



Theresa M. Botts, Ph.D.

Clinical Interest Section | Term Expires: 12/31/2021



Dr. Theresa Botts, graduated from Eastern Kentucky University, earning a B.S. in General Psychology in 1985. As an undergraduate, I was a nationally certified peer helper and tutor with ECU Student Special Services for three years. I received a Master's of Science degree in Clinical Psychology from ECU in May 1988 and started teaching full-time in the ECU Psychology Department in January, 1989. I completed my Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Kentucky in 2001 and my dissertation examined Psychosocial Factors Influencing the Academic Success of African American Students Attending Predominately White Universities. My internship was at the VA Medical Center, Lexington, KY, and it was while serving as an intern, that I developed a strong interest in doing trauma work. I currently am an Associate Professor in the ECU Psychology Department and have been teaching at ECU for over 30 years. In addition to teaching full time, I am the Director of Admissions for the Psy D Clinical Psychology program, Director of the ECU Psychology Clinic and creator of the Trauma and Suicide Prevention Specialty Clinic. I also serve as the Psychology Department's Psi Chi/Psychology Club Faculty Advisor, Faculty Career Advisor for eCampus Psychology Majors, the Faculty Cooperative and Applied Learning Coordinator for Psychology and Animal Studies' majors and the Faculty Advisor for the ECU Veteran Studies program. It is also with great pleasure that I have been serving as the Regional Clinical Representative for the Kentucky Psychological Association over the last year. As a Co-Director of the ECU Psychology Clinic, I work as a clinician and clinical supervisor of doctoral students enrolled in our Psy. D. Clinical Psychology program. As a supplemental service in our clinic, I have added a supplemental Trauma and Suicide Prevention Clinic that focuses on providing trauma treatment and suicide prevention services to a wide range of client populations, including veterans and their families. The Trauma and SP Clinic also provide outreach trainings on trauma informed care and suicide prevention to our ECU community and outside organizations in surrounding communities. My clinical interests include individual and group trauma work, gender related issues affecting mental health, diversity and cultural sensitivity training, and treating mood, anxiety and eating disorders. Finally, from 2015-2019, I served as a co-investigator with Dr. Melinda Moore on the Eastern Kentucky University's Suicide Awareness and Focus on Suicide (EKU SAFE) grant which sought to systematically create a safer and more caring campus community, to assist those at-risk for suicidal behavior, and to support those who are concerned regarding the welfare of members of the community.



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Diversity statement: As a psychologist, I think that attending to and being knowledgeable about the impact of one's intersectionality of identities is crucial in our fast changing and diverse world. This is true on both a personal and professional level. As a clinician and educator who trains doctoral level students, I do my best to "practice what I teach" and therefore have a strong commitment to spending a lifetime building multicultural competencies and celebrating diversity. I see this as a process and not an event. I start with the premise that when you meet one individual, they have met one individual. I know that as a Black woman, I appreciate and celebrate those people who have approached me with this core belief. Adopting this openness allows us to enter into a dialogue that helps us build upon our knowledge about that individual in a way that is respectful and genuine. It enables the person to feel more comfortable telling their story about who they are and what they bring to the relationship, be it again, at the personal or professional level. Adopting this approach also means we can rid ourselves of stereotypical beliefs that might otherwise contaminate our ability to truly know and appreciate one another. Additionally, I will share that I have a strong passion to be an advocate for diversity and to push for equal access to mental healthcare for all who are in need of such services. As the Director of the ECU Psychology Clinic, I work with my colleagues and students in training to ensure that we provide quality services to those who are from diverse backgrounds. We have worked especially hard to provide services in rural and underserved areas of our state through our telepsychology services. My history inspires me to provide such services. Being Black and growing up in a rural area in Kentucky, early on, I became aware of two things. One was that there were a number of people with mental health issues, but no one seemed to have easy access to mental healthcare, and especially Black people in my small town. Secondly, they had no real desire to seek such services, even if they were available. I knew there was a legitimate reason for both these things and it took the form of racism. I knew at a fairly young age that "being on the victim end of racism and sexism" was far too common of an experience for the people that I knew and loved. Hence I pledged to do my part to make things better. My mission was to do something to stamp out as many of these "victimization experiences", as I possibly could in my lifetime. I saw psychology as the mechanism for changing these ills. I am still on this mission and continue my attempts to be an advocate for using my profession as a means for instilling hope and real change. Luckily, I have been blessed to be able to serve as a change agent in my role as a teacher, clinician, researcher and trainer of clinicians and truly push for social justice in our profession. I like to think that my mission is being fulfilled in the work that I and others do in the ECU Psychology Clinic. The addition of our Trauma and Suicide Specialty Clinic has helped me truly practice what I teach. For example, our TSSPC team works to do numerous outreach trainings to make trauma and suicide prevention outreach trainings available to diverse individuals and groups who have a need for clinical services and/or education on how to better serve diverse populations. Understanding racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and the intersectionality effects of additional identities and how they may impact differences in rates for trauma experiences, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide deaths is essential for more effectively directing suicide prevention efforts and helping others to become more trauma informed. These are things that I strive to build a better understanding of and integrate the knowledge into my teaching, clinical work and research endeavors. I hope that in doing so, that I am having a positive influence on those that I teach and serve, thereby contributing to our profession in some small way as we all fight to enhance social justice for all.