A Qualitative Exploration of Counseling Student Development through Community Outreach

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Abstract

Community outreach and service learning have been shown to facilitate counseling and psychology student development. Community outreaches conducted from a liberation psychology-based perspective are particularly effective in terms of promoting multicultural competence and social justice ideals and actions among outreach participants. Using qualitative interviews of students participating in a local community outreach, the authors explore student development with a focus on multicultural and social justice practices. The authors discuss the implications for facilitating community outreaches based on the data from student participants.

Keywords: Community Outreach, Multicultural Competence, Social Justice, Qualitative Research

Community-based outreach and service learning projects are well established as meaningful ways in which to facilitate the development of skills for counseling and psychology students as well as other human service professionals (Barrow, 2008; Burnett, Hammel, & Long, 2004; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009a, 2009b; Hagan, 2004; Musucci & Renner, 2000; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega, 2005; West-Olatunji, Goodman, Mehta, & Templeton, 2011). Outreach and service learning projects in local communities have been suggested as a way for counseling training programs to better infuse multicultural and social justice training throughout the curriculum (Bemak, Chung, Talleyrand, Jones, & Daquin, 2011; Nilsson, Schale, & Khamphakdy-Brown, 2011). Community outreach led by counseling and psychology faculty can also link underserved communities with desired services and university partnerships (Bemak et al., 2011; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009b). Community outreach ranging from service learning to post-disaster counseling have been shown to increase students' cultural awareness, critical thinking, advocacy skills, and socio-political awareness (e.g., Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009a; Murray, Pope, Rowell, 2010; Roysircar et al., 2005). A greater understanding of how these outreach projects impact students is needed in order to expand and continue their infusion within training programs. Further, there are a number of barriers to conducting outreach, including a lack of knowledge about how to best conduct outreach that facilitates student development and that provides services that do not further marginalize communities. As such, this study explores the experiences of counseling students during a local community outreach project, with particular attention given to student development and implications for conducting community outreach.

Background

Community Outreach and Service Learning

Counseling and psychology educators, as well as other human services professionals, use service learning to offer students the opportunity to learn about day-to-day realities and responsibilities of working in a community or school setting (Arman & Scherer, 2002). Community outreach and service learning can provide services to the communities, while also engendering two critical aspects of counselor development: multicultural competence and social justice awareness (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009a; Murray et al, 2010; Nilsson et al., 2011; Roysircar et al., 2005). Multiculturalism is now well established as a critical part of counselor training. Sometimes called the fourth force in counseling, multiculturalism established that counselors must develop awareness, knowledge, and skills about their own and their clients' cultural worldviews (Pedersen, 1990, 2008). More recently, a fifth force in counseling and psychology has emerged – social justice (Ratts, 2009). Social justice counseling attends to the systemic and sociopolitical issues that impact clients and communities, as well as examines the multiple facets of identity and the impact of oppression and marginalization (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 2011). Furthermore, social justice involves social action, meaning that counselors and psychologists engage in activities to address systemic oppression, disrupt harmful social structures, and advocate for policies and practices that promote equity (Prilleltensky, 2001; Vera & Speight, 2003). Given the importance of counseling students developing cultural and social justice competence, counseling and psychology training programs have an obligation to provide training that facilitates this development (Bemak et al., 2011; Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010). Community outreach is a promising way to promote student development related to multiculturalism and social justice, including social justice and advocacy (Barrow, 2008; Murray et al., 2010), multicultural counseling competence (Burnett et al., 2004; Roysircar et al., 2005), or both (Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009a; Nilsson et al., 2011).

