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Articles

We Are Humans Too: Secondary Traumatic Stress Among Novice Victim Advocates

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Abstract

This article focuses on the experiences of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) among novice victim advocates. Victim advocates work with survivors of violent crimes and provide emotional and logistical support to their clients, helping them navigate the criminal justice system. Through individual interviews, this study explored how advocates managed their exposure to traumatic events and how they believed it impacted them professionally and personally. Nine victim advocates were interviewed, and principles of reflexive thematic analysis were used to code the interviews and analyze the data. From the interviews, three major themes emerged related to STS: worldview shifts, secondary traumatic stress symptoms, and burnout. Two major themes were discovered linked to prevention or social justice: colleague support and recognizing successes. Advocates are a particularly vulnerable population of helping professions that are at risk for STS. Increased awareness and acknowledgement of their work is an important component of intervention efforts. Supporting the needs of novice advocates will be necessary for them to sustain their career and be better positioned to help survivors of violent crimes.

Keywords: secondary traumatic stress, victim advocates, vicarious trauma, criminal justice

We Are Humans Too: Secondary Traumatic Stress Among Novice Victim Advocates

Violent crimes have a rippling effect across communities, forever changing the course for individuals and those close to them. This also includes the professionals, like victim advocates, who work with those who have been the victims of violent crimes. A victim advocate is a professional who is trained to provide support to survivors of crimes and offers information and guidance around the judicial process (Benuto, Newlands, Ruork, Hooft, & Ahrendt, 2018). Advocates often attempt to alleviate the trauma crime victims have experienced, while also trying to mitigate the many difficulties associated with having to engage with the criminal justice system (Globokar, Erez, & Gregory, 2016). Within the course of their duties, victim advocates often hear about shocking acts of emotional, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse that their clients have experienced (Benuto, Yang, Ahrendt, & Cummings, 2018). Advocates are likely to be greatly impacted by these shocking acts because of having to listen to these traumatic stories and from being immersed within the criminal justice proceedings surrounding these events. This study sought to better understand this dynamic as it examined secondary traumatic stress (STS) among novice victim advocates in California. We defined novice advocates as individuals newer to the profession, who have worked less than 2 years in the field.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

It was not until the 1980s that even minimal attention was given to the impact of traumatic stress on helping professionals. In 1983, Figley (1995) recognized "stress disability" among crisis workers such as police, firefighters, emergency technicians, and other emergency workers who assisted families of victims of catastrophes, in which the stress resulted from exposure to traumatized populations. It would be another 10 years until social workers and other mental health workers were identified as "hidden victims" of trauma in our society (Stewart & Hodgkinson, 1994). The traumatic stress experienced by these workers has been variously recognized as Vicarious Trauma (VT; McCann & Pearlman, 1990) or STS/Compassion Fatigue (CF; Figley, 1995). In this article we use the term STS, since in the research, it has been generally used to refer to helping professionals who experience trauma indirectly because of working with individuals who have directly experienced traumatic events.

STS can be described as the psychological symptoms professionals experience because of being indirectly exposed to their client's traumatic experiences (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004). The adverse effects individuals experience from secondary trauma are very similar to those experienced by the persons who experienced the trauma itself (Bride et al., 2004). The most recent revisions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) accounted for STS, and made explicit that repeated exposure to aversive details of traumatic events during the course of one's professional duties qualifies as a Criterion A stressor for the purposes of diagnosing someone with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; Hensel, Ruiz, Finney, & Dewa, 2015).

The adverse outcomes of repeated exposure to others' trauma can include "a broad range of emotional and behavioral consequences, including nightmares, intrusive thoughts, disturbing imagery along with affective states such as anger, sadness, and anxiety" (Bercier & Maynard, 2015, p. 82). STS can lead to a diagnosis of PTSD, with the main distinction being the traumatic event was not directly experienced by the individual, but rather the stressor is repeated or extreme exposure to knowledge about traumatic events (Elwood, Mott, Lohr, & Galvoski, 2011). Symptoms can include numbing or avoiding feelings and emotions, somatic complaints or problems with sleep, problems with social functioning or interpersonal relationships, lower levels of trust or a heightened sense of vulnerability, and other related concerns (Bercier & Maynard, 2015). Professional consequences also have been identified. Individuals may have a reduction in their capacity or interest in being empathic with their clients (Elwood et al., 2011).

