

Humanity in Homelessness: A Social Justice Consultation Course for Counseling Psychology Students

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Abstract

Students in counseling psychology have cited a desire for more opportunities to engage in social justice within their programs. Pressing national issues, such as homelessness, offer an opportunity to use transferrable psychology skills, such as consultation, to address and prevent systemic oppression, while affording students necessary training. This paper describes a doctoral level counseling psychology course on social justice consultation and evaluation. The students and faculty undertook a consultation project with the city's Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI), where they applied a strengths-based social justice consultation model to the goal of providing recommendations to prevent homelessness. First, we set the context for homelessness in Lexington, Kentucky. We then outline the course's social justice consultation process and preparation/presentation of a formal report for OHPI officials, including successful outcomes from the consultation. Finally, we discuss lessons learned from the consultation project and recommendations for students and faculty who plan to implement social justice consultation into their graduate programs.

Keywords: Social Justice; Homelessness; Training; Counseling Psychology

Introduction

According to the 2018 LexCount (point in time count of homeless people on a given night in January) for the city of Lexington, Kentucky, there were 685 homeless people in our city of 321,959 (Kentucky Housing Corporation, 2018). That figure declined from 1,051 homeless people in 2017 (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, 2018). More personally, a homeless Black man named Teddy* reportedly froze to death in my (first author's) neighborhood between these two counts. We knew each other because my husband and I purchased an abandoned home in a mixed-income neighborhood, and Teddy often lent a hand in our renovation process. He offered what help he could for a few dollars, and at night, he slept in the unfinished \$400k townhomes being built in return for serving as a watch guard for the construction company. Teddy froze to death during the frigid winter in 2017, and his story is not unique among homeless people. His death became a catalyst to engage in social justice in Lexington related to humanity in homelessness through the 2018 Social Justice Consultation and Evaluation course I was scheduled to teach.

Counseling psychologists define social justice work as “scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination” (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 795). One potential avenue for social justice may be through consultation and evaluation (Romney, 2008; Sue, 2008), or the process of engaging with agencies to address social justice issues at the systemic level. Psychologists have traditionally been tasked with helping individuals cope with effects of social inequality, such as poverty, but failing to address and prevent the root of these inequities has been a flaw in our training (Thrift & Sugarman, 2018).

This paper describes a doctoral level course on the intersection of consultation and social justice, particularly in working to prevent homelessness in Lexington. The authors describe existing literature on social justice training, with a focus on consultation work. We then briefly discuss homelessness in Lexington and the primary goals of the course's social justice consultation project. Next, we outline the process of data collection and preparation of a formal report for Lexington's Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI). Finally, we discuss lessons learned from the consultation project and recommendations for students and faculty who plan to implement social justice consultation into their graduate programs.

Social Justice Training

Social justice training involves preparing trainees with the knowledge and skills to implement systemic change toward the goal of dismantling systemic oppression. Counseling psychology has explicitly espoused social justice as a value for over a decade (Packard, 2009); however, trainees in counseling psychology assert that our programs fall short of acting on this expressed value (Beer, Spanierman, Greene, & Todd, 2012; Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk, & Ingene, 2012). In Vera and Speight's (2003) call for the implementation of social justice multicultural work and Helms' (2003) critique of their call, the overarching invitation was to work on systemic change in addition to the individual level interventions in which most counseling psychologists are trained. Thus, when students ask faculty how to reduce or eliminate oppression and injustice, it serves as a call to action for faculty and supervisors to provide training opportunities to implement social justice interventions at the systemic level.

Social Justice Training in Counseling Psychology

Social justice training research has documented some of our field's repertoire of possible activities to provide students with social justice knowledge and skills (Flores et al., 2014; Koch & Juntunen, 2014; White et al., 2018); however, the literature presents them in isolation, rather than comparing and contrasting the value

of various training options. Although this small body of literature offers evaluation of various course activities with valuable lessons learned, the direction in which our field is going is less clear.