Although community outreach offers opportunities to facilitate student development, engaging in such endeavors presents several challenges. Students often find themselves confronted with issues that impede their ability to offer appropriate services. For example, simply sending students out to "volunteer" in the local community may perpetuate further marginalization of people based on gender, race,

sexual orientation, class, or ethnicity (Masucci & Renner, 2000). Challenges may also arise when the expectations or needs of the community being served are not aligned with the abilities, purposes, or perspectives of the students and outreach project managers. Community members may also have concerns regarding students' abilities to make meaningful contributions given the time limitations of many outreaches (Burnett et al., 2004). For instance, Burnett et al. (2004) found that a 6-week community outreach timeframe was too short for students to have an in-depth experience. In a study by Murray et al. (2010) students reported that organization was a primary challenge during outreach; students had difficulty making time for the project, desired more structure on-site, and wanted better communication among volunteers and faculty supervisors.

Towards Liberatory Community Outreach

As noted, there remains a danger that students and faculty from universities seeking to conduct community outreach will be ineffective in their outreach and even, perhaps unintentionally, contribute to the marginalization of communities (West-Olatunji & Goodman, 2011). This may occur when university collaborators fail to understand and address the confluence of power dynamics, sociopolitical context, and community wellness (Prilleltensky, 2008), or when university partners are focused on serving their own needs instead of those of the community. As such, the use of liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994) and critical consciousness theory (Freire, 1970) as a lens for conducting community outreach assists university partners in expressly attending to social justice issues and generating a collaborative partnership in which the community's needs are central to the outreach process.

As Watts and Flanagan (2007) wrote, "Liberation psychology differs from conventional U.S. psychology in its emphasis on human rights and social equity. Exposing social injustice, creating just societies, promoting self-determination and solidarity with others, ending oppression (and healing its effects) are core tenets" (p. 780). The fundamental goal of liberation psychology is the awakening of critical consciousness in the individual or group (Freire, 1970; Martín-Baró, 1994). Critical consciousness involves developing awareness and understanding of the sociopolitical environment and oppression through self-reflection and dialogue, and then taking action against this oppression, or praxis (Freire, 1970; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Counseling and psychology practitioners from this liberatory perspective are acutely aware of the sociopolitical environment and they work collaboratively with clients and communities to address injustice and promote wellness (Prilleltensky, 2001; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

As such, the current study utilized a perspective based on the principles of liberation psychology and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Martín-Baró, 1994; Watkins &

Shulman, 2008) when conducting and supervising a community outreach with master's level counseling students. Using qualitative interviews, the authors examined the experiences of students, specifically in terms of their multicultural and social justice development. Further, the authors were interested in understanding the experiences of student volunteers in outreach in order to improve outreach supervision and organization for future projects.

Methods

The South Falls outreach project (all names are pseudonyms) was created as an opportunity for master's level students in a counseling program to volunteer in the local community and to develop their multicultural and social justice counseling skills under faculty supervision. The three sites were Nuevo Dia Immigration and Language Center, South Falls Historical Society, and South Falls Out-of-School Suspension Program. Students committed to volunteer at the site for at least one semester, either as a part of an advanced counseling course or independently. Student volunteers were provided with regular supervision in small groups by one or both of the counseling faculty members. Supervision focused on conducting the outreach from a collaborative, critically conscious perspective (Freire, 1970; Watkins & Shulman, 2008) in which volunteers: (a) did not impose their own agenda on the community, (b) sought to adhere to the cultural norms and expectations of the community, (c), were self-reflective about their own biases and concerns, and (d) attended to issues of social injustice.

After obtaining Human Subjects Review Board approval, the second and third authors (both doctoral counseling students) recruited participants among students who were participating in the South Falls outreach project. The purposeful sample included 8 master's-level students enrolled in the counseling program. See Table 1 for information on the participants.