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Victim Advocates

Research has demonstrated consistently the impact of STS in the healing professions, acknowledging the toll that a career in helping others can have on a person (Powell-Williams, White, & Powell-Williams, 2013; Regehr, Hemsworth, Leslie, Howe & Chau, 2004). STS is identified as a primary reason why workers in the helping professions leave the field prematurely (Bonach & Heckert, 2012). The current study focused on understanding the experience of novice professionals, specifically victim advocates who had been working in the field for less than two years. Given their repeated indirect exposure to traumatic events, including violent crimes, sexual abuse and assault, homicide, and other forms of trauma, it is important to consider how STS may manifest among victim advocates in the beginning stages of their career. This has implications not only for individual well-being, but also for sustainability of expertise in the field.

Studies examining the prevalence of STS among victim advocates have noted rates of STS might exceed rates among similar populations (e.g., social workers, mental health professionals). For instance, around 48% of advocates in one study were found to meet criteria for experiencing clinical levels of STS, whereas other studies have reported that social workers have prevalence rates around 15% (Benuto, Newlands, Ruork, Hooft, & Ahrendt, 2018). It appears that the cumulative trauma exposure acts as a risk factor for victim advocates, including the hours worked (Szoke, Lancaster, & Hazlett-Stevens, 2023), the hours directly working with clients, and for some, the exposure to crime scenes (Benuto et al., 2018). Additional research examining STS among victim advocates has found that advocates did have trouble in coping with occupational stress (Powell-Williams et al., 2013) and that they often did not feel the emotional work they did with their clients was respected (Kolb, 2011). These are both factors increasing the risk for STS.

Current Study

As stated earlier, this study sought to better understand STS among novice victim advocates. Specially, the aim was to gain insight into how victim advocates who were early in the career, understood their exposure to trauma, and how they interpreted it as impacting their own lives. It is important to research novice victim advocates so that effective prevention or social justice efforts might be mobilized to assist and support these professionals in order that they can sustain their careers. Given the importance of advocates in supporting victims of crimes, it is essential to identify how to support their longevity in the profession, and as a result, their expertise.

Methods

Researchers

The researchers have worked at the intersection of trauma and the carceral system, with a focus on understanding how to better support survivors of violent crime. Through this broader body of work, it has become evident that there is a need to better understand each aspect of the carceral system to best design effective prevention and intervention efforts for survivors of violence. This study aimed to understand the role of victim advocates in this dynamic, and how they can contribute to the larger aim of building socially just and trauma responsive systems for survivors of crime.

Participants

Participants included nine victim advocates who were recruited from a Victim Services Division in a California District Attorney's Office via email invitations. There was difficulty in recruiting participants given the demanding schedules of the advocates, and the need to be flexible for court proceedings and other tasks that often came up unscheduled during their days. The interviewer had a pre-existing relationship with the director of the department, and the director was the person who forwarded the email recruitment invitation to potential participants.

The recruitment email to participants outlined the purpose of the study, which was described as wanting to learn more about the experiences of victim service providers. The email requested people to participant in

individual interviews where they would be asked to discuss their experiences as a victim advocate and to discuss barriers they encountered in their jobs. While participants were told the study was confidential, and the director would not know who participated or what was shared, the proximity in their working relationships may have deterred some respondents. The interviewer had not met the advocates interviewed prior to this study. Participants were provided with a $50 stipend for their participation.

Respondents represented different units of the office and had been victim advocates for a varied amount of time. Two advocates worked in intake, which meant they worked with any crime victim who came in during walk-in hours, and who had *not* experienced a crime of domestic violence, human trafficking, or elder abuse. Three advocates worked in general felonies, which included robberies, assaults, attempted homicides, and anything else that was charged as a felony that was not specified. Two advocates worked in the homicide unit, one worked in the domestic violence division, and one worked in the human trafficking / sexual assault unit. Participants represented most of the units in the targeted office.

The amount of time participants had worked as victim advocates ranged from 2 months experience (although this person had worked previously as an intern) to as long as 2 years of experience. Eight of the participants identified as women, and one identified as a man. The advocates were diverse in race and ethnicity (four identified as Latina, three as Asian/ Pacific Islander, one as White and one as Eastern European), and reflected the diverse communities which they served. Most of the advocates were fluent in English and a second language.