Social justice training projects include everything from writing proposals for social justice projects to engaging in social justice service learning to consultation projects (Koch & Juntunen, 2014). Whereas proposals and written assignments may serve as a catalyst for later engagement in social justice action (Storms, 2012), actual participation in social justice service learning and/or consultation develops the skills (Flores et al., 2014; Toperek & Worthington, 2014). White et al. (2018) described the use of the intergroup dialogue model to develop social justice advocacy competencies among counseling psychology doctoral students. The doctoral students facilitated intergroup dialogue groups with undergraduate students under faculty supervision. The facilitation process reportedly increased the counseling psychology students' awareness of their experiences with oppression and placement within social systems. Participants also reported a renewed sense of interest in social justice work. Whereas this project sought to use social justice training to improve the university climate, other projects have an external focus, engaging the community outside of the academy.

Flores et al. (2014) presented a social justice consultation project in partnership with the Educational Justice Project. Through their description of this project, they shared consultation activities, student outcomes, and a social justice consultation model for guiding graduate training. Students reported developing the ability to identify better their privilege, systemic inequalities, and the skills of engaging in social justice work. The Flores et al. (2014) and White et al. (2018) projects highlight the differences between the types of social justice training students may receive and the outcomes related to their programs. We argue that these applied social justice consultation approaches are ideal for counseling psychology programs who wish to actively engage the endorsed value of social justice, thus this course was designed to train students and provide the aforementioned benefits.

Programs also note challenges with integrating social justice training into an already packed curriculum. Students may have social justice content in certain classes, such as multicultural psychology, but faculty may struggle to apply social justice to courses such as research methods or neuropsychology (Motulsky, Gere, Saleem, & Trantham, 2014). This often results from the faculty's lack of social justice knowledge and skills, as well as resistance to change in curriculum. Faculty at Lesley University discussed how they established a program-wide commitment to embed social justice in every course, which occasionally included "stepping out" assignments, or cultural immersion projects, where students attended community events outside of their experience (Motulsky et al., 2014). To further this experiential training, consultation courses can be an ideal addition.

What differentiates consultation projects from immersion projects is the partnership with a community or system to identify and address a problem (Flores et al., 2014). The strength of consultation projects is that they move beyond exposure to collaborative action. Immersion projects typically include spending extended periods of time with a group that students have little experience and contact with in order to learn from that group (e.g., Germaine, 2009). Rather than attendance and observation of cultural differences and similarities, consultants share their research, conceptualization, and other transferable psychology skills with the consultee with a goal of enacting mutually determined systemic change. The next section will further address how consultation skill development can be an integral part of social justice training.

Importance of Consultation Skill Development in Social Justice Work

Systems of oppression impose damaging experiences and circumstances on marginalized people. Whereas therapeutic work can enhance coping skills and increase capacity for resistance and critical action (Comas-Dias, 2016), therapy is limited in its ability to effect change on the system of oppression. Consultation work has a decidedly systems approach. Although there are instances where the consultee is a clinician, the typical consultee is often an organization or a system that has identified a need to change (Baranowski et al., 2016). Consultation projects seek to address a problem/prescribe a solution generally, and social justice consultation

aims to address systems of inequality and oppression through consultation work (Sue, 2008). As a part of the counseling psychology model program (Scheel, Stabb, Cohn, Duan, & Sauer, 2018), counseling psychologists have specified the importance of consultation coursework. To couple that with the expressed value of social justice, social justice oriented consultation courses provide an opportunity to collaboratively develop and apply consultation skills in a meaningful way through a class project.

