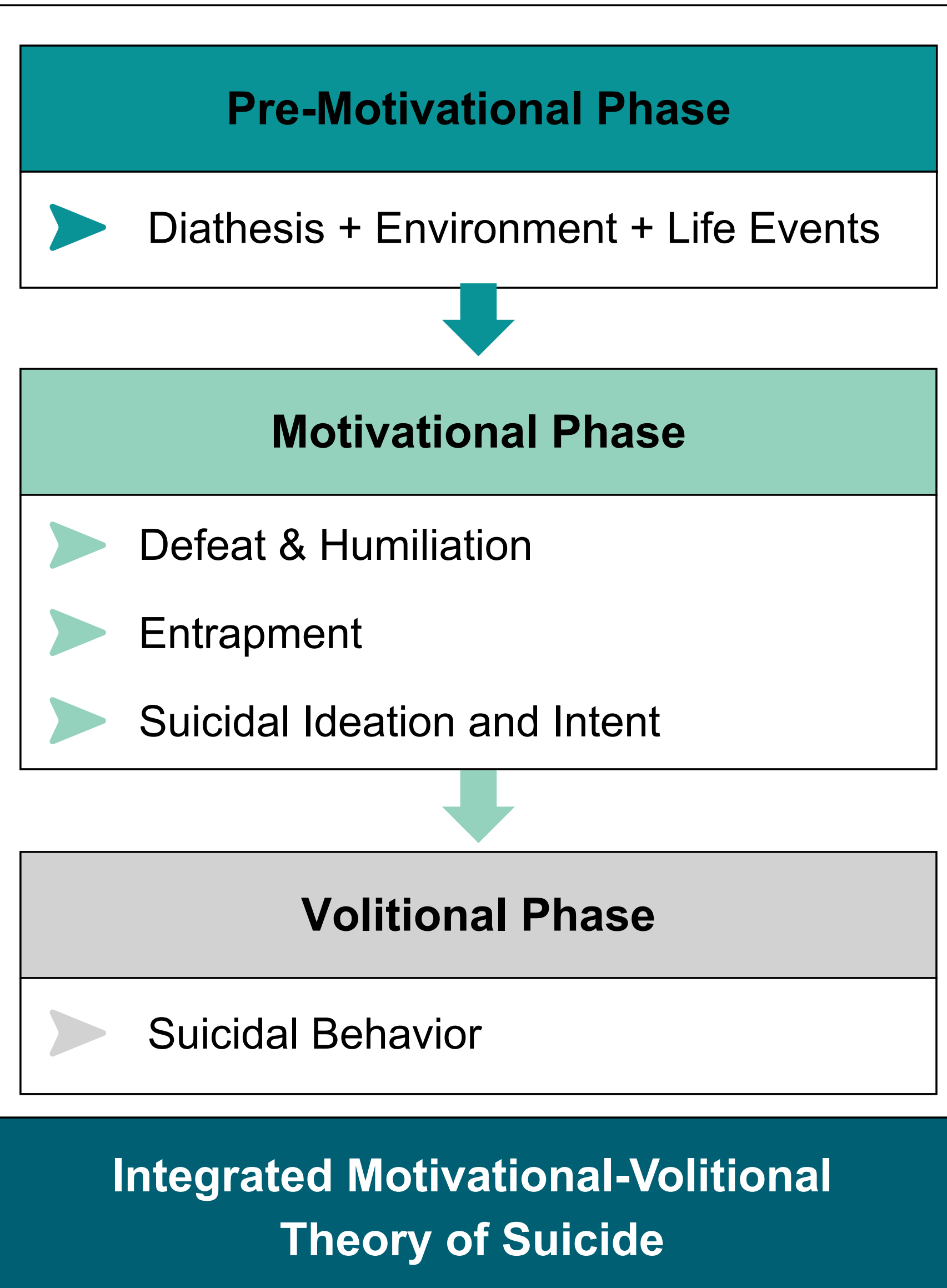
- Minority Stress Theory (MST) engages with distal and proximal stressors, which highlight the links between external events and internalization processes for minority populations.
- Counselor educators and supervisors can integrate suicide theories and minority stress models into coursework and supervision to strengthen trainee competence with diverse clients at risk for suicidal ideation and behavior.
- Clients are not a monolith; theoretical approaches must account for temporal, intrapsychic, interpersonal, and social factors related to risk and resilience.