Table 1. *Demographic Participant Data*

Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Location	Credit Hours Completed
Maria	Hispanic	26	Female	IL	36
Ariana	White	37	Female	IL	26
Natasha	Black	50	Female	IL	18
Sarah	Caucasian	30	Female	SS	15
Michelle	Asian	24	Female	SS	31
Tonya	African American	23	Female	HS	10
Ashley	Caucasian	49	Female	HS	42
Kara	White	35	Female	HS	24

Note. Participant names are pseudonyms. Locations are as follows; IL = Nuevo Dia Immigration and Language Center, SS = South Falls Out-of-School Suspension Program, HS =

South Falls Historical Society

The second and third authors conducted two semi-structured individual interviews with the participants, one at the beginning and one at the end of the outreach. The initial interview protocol included questions about participants' interests, expectations, and anticipated challenges. The final interview protocol included questions about participants' overall experiences, personal and professional impacts, and the impact on their multicultural competence and social justice counseling knowledge or skills. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the authors and checked for accuracy by another author.
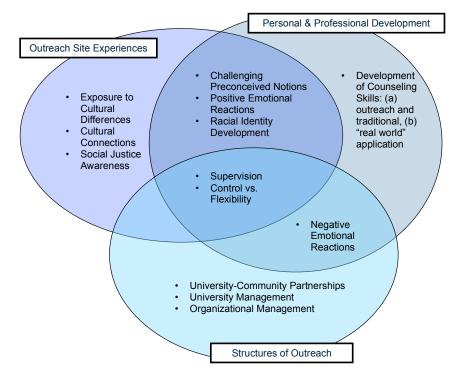
Data Analysis

The authors used a critical realism perspective to ground their data analysis. This perspective combines ontological realism and epistemological constructivism, positing that reality (including meaning, culture, and processes) exists, although it is not directly observable but seen through one's own perspective (Maxwell, 2012, 2013). Thematic coding of the interview transcription content was used to condense data into themes for interpretation and understanding of social phenomena (Creswell, 2008; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

First, all three authors read through the data at least two times to conduct a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2008). Each author made notes and highlighted phrases that were representative of the participants' experiences and development during outreach (Maxwell, 2013). The authors then created a preliminary list of themes and agreed upon 12 themes to use for coding the data (Creswell, 2008). Next, the authors independently coded the data and then met to review the coding. To increase trustworthiness through investigator triangulation (Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011), a text segment was considered to be reflective of a theme if two of three authors agreed. Investigator triangulation also helped ensure consistency since fatigue and changes to theme definitions can occur subtly over time (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Findings

Analysis of the interviews resulted in 12 themes that were situated in three overarching categories (see Figure 1): *Outreach Site Experiences* (participants' interactions and involvement at the community outreach site), *Personal and Professional Development* (participants' growth both personally and as a future counselor), and *Structures of Outreach* (participants' experiences with the organizations that facilitated or managed the outreach). Below, we discuss each theme and identify the overarching category or categories.

Figure 1. Themes as situated within the three overarching categories that influenced the community outreach experience.

Category: *Outreach Site Experiences*

Exposure to cultural differences. Several participants noted that participation in outreach offered opportunities for them to interact with people from cultural backgrounds that they would not otherwise come in contact with. Participants alluded to how their new awareness of cultural differences changed their perspectives. Michelle (Interview 1, SS) said:

> I didn't really have interaction with…deep interaction with African-Americans until I [did] this volunteering opportunity, but I get to know that … background information and why they're really suffering, although I can't really generalize their situation to the whole Black America situation. But, yeah, I was able to deepen my insight and the importance of being open.

Cultural connections. Participants discussed the importance of culture in counseling outreach and communities, and noted their desire to be inclusive and to connect with clients across cultures. For instance, Tonya (Interview 2, HS) spoke of the importance of learning how culture and traditions interact; she noted that doing so allowed her to "see the person as a whole" and develop rapport within the outreach site. Participants noted that understanding the cultural backgrounds and practices of the individuals with whom they were working was critical to connecting and building working relationships.