Various consultation models may be applied to social justice work (Flores et al., 2014), including individual client-focused consultation, advocacy, and community or system focused consultation (Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar, & Israel, 2006). Models that are specifically intended to examine and decrease oppressive conditions affecting marginalized people are requested by students (Burnes & Singh, 2010). For the purposes of the 2018 Social Justice Consultation and Evaluation class at the University of Kentucky, we sought to address the issue of homelessness in Lexington using a prevention-focused social justice consultation model. As homelessness remains problematic in the United States (Thompson, Wall, Greinsten, Grant, & Hasin, 2013), Lexington represents a microcosm of a national issue. A lack of affordable housing (Martin, 2015), inadequate mental and physical health care (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2010), substance use issues (McVicar, Moschion, & van Ours, 2015), and the culture of homeless shelters impact the lived experience of homeless people in this city.

In 2010, the American Psychological Association Task Force on Homelessness issued a report that examines the issue of homelessness, as well as outlines several ways that training can be used to help alleviate the issue. The Task Force recommended that training opportunities incorporate theories of homelessness within a strengths-based framework, direct service with individuals at risk for homelessness, and learning opportunities that focus on psychosocial factors contributing to individuals exiting and entering homelessness (Bray et al., 2009). However, it was not clear how training opportunities should be structured to meet these training goals in counseling psychology programs. The current consultation project provides a strengths-based and social-justice focused framework that could be implemented to meet these training goals. Using the consultation to recommend prevention efforts to OHPI allowed us to walk the talk of social justice in our counseling psychology program.

Homelessness in Lexington

In 2017, approximately 4,025 individuals were identified as homeless in the state of Kentucky. This is a significant decrease from the 8,061 individuals who were identified as homeless in 2007. Approximately 26% of the homeless population resides in Fayette County, where Lexington is located (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2017). Although the 2018 count identified a decrease in the number of individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters by approximately 35% (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, 2018), it is still not clear how many individuals are double-upped with families and friends. Thus the number could be higher.

The reduction in existing homelessness in Lexington may be primarily attributed to the development of The Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI). The OHPI was established in 2014 and primarily focuses on helping individuals quickly exit homelessness. One example is the Housing First program that provides affordable, permanent housing to individuals or families who have lost their home. Despite the progress OHPI has achieved, statistics also indicate the vast majority of homeless individuals were homeless for the first time (Kentucky Housing Corporation, 2017). Even more concerning is the number of individuals who reported housing costs were more than 50% of their total annual income (i.e., severe housing cost burdened) increased by 6%, suggesting a continued lack of affordable housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2017). The increase in the number of individuals who were homeless for the first time and the increasing lack of affordable housing both informed OHPI's interest in partnering for the current project.

Humanity in Homelessness Project

Through this doctoral level course focusing on social justice consultation and evaluation, doctoral-level counseling psychology students engaged in a social justice consultation project with OHPI in Lexington. The course served as a training opportunity for students to learn about the consultation process, specific research, and policy related to homelessness while contributing to the prevention of homelessness as a form of social justice. Students executed a consultation project consisting of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, creating an executive report, providing recommendations in a formal presentation, and receiving supervision to reflect on the consultation process and its connections to social justice.

The 3-credit course is designed for doctoral students who have completed the majority of their coursework. Students in the course engage in a semester-long consultation project with the chosen organizations; after the course is completed, students had opportunities for continued consultation and engagement with the organization. This was the first time the instructor taught the course, and it is our hope that the social justice consultation project outlined will encourage and guide future efforts to implement social justice consultation training within counseling psychology, particularly with individuals who are homeless.