Data Collection

In-person interviews ranged in length from 24 minutes to 1 hour (average interview time was 35 minutes). Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A), that was developed with the help of an expert in the field of victim advocacy and also informed by literature reviews. The interview protocol asked participants to describe their work, resources available to them, barriers they faced, and about their experiences of vicarious trauma. Interviews were conducted at the offices where the advocates worked. Participants provided their consent to audio record the interviews, and recoding's were later fully transcribed and coded. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of San Francisco.

We defined data saturation following the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019). Specifically, we engaged in reflexive thematic analysis, which implies that codes are never finally fixed. Coding becomes more interpretive and conceptual. The lack of a fixed codebook suggests incapability with data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Instead, we made an interpretive judgement about when to stop coding and identified that the sample held such informative and rich data that no additional participants were required.

Data Analysis

Using dedoose software (n.d.), interview transcripts were coded using principles of reflexive thematic analysis, specifically, coding followed Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) methodological guidance. The first step in the coding process was open-coding or line-by-line coding where initial codes were identified. Axial coding followed, where categories were re-arranged and re-grouped to help build a code book. The final step was selective coding where codes and categories were refined (Creswell, 2007). Care was taken throughout the process to maintain participants' voice whenever possible throughout the codes and themes.

Interviews were coded by two of the authors and a graduate student. The first transcript was coded by all three individuals together via video conferencing. This initial line-by-line coding resulted in a solid foundation for the code book, which was used in coding the rest of the transcripts. After the first transcript was coded, the remaining transcripts were divided up and coded in accordance with the codebook. All transcripts were reviewed by at least two coders. After all transcripts were open-coded, axial coding was completed. Coders met through video conferencing to combine and re-categorize codes as needed. Selective coding was completed in a similar fashion to axial coding where coders met via video conferencing and discussed the final codes and categories. All coders reached agreement on each of the final codes, and then the first two authors moved to the generation of themes that aligned with the purpose and goals of the study.

Integrity

The researchers engaged in a process of triangulation, where the first and second authors compared their individual findings. These two individuals compared their understanding of different data points and discussed differences in their understanding. The first author has done work directly with survivors of violent crime and had to be attuned to biases. The second author, whose work encompasses trauma responsive interventions, has not worked directly with crime victims. This allowed for a robust question and dialogue process, that called attention to possible gaps and biases in their interpretations. For example, there were times when the first author assumed a particular meaning from a statement based on their own experiences. The second author would challenge this and suggest the meaning could not be assumed from the statement provided, as such checking the first author's bias. This open dialogue allowed for reaching a shared definition and understanding of each of the final themes, and the quotes chosen to exemplify these themes.

The third author served as a subject matter expert. They have worked directly in victim advocacy for many years and served in a leadership position in this work overseeing other advocates. Analysis and interpretations were shared with the third author, who provided subject matter expertise feedback. Finally, the authors engaged in member checking. The authors shared the final themes and accompanying quotes with the participants via email and solicited feedback. No participants provided any feedback.

Results

Participants shared rich information around their experiences with exposure to traumatic materials, and all disclosed how they thought this exposure had impacted them. All the participants talked about vicarious trauma and indeed it was something many of the advocates expressed wanting to talk more about. The advocates reported that conversations around self-care and learning to manage exposure to traumatic material was something that had been brought up on multiple occasions in their place of work. From the interviews three major themes related to trauma exposure emerged: worldview shifts, STS symptoms, and burnout. In addition, the participants identified intervention and prevention needs to help address their exposure to traumatic material. Two major themes linked to prevention were discovered: colleague support and recognizing successes.

Trauma Exposure: Worldview Shifts

All the advocates discussed how their views of the world shifted because of their work. This shift resulted in their more pessimistic and negative view of the world. The shift was largely seen in the area of safety, and how places and people are generally not safe. As highlighted in advocate statements such as those that follow, there tended to be an overgeneralization around safety concerns.

> Before I started working here, I understand that you can't trust everybody in this world. There are bad people out there but after doing this work, you realize, you really can't trust anyone.

> There's just some people who seem like that, batters or constantly offending. Every relationship they're in, they're doing really creatively horrible things to people. I'm more pessimistic view of the world.

While the crimes and traumas the advocates were exposed to were not a part of their everyday lived experiences directly, given their constant exposure to these stories the advocates started to generalize these events and viewed them instead as happening with greater frequency then was the case. For many of the advocates, this shift in worldview also translated into their behaviors. They were overly cautious in certain neighborhoods and avoided certain places. They also became vigilant about doing everything they could to maintain safety, even beyond what might be