Social justice awareness. Participants noted the systemic barriers faced by their clients and discussed the emotional damage and differential outcomes that they perceived their clients experienced through instances of "invalidation," "marginalization," and unfair treatment. For instance, Sarah (Interview 2, SS) found that the African American middle and high school students at her site were experiencing discrimination at school. She discussed one teen who was suspended several times because he "was getting made fun of and … no one at school was realizing that he was the subject of these fights because he was so much bigger [than other students]." She continued: "[Talking to students] really like made me feel like kids are not getting equitable [treatment]." Participants frequently observed differential outcomes of students, neighborhoods, and marginalized ethnic groups as compared to more affluent, predominantly White areas of the county. Participants were especially surprised and frustrated that clients sincerely desired to create change, but lacked access to power and resources necessary to do so.

Category: *Personal and Professional Development*

Development of counseling skills. Participants made reference to: (a) the opportunity to engage in the "real world" application of classroom knowledge, as well as; (b) their acquisition of both outreach specific and traditional counseling skills. Sarah (Interview 2, SS) stated:

> I think it was almost, like, it is exactly what we learn, what we talk about in our classes…it was like our class [came] alive.… But for someone like me, who doesn't have a lot of exposure to [counseling] except for when I'm in school, I felt like it was so beneficial.

Some of the counseling skills participants noted were: conducting client conceptualizations, building rapport, developing empathy, neutrality, reflecting, and listening. They also noted the development of skills specific to outreach counseling, such as conducting counseling outside of an office and going out into the community or finding other ways to access clients through casual conversations or activities to build rapport.

Category: *Structures of Outreach*

University-community partnerships. Participants discussed their awareness of issues related to the partnership between the community organizations and the university, including how this relationship positively or negatively impacted the outreach. In the initial student interviews, many participants voiced concerns pertaining to the university-community partnership, including having clearer expectations and specific responsibilities to be delegated to the students before outreach began. For instance, Ashley (Interview 1, HS) said, "I really feel like there needs to be some type of protocol for students to know what exactly is expected." This concern appeared to dissipate as the outreach continued, with participants focusing less on the need for structure and guidelines in their second interviews.

University management. Participants commented on management by the university of the outreach project, and generally wanted more clarity about their role and the expectations from the university organizing the outreach. While the participants were glad that the university was providing the opportunity to students, they noted struggles in setting up times for supervision, expressed frustrations with communication between the university and the students who were participating in the outreach, and wanted more communication from the university.

Organizational management. Participants' discussed their awareness of issues related to management of the agency, including the importance of good management, the complexity of management issues, and the impact on service delivery due to management problems, such as communication and disorganization and limitations of the space or facility. Participants expressed frustration with lack of organization and lack of follow through by some organizational leaders. Some participants also expressed empathy when they noted the challenges faced by community organizations. Ariana (Interview 1, IL) noted: "I think that's why it's so unorganized – because they just don't have enough man power." Participants also noted challenges due to organizational management expectations

and beliefs, including asking participants to engage in counseling practices that were beyond their skills level. In some cases, organizational management did not seem to understand counseling, and asked participants to engage in tasks that were counter to their roles (e.g., having teachers sit in on counseling groups, being asked to discipline children).

Categories: *Outreach Site Experiences* and *Personal and Professional Development*

Challenging preconceived notions. By engaging in the outreach, participants questioned the assumptions they had about their clients, as well as the beliefs that participants believed their clients held of them. Participants found that client receptivity to services, client attitudes, and client needs were different than they initially anticipated. Participants were initially apprehensive about working with clients and held some negative assumptions about the clients' interests and character traits. After spending time with the clients, however, participants expressed finding them to be "nice" and possessing interests that were similar to most people, challenging the assumption that clients would be very different from themselves. Further, participants noted that the actual needs, expectations, and demographics of the community were different than what they had anticipated prior to the outreach.

Positive emotional reactions. Many participants shared positive emotional reactions, including feeling inspired or transformed during the outreach, that were linked to their outreach site experience and their own development. Ariana (Interview 2, IL) stated:

> It's a perfect project and one that I hope we continue because we got to be leaders. I feel like we got to take our mission [of social justice, leadership, and multiculturalism] out to the community but to also bring that experience back [to the university].

Participants' positive feelings were linked to the applied nature of the experience and their opportunities to develop as professionals and engage with diverse clients at their sites.

Racial identity development. Participants noted development in terms of their own racial identities, including reflecting on their own race and/or reflecting on how clients might potentially perceive their (the participants') race. Tonya, an African American female working with African Americans, reflected on her race and how she identified racially and culturally with individuals at her site. For some White participants, reflecting on racial identity generated some apprehension. For instance, Ariana (Interview 1, IL) was concerned that clients would "immediately" judge her because she was one of the only "White female" volunteers at her site that served people of color. She did not want to be seen as a "White lady coming in and trying to change everything up." Overall,

participants' racial identity development appeared to be impacted by engaging in outreach with individuals in communities that were both similar to and different from them.

Categories: *Personal and Professional Development* and *Structures of Outreach*

Negative emotional reactions. Negative emotional reactions were noted in terms of participants expressing feelings of fear, anxiety, discomfort, or frustration associated with outreach. Negative emotional reactions were often associated with participants' development as counselors, including worries about their counseling competence. For one participant, Sarah (SS), although she expressed feeling "stronger" at the conclusion of the outreach process, in her first interview she said, "I feel like I have so much to learn…. It just makes me anxious to know that there is so much more that I have to learn and that I'm not in the full capacity to help them."

Participants also had negative emotional reactions related to structures of outreach and project management. While they were frustrated with lack of organization and communication initially, many developed greater empathy for the organizations' challenges and understanding of the outreach process over time.

Categories: *Outreach Site Experiences*, *Personal and Professional Development*, and *Structures of Outreach*

Supervision. Supervision helped in the development of counseling skills, flexibility, and sense of competence and satisfaction, which allowed participants to debrief and work through their emotional reactions pertaining to outreach. All but one participant communicated that supervision was an integral aspect of their outreach experience. Participants noted that supervision helped provide direction, purpose, and clarity; some participants found the supervision helped them emotionally and with self care. Maria (Interview 2, IL) said that supervision "was pretty much, letting all that out. Because I guess [the outreach experience] was very heavy for me to handle all that." Overall, supervision appeared to be critical in guiding participants in their roles and also helping them process their own reactions to the experience.

Control vs. flexibility. In the initial interviews most participants discussed a desire for more control. Some voiced the desire to impose their own agenda during counseling sessions or outreach in general, which was often paired with limited flexibility. Kara (Interview 1, HS) said,

> Maybe I'm better at working towards [goals] than going into this kind of obscure environment that has a lot of needs but none of them are specific. And once we started to work towards one [goal], it would kind of change direction and I got frustrated with that.

However, participants' flexibility seemed to increase over time and appeared to be related to their sense of satisfaction

and competence. Flexibility allowed participants to expand their view of their role as outreach counselors, and to use situations that might be frustrating as opportunities to assist the community and to build rapport.

Discussion

The results of the study are consistent with previous research findings on outreach in two primary ways. First, hands on experiences in outreach aid students in skill development and increase their confidence in terms of applying classroom-based knowledge. In particular, students developed *outreach* counseling skills (e.g., flexibility), which are critical to reaching marginalized populations and working in non-traditional counseling settings (Lewis et al., 2011). Second, results of this study are consistent with previous research that shows engaging in outreach or service learning promotes multicultural competence and social justice (e.g., Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2009b, Nillson et al., 2011; West-Olatunji et al., 2011). It appeared to be particularly salient that participants were volunteering in communities with members who were culturally different from the participants because this facilitated cross-cultural experiences and exposure to cultural differences. These interactions also prompted participants to think more deeply about their own racial identities, which promotes cultural competence (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), and challenged their preconceived notions or stereotypes, which may promote social justice awareness through the deconstruction of their assumptions (Martín-Baró, 1994; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

As noted, multicultural and social justice counseling competencies are imperative, and counseling outreach embedded in training programs offers a way to facilitate this growth beyond what is possible in coursework alone. By embedding outreach within counseling and psychology training programs, more counseling students could graduate with these important skills. If counselors and psychologists are going to meet the needs of diverse communities, it is critical that they are able to operate outside of one-to-one office-based counseling sessions (Lewis et al., 2011).

In terms of participants' emotional responses, participants' early reactions were characterized by negative feelings but shifted to more positive feelings by the end of the outreach. Gaining experience and processing these experiences in supervision appeared to facilitate this shift. It appeared that the desire to control when feelings of discomfort or confusion arose was common among the developing counselors. However, over time, as participants appeared to relax their desire to control, they noted relief and more positive feelings and perceived themselves as more effective during the outreach process. Outreach appears to be particularly useful at challenging students to encounter – and hopefully move through – the discomfort associated with common counseling problems, such as lack of control, personal insecurities, or difficulties with organization

structures. Outreach may intensify these experiences, and thus may help participants develop skills that can be applied in other settings.

Concerns about the structures of outreach were also related to these negative emotional reactions and provided additional challenges for participants. Negotiating roles is an integral part of community outreach and may be challenging. Thus, participants wanted more explicit directions from the community organizations and the university. While this may imply the need to provide more concrete guidelines and structures in order to decrease participants' discomfort and role confusion, social justice focused counseling and outreach need to be flexible in order to respond to the needs of the community (Vera & Speight, 2003). The results of this study point to the possible tension between remaining flexible and providing structure during outreach.

The results of the study indicated that supervision was a particularly critical aspect of participants' experiences. Supervision offered a safe space where students were able to share, process, receive feedback, and focus on self-care. Therefore, supervision can shape participants' outreach experiences and promote the development of counseling skills. Supervision also serves a guiding role in terms of the framework used in the outreach; in this case, the findings reflect students' movement towards critical consciousness and ideals consistent with a liberatory perspective (e.g., new awareness of social justice and personal racial identity).

Finally, as compared to some outreaches that have been studied, this community outreach was local and did not have extensive time requirements. However, the benefits to participants were consistent with more intense outreaches. This indicates that even small, limited experiences can be of benefit. Such outreach experiences offer the opportunity to link classroom knowledge to "prepractica" type clinical experiences for ongoing, meaningful development.

Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that outreach should be infused in counseling training programs and related disciplines. Regular outreach within local communities should be an ongoing opportunity for students within such programs. The infusion of outreach in training programs is particularly important because it is a skill that students need to develop to reach marginalized populations (Lewis et al., 2011). Partnerships with community organizations can be developed so that there are standing relationships and so that students have such opportunities throughout their programs. Given participants' expressed concerns with time and difficulty managing multiple commitments, a limited time commitment by individual students could be considered if the outreach can still meet the needs of the organization, perhaps by balancing the short individual time commitment with a longer-term university or program commitment.

Outreach project organizers interested in developing multicultural and social justice competence should select outreach sites where students will interact with diverse individuals. Exposure, when it is not voyeuristic, can assist in breaking stereotypes and increasing awareness. Supervision can play an important role in this process by focusing on diversity and sociopolitical issues. Supervisors can ask students to reflect on their own culture and the role of culture in the community. Supervisors can also help students to identify the sociopolitical factors impacting the community. Supervisors should take into account students' prior experiences and their level of awareness in order to provide developmentally appropriate supervision.

The results of the study generated a number of recommendations related to facilitating community outreach. In terms of project management, there is a need for university partners to provide clear information about student and supervisor roles. The current project was intended to be collaborative and flexible, so that some students were volunteering on their own while others were doing so as a part of a class. This generated anxiety and confusion among students, pointing to the need to balance flexibility and inclusion within the outreach structure.

Similar concerns were salient within the management of outreach sites. One of the strengths of a community outreach that utilizes a liberatory framework is that it emphasizes responsiveness to the needs of the community. Developing and revising an outline of expectations could be a collaborative task undertaken with students included in this process. Supervision should also focus on developing an understanding of the challenges faced by community organizations so that participants can develop empathy and reduce frustrations about the sometimes ambiguous roles and changes that occur within the site.

Supervision, which most participants in this study found to be critical to their experience, should be a central component of community outreach. University organizers could consider having supervision available both on-site and off-site. In the current study, supervision was offered at the university and was scheduled at times that were as convenient for participants as possible. However, there remained challenges in terms of scheduling; participants appeared to be adding the outreach experience onto already overloaded schedules, which also meant that sometimes they were unable to attend supervision. This is a concern, since supervision is important not only to the participants' experience and development, but also to ensuring that the outreach services provided to the community are meaningful, effective, and socially just. In future outreaches, supervision sessions at the university for similar projects were offered in person and via conference call. The conference call format appeared to increase participants' attendance but reduced participation during supervision: the processing (e.g., verbal disclosures and discussion) seemed

to be more limited as compared to in-person sessions. Other possible solutions include offering supervision at multiple times or holding supervision sessions on-site.

Additionally, outreach supervisors should be aware that throughout the outreach process participants may react negatively to various aspects of outreach and may need assistance in working through their emotions. Supervision needs to focus on issues of control so that the frustration associated with organizational or university management does not cause participants to become ineffective and inflexible, thus losing motivation or even harming the relationships with community members. Supervisors need to be aware of the emotions that arise for participants related to structural aspects of outreach. Bringing outreach challenges to the attention of the participants and acknowledging them as a common aspect of outreach may help participants to better understand the process and overcome potential problems.

The results of the study indicated that students engaged in deconstructing sociopolitical injustices and acknowledging marginalization experienced by their clients, an important aspect of critical consciousness and liberation psychology (Freire, 1970; Martin-Baro, 1994). While participants developed knowledge around injustices experienced by communities, there was limited discussion that focused on strengths or aspects of resilience among community members. Within liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994), counselors and psychologists facilitate exploration of strengths within marginalized communities that might have been lost or ignored, and which can then be used as ways for overcoming oppression and moving towards praxis. Outreach coordinators and supervisors as well as training programs can prompt discussions about community strengths among students both prior to the outreach and during the outreach process. Supervisors can help illuminate how communities have persisted despite difficult conditions and oppressive systemic forces. Participants should identify these collaboratively with community members during outreach to deepen and clarify their understanding.

Finally, counseling and psychology training programs should incorporate opportunities for students to explore not only their racial identity and its development but also develop a deeper familiarity with the literature on the racial identity of other racial groups. It is important to incorporate teaching points that speak to the variability that is present among all racial and cultural groups, which is an aspect of preventing stereotyping and generalizing. Additionally, students should be given the opportunity to challenge some of the faulty beliefs and preconceived notions that they have acquired through exposure to individuals from diverse backgrounds. The current outreach triggered initial exploration of these issues, which needs to be continued in training programs and should not stop at the end of an outreach experience.

In summary, the results of this study confirm previous research that counseling and psychology students can benefit from community outreach in terms of their development as counselors. Participants appeared to develop greater multicultural and social justice counseling skills, as noted by their discussions about racial identity, cross-cultural experiences, and social justice awareness. This study also points to the challenges of conducting outreach, including emotional reactions such as anxiety and the tension between the desire to be in control and the need to remain flexible. Further, analysis of the data suggests that the variability and imprecision inherent in the structures of outreach contributed to anxiety, but may also have helped participants develop outreach skills, such as responsiveness. Supervision was a central point that almost all participants indicated significantly impacted their experience. As such, outreach coordinators seeking to engage in community outreach may be able to leverage supervision as a means for ensuring social justice perspectives and for facilitating student development from a liberatory framework.

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