The project was titled the “Humanity in Homelessness Project” to highlight the importance of recognizing the humans OHPI serves. The faculty member made initial contact with OHPI prior to the beginning of the course. Through initial discussions, the purpose of the project was determined to help OHPI understand the experiences of people who are homeless in Lexington and learn how to prevent people from becoming homeless based on the feedback, strengths, and experiences of those affected by homelessness. OHPI had been relatively successful in their goal of helping people out of homelessness, but not as successful in preventing more people from moving into homelessness. Following initial readings by students in the course to better understand homelessness, social justice, and the consultation process, the consultation team met with the director of OHPI to explicate the overarching goals the office had for the consultation process. After consulting local stakeholders, reviewing empirical research, and further readings about homelessness in Lexington, OHPI and the consultation team developed qualitative and quantitative measures aimed at exploring the stakeholder’s goals. Consultation goals included examination of 1) risk factors that may lead to people becoming homeless, 2) use of OHPI and other services geared towards people without homes and barriers to these services, 3) strengths of people who are homeless, 4) barriers to maintaining housing, and 5) services homeless people in Lexington need with the aim to prevent homelessness.

Strengths-Based Approach

The 2009 APA task force on homelessness recommended that training programs incorporate a strengths-based approach to dispel the stigma associated with homelessness (Bray et al., 2009). The professor also employed a strengths-based approach in training students to encourage their sense of empowerment and autonomy in executing the project. We argue that programs wishing to initiate a consultation project focused on homelessness should implement a strength-focused for several reasons. The implementation of a strengths-based consulting perspective allowed us to systematically capture and make use of these strengths to develop effective interventions tailored to the community. The overarching goal of the strengths-based perspective is to help individuals, groups, and communities increase their personal and socioeconomic influence toward improving their circumstances through the identification of strengths (Rapp, Saleebey, & Sullivan, 2005). The strengths-based perspective amplifies strengths to increase people’s resources and capacity to be engaged in action (Saleebey, 2009). In this way, a strengths-based perspective has the potential to widen pathways out of homelessness above and beyond other approaches. Research supports that identifying strengths facilitates escape from homelessness through the recognition of one’s worth and value (Patterson & Tweed, 2009). Homeless individuals have described their strengths like resilience, optimism, and resourcefulness, but prevention research

has rarely applied a strength-based approach to homelessness (Thompson et al., 2013). Effective homelessness prevention requires a combined risk-aware and strengths-based approach, so our data collection process included both.

Data Collection

To gain data related to the above questions, the consultation team made site visits to three homeless shelters in Lexington where they collected qualitative and quantitative data from homeless people. The consultation team also reviewed the literature on homelessness initiatives throughout the United States to inform data analysis and recommendations for OHPI. Per university guidelines, the professor determined this project did not require IRB approval, as the information gleaned for the consultation project was not intended to be generalizable and was explicitly used for OHPI program evaluation and recommendations. Thus, the data collection process, but not results, are discussed here.

Quantitative data. Following an examination of the literature on risk factors and pathways to homelessness, the consultation team developed a Qualtrics survey to assess the prevalence of some common risk factors for homeless people in Lexington. Survey questions asked about demographic information, housing experiences such as foreclosure and eviction, substance use history, legal/criminal history, veteran status, current medical illnesses, and mental health symptoms, such as depression (PHQ-9; Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001), anxiety (GAD-7; Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Löwe, 2006), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PC-PTSD; Prins et al., 2004). Before completing the survey, the consultation team explained the purpose of the survey to potential participants, including voluntary participation, aspects of confidentiality, and that the goal of the project was to provide feedback to stakeholders about what programming works well for addressing homelessness, as well as what programming would more effectively serve this population and prevent homelessness. All participants signed informed consent.

Over the course of the semester, members of the consultation team visited three homeless shelters to distribute surveys. Initially, participants at homeless shelters were hesitant and potentially distrusting of the consultation team. This may have been due to our observable middle-class and academic backgrounds, such as being dressed in business casual attire after collecting data following our on-site clinical training responsibilities. Furthermore, the consultation team members were initially unfamiliar to the participants; however, after multiple visits, the consultation team began to build rapport with participants. This rapport culminated in participant trust, as evidenced by the encouragement of others to take our survey. Data were collected in person at the shelters using either paper or online versions of the survey. Participation was optional, and only individuals and community partners and participants who provided consent took surveys.