(Rivas-Koehl et al., 2023)

## Theoretical Models of Suicide

- Perceived Burdensomeness (PB)
- Thwarted Belongingness (TB)
- Hopelessness
- Acquired Capability (AC)

### Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide



### Three-Step Theory of Suicide

- Step One: Pain and Hopelessness
- Step Two: Pain becomes greater than connectedness
- Step Three: Acquired Capability

### Fluid Vulnerability Theory

- Suicidal Belief System
- Baseline Risk Factors
- Acute Risk Factors

### Four Domains of Vulnerability

- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Physiological

## Applied Example: Child Sex Trafficking Competencies for Counselors

- Developed through a four-round Delphi study with 19 experts, the framework includes 128 competencies across five domains.
- These competencies support counselor training, curriculum development, and quality-of-care standards to prepare counselors to work effectively with child sex trafficking survivors.



(Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2023)

<b>Domain 1: Intervention Strategies &amp; Helping Relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of PB or TB (IPTS): Youth voices “I am a burden” or “I do not belong,” respond with explicit worth-affirmation, consistent presence, and collaborative micro-goals to restore connection and agency.</li> <li>• If defeat or entrapment dominates (IMV): Expand options and agency via motivational strategies.</li> <li>• If risk fluctuates (FVT): Normalize non-linear change and co-create a plan around predictable spikes (e.g., court dates, placement moves).</li> </ul>	<p>Competencies: A1-3, 5,7; B2; C1-3,5,8,11</p> <p>Competencies: A7; B2; C8-9,18</p> <p>Competencies: A3; C12,15,18</p>
<b>Domain 2: Trauma &amp; Sex Trafficking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If capability is rising (IPTS/3ST/IMV, volitional phase): When repeated exposure to violence or self-harm suggests increased AC, embed means-safety and crisis skills within trauma-informed care.</li> <li>• Make explicit that your stance is trauma-informed with plans that reflect long-term, nonlinear healing (FVT).</li> </ul>	<p>Competencies: B1,3; C1,3-5</p> <p>Competencies: A1-3; B1,3,8-10; C1-3</p>
<b>Domain 3: Assessment for Risk Factors &amp; Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing Content and Process: Integrate content-specific risk factors (IPTS, IMV, and 3ST) alongside a non-linear, dynamic process focus (FVT) for a more competent assessment of risk.</li> <li>• Diathesis-Stress Assessment (IMV; FVT): Assess individual vulnerabilities as well as stressors and broader contextual factors impacting CST survivors current level of risk.</li> </ul>	<p>Competencies: A3; A5; B8-9; C1; C8</p> <p>Competencies: A5-6; B1; B3; B8; B10; C1</p>
<b>Domain 4: Ethical Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and autonomy: Use theory to justify proportionate safety measures (e.g., means-safety when capability and access are present) while preserving youth autonomy via collaborative plans.</li> <li>• Transparency about limitations: When capability is difficult to measure directly, document rationale, consult, and proceed with beneficence and nonmaleficence in mind.</li> </ul>	<p>Competencies: A3; C1-2</p> <p>Competencies: B1-6; C1-3</p>
<b>Domain 5: Cultural Diversity &amp; Human Growth and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge suicidal ideation and action are contextually bound, generating diverse presentation of suicidal belief systems (FVT), as well as differential experiences of pain and connectedness (3ST), PB and TB (IPTS), and defeat and entrapment (IMV).</li> </ul>	<p>Competencies: A1-4; B1-5; C3,5-6</p>

(Baumeister, 1990; Bryan et al., 2020; Joiner, 2005; Klonsky et al., 2018; Klonsky et al., 2021; O'Connor, 2011; Rudd, 2006)