Qualitative data. To highlight the humanity in homelessness, qualitative methods were also used to understand the experiences of homeless people in Lexington. Qualitative methods are cited as being best able to highlight and raise traditionally underrepresented voices by allowing participants to describe their experiences and views (Ponterotto, 2010). Focus groups were planned for each of the three homeless shelters, but due to scheduling and logistics, two focus groups were completed. Consultation team members conducted the focus groups in pairs. The focus groups had three and six participants, respectively, and were conducted over 45-55 minutes. At the start of focus groups, participants were invited to assign themselves a pseudonym. Focus groups followed a semi-structured interview protocol with the following questions: 1) How do people become homeless? Walk me through that process. 2) What did it look like for you? 3) What do you see as the strengths of people who are homeless in Lexington? 4) What do you think would help people get and keep housing? 5) What are the services related to homelessness that you have used that have been helpful? Unhelpful? 6) What services do you need that you have not been able to access, or Lexington does not have? and 7) What keeps you going? The consulting team engaged in memo-writing following focus groups and throughout the qualitative analysis to understand their own reactions, biases, and observations (Charmaz, 2014). Through the process of memo-

writing, team members collected field notes following each focus group, which was then discussed during team meetings. Team members engaged in a discussion regarding what was being learned and observed through the data collected and the data collection process.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify themes present across the focus groups. Following focus groups, the focus group leaders transcribed the focus groups. Members engaged in line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2014) to remain close to the data and voices of the participants. Coding using gerunds identified action, meaning, categories, and observations within the transcripts. Following initial coding, the consultation team pulled codes for focused coding that were salient and meaningful across the two focus groups. Focused coding entailed further defining and understanding relationships between initial codes to formulate themes and subthemes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Consensus about the results was reached by all team members before sharing with the OHPI in report form.

Site visits. Members of the consultation team visited three of the larger homeless shelters in Lexington. Recruiting from homeless shelters was recommended by the consultation partners to complement recently conducted data on homelessness via unsheltered homeless individuals. Repeat visits allowed the consultation team to build rapport and trust with individuals at the shelters. This led to more people being willing to complete surveys or participate in focus groups upon subsequent visits. While collecting survey data and conducting focus groups, site visits also allowed the consultation team the opportunity to more informally speak with people at each shelter, as well as make observations about the environmental and interpersonal dynamics to provide additional feedback and recommendations to the OHPI. With the data collected and analyzed, the project shifted to the report writing and dissemination stage. The explanation of the roles below outlines team member strengths and their contributions to the next step in the project.

Explanation of Various Roles and Strengths of Team

The consultation team consisted of seven members: the faculty advisor and six graduate students. Of the seven members, four identified as White, one as Black, one as an Asian international student and one as biracial (Hispanic/White). All six student members identified as middle class had earned a master's degree and were enrolled as doctoral students in counseling psychology at the University of Kentucky. The faculty advisor identified as working class transitioned to the middle class and served as core tenure track faculty in the program. Of the seven team members, five identified as heterosexual, one as gay, and one as bisexual. Though none of the members had previous personal experiences with shelter homelessness, they had experience working with this population through therapy, service work, prior research or cultural experiences/exposure. Each member had resided in Lexington for a minimum of six months before the start of this project.

The faculty advisor served as a primary liaison between the consultation team and the stakeholders. Once a relationship was established, the faculty advisor aided in managing the project as well as providing continued support and guidance throughout the process. For example, as data were collected, the faculty member facilitated in class discussions about impressions that biases could have informed the process. As the data collection concluded, the faculty advisor reviewed and edited all reports, presentations for OHPI, and offered constructive feedback to the student team. Amongst the graduate students, three teams of two were formed to initiate contact with stakeholders. Each team of two visited one site each and administered the quantitative survey to individuals faced with homelessness in community partners around Lexington. Further, each student member led a focus group.

The six student members divided themselves according to their strengths. However, pairs were also created to promote growth among each other through the processes of modeling and peer supervision and consultation. For example, an individual was paired with another member more familiar with survey development. Additionally, students with qualitative research experience conducted the focus groups with members unfamiliar with this process. Clements-Hickman and Spiker focused on developing a review of existing

literature that focused on homelessness in Lexington and across the United States. Their search focused on uncovering existing models of homelessness, the risks associated with homelessness, and prevention. Dschaak and Ryser-Oatman concentrated their efforts on developing the quantitative survey by referring to existing measures that focused on homelessness and mental health. Kwok and Meiller developed a qualitative interview protocol for the focused groups. Once data collection was complete, Clements-Hickman, Dschaak, and Spiker worked on cleaning and analyzing quantitative data, while Kwok and Meiller thematically coded the qualitative data. Ryser-Oatman, whose strength lay in the presentation of work, then focused on bringing together the various data points for the OHPI. With his experience in program evaluation report-writing, he developed suitable recommendations for the OHPI and built structures for the long- and short-form reports.

The culmination of the project included the team working together to combine various parts of the report. They also collaboratively developed, practiced, and finalized the PowerPoint presentation used for presenting the data to the OHPI. The teams' success lay in the students and faculty advisor honoring each members' strengths. Further, due to having worked together previously and having close professional relationships, the team developed trust and rapport quickly and effectively. Each team member was flexible and willing to step in whenever needed (e.g., scheduling difficulties). The faculty advisor provided guidance such that students were given autonomy to work together but also had support whenever needed.

Final Steps for the Consultation

Following data collection and analysis, the consultation team combined the collected data with the empirical literature on homelessness and homelessness prevention initiatives to provide recommendations consistent with the primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention models (Burt, Pearson, & Montgomery, 2005; Shinn, Baumohl, & Hopper, 2001) to OHPI. The consultation team then presented the information in the report to local stakeholders, including mental health providers, executives, city officials, stakeholders in OHPI on campus. Broadly, the consultation team recommended ways OHPI could engage with communities at risk of homelessness to establish relationships and awareness of OHPI resources to prevent the occurrence of homelessness. OHPI and stakeholders posed questions and discussed the usefulness of the findings with the consultation team. Due to the success of the project and the recommendations in the presentation, two paid graduate research assistantships were developed to promote continuity and future collaborations between OHPI and the counseling psychology program. Students members of the consultation team expressed that this was one of the most meaningful training experiences they had to date.

Recommendations for Integrating Social Justice and Consultation in Curriculum

This manuscript serves as a guideline for graduate programs seeking to implement social justice consultation into their curriculum as a means of in vivo experiences of consultation. Hazel, Laviolette, and Lineman (2010) examined school-based consultation course syllabi and found that of 25 American Psychological Association accredited programs; less than half mentioned prevention, and fewer mentioned social justice consultation. Thus, below, we describe facilitators and barriers to implementing social justice consultation, as well as specific recommendations for students and faculty.

Facilitators

Several factors facilitated our social justice consultation project. For instance, using a small group of students was advantageous to conduct this consultation. The consultation team for this project consisted of six students who were at similar points in their doctoral training. A small group allowed for easier division of tasks and ease of communication. The consultation team conducted early discussions around our social locations, consultation strengths, and areas for growth, which allowed our group to support each other, utilizing a developmentally appropriate strengths-based perspective. An example of this perspective included having

consultation team members further in their development of aspects of the project (e.g., survey creation, qualitative methodology) assist other members in gaining this awareness, knowledge, and skills. This support was essential, considering the emotional cost of social justice work (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001), and it speaks another facilitator. The course was offered for more advanced students who had taken necessary research coursework and had prior practicum experiences working with similar populations. Students had already earned master's degrees and were in their first of second-year post master's.

Another facilitator of our project included the emphasis on smaller group sizes during the data collection process (e.g., focus group, on-site survey collection). The smaller group sizes allowed for more open and honest conversations, as highlighted by many of the participants. In particular, the smaller group sizes appeared to have assisted in providing the more silent, distrusting, and disenfranchised participants the opportunity, space, and comfort to speak (i.e., empowerment of voice; Flores et al., 2014). An additional facilitator was having a faculty member initiate and establish the partnership before the class began. Thus, the consultation partner was primed to consider what help the consultation team could offer at the beginning of the class. Due to time barriers and other difficulties, this early start was necessary.

Difficulties

Several challenges arose when conducting this project. Most notably, working with underserved groups may present challenges in the development of trust between consultation partners and participants. Evidence suggests it is difficult to develop a rapport with homeless populations, which must be prioritized for data collection to succeed (e.g., Cloke, May, & Johnsen, 2010), mainly because homeless people might have had painful past or present interactions with institutions meant to serve them (Ensign, 2003). By acknowledging the sociopolitical context of this distrust, the consultation team adjusted accordingly and attempted to spend time in shelters that served homeless individuals outside of data collection time (Hoolachan, 2016). Further time investment and consistency may have increased participation in the focus groups and surveys. Future consulting projects should ensure adequate time to build community relationships prior to data collection. A specific recommendation regarding time would be helpful, but processes such as building trust in the consultation are organic (Barret & Ollie, 2016). Consultants should consider the system in which they partner with and plan accordingly.

Another challenge of engaging in consultation work with a large organization is stakeholder engagement. Occasionally, student consultants had difficulty contacting stakeholders and holding consistent communication about clarifying expectations, scheduling data collection times, and receiving feedback on assessment materials; this was mostly in part due to the limited resources (e.g., low staffing, staff members fulfilling several roles within their organizations) of homelessness services in Lexington. Several times throughout the consultation process, consultants and the course instructor had to repeatedly email stakeholders to set up and clarify data collection times, seek feedback on data collection materials, and provide consultation updates.

Lastly, several unique challenges arose when completing a consultation project in the context of a doctoral level course. A significant limitation came from the time available to complete the consultation project. In total, the consultation team had 15 weeks to meet with stakeholders, develop research instruments, collect data, analyze data, and generate reports to provide to stakeholders. Due to time constraints from the semester length and commitments to professional roles (e.g., counseling sites, teaching assistantships), the consultation team had limited time to visit homeless shelters and build relationships with this community. Still, the training experience was a rewarding and unique contribution to the students' program of study despite a substantial time commitment.

Recommendations for Students

Students conducting social justice consultation initiatives should engage in ongoing self-examination. Sue (2008) asserts that an essential attribute for an effective consultant is the ability to use oneself as a tool for

change and to understand how social location impacts others. Ongoing self-examination fosters an individual's self-awareness of their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes (Sue & Sue, 2013). We followed Flores et al. (2014) recommendations for engaging in consciousness-raising activities such as reading literature (i.e., specifically around inequality, social justice competency, and the experiences of homeless individuals), writing reflection papers, engaging in memo writing, debriefing sessions after each consultation activity that include discussions and reflection on social location, privilege and power, biases, prejudices, and stereotypes, which were all critical for our consultation. For instance, most of the students on the consultation team had little experience working with homeless populations outside of therapy. To increase familiarity and competence with this population, the consultation team processed their experiences with shelter visits to discuss how their perceptions of homelessness were challenged and the reactions they had to their experiences.

The second recommendation is that members of the consultation team begin informally integrating themselves within the culture of the prospective consultation partners and prospective participants before the formal consultation process begins. Consultation efforts should not be seen as just "drive-by data collection" (Riger, 1999, p. 1101) in which individuals are viewed as data banks that promote research agendas rather than the communities' well-being (Goodman et al., 2004). This also affords students the opportunity to observe the culture and system before being influenced by stakeholders and allows students to gain awareness and challenge their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes (e.g., Flores et al., 2014). For instance, consultation team members would regularly visit homeless shelters and talk with both participants and those who chose not to participate in learning more about their experiences. Further, the counseling psychology program and OHPI established an ongoing relationship by instituting and funding two graduate student assistantships to continue working with the homeless initiatives once the course ended. This was requested and funded by OHPI.

Third, social justice consultation projects are not wide-spread in doctoral training programs (Burnes & Singh, 2010). Students should advocate for opportunities to conduct social justice consultation as a means of learning more about the process of implementing long-standing change for marginalized groups. In many cases, students may need to take a proactive effort to assist faculty in the creation of these opportunities, considering that faculty may feel hesitant to incorporate social justice initiatives into programming (Talleyrand, Chung, & Bemak, 2006). One way to encourage the implementation of social justice consultation is the evidence suggesting that it assists graduate students in developing cultural competences (Goodman et al., 2004; Sue & Sue, 2013).

Fourth, it is vital for students to consider how their social locations influence different aspects of the consultation process. For example, as counseling psychology, doctoral students, our quantitative and qualitative methodology included numerous questions related to mental health. Although the questions for this project were created collaboratively between the consultation partners, it may have been easy for consultation teams with similar social locations to emphasize mental health factors, while failing to consider the goals and context of the consultation project.

Recommendations for Faculty

First, faculty facilitating consulting projects for counseling psychology doctoral students should be mindful that even in programs that endorse a social justice orientation, students and faculty members may vary in the integration of that identity (Burnes & Singh, 2010). All parties involved should review the literature on how social justice is defined and enacted to establish a working model for the consultation project. Second, front-loading reading assignments in the first month on the consultation process, the consultation focus area, and social justice primes students to then integrate that knowledge into their subsequent practice. Despite a large amount of reading, this priming can be reinforced and discussed throughout the course.

Third, as indicated in Flores et al. (2014), instructors should include an opportunity to process student experiences during the consultation project as a means to continue developing social justice self-awareness.

The consultation team was able to examine their power and privilege as students interacting with people who are homeless, which included identifying emotions and perceptions that emerged and shifted throughout the project. Lastly, inviting students to identify and utilize their strengths is vital to the counseling psychologist identity (Scheel et al., 2018) and serves as an important protective factor when engaging in a rigorous, high stakes class assignment. In the same way, the consultation team invited the homeless people they surveyed, interviewed, and observed to name their strengths as a source of data to inform prevention efforts, identifying student strengths enhanced the success of the project. Initially, students found the strengths exercise difficult, which may serve as feedback for the counseling psychology field that our training experiences may not match our values enough. Stated differently, we may address client strengths while ignoring student strengths more often than we should.

Conclusion

The extent to which consultation is used as a teaching tool is unclear in counseling graduate training programs (Hazel et al., 2010), particularly in counseling psychology. This is unfortunate given the propensity of consultation work to help students gain in vivo learning related to social justice (Flores et al., 2014). The current manuscript outlines a social justice consultation course that focused on collaborating with a government-funded homelessness prevention agency in a mid-sized university town: Lexington.

While limited research examines social justice consultation, the experience was similarly rewarding to other students who have engaged in this process (Flores et al., 2010). The project resulted in more insight about the consultation process and how it can intersect with social justice. Although barriers arose, such as difficulty gaining the trust of participants and constraints on time to collect data, the consultation team successfully navigated those barriers by using their strengths and presented findings and recommendations to OHPI, the city's homelessness prevention organization. Thus, through a high-stakes social justice consultation project, students went beyond knowledge acquisition. They applied skills as consultants to the city where they spent four to five years of training and evaluated the services being provided. Additionally, focusing on a demographic that receives less attention in the counseling psychology literature, students were able to examine a variety of systemic, interpersonal, and individual factors by integrating multidisciplinary literature and lived experience. Thus, counseling psychology consultation courses provide a key opportunity to put our translatable social justice skills into practice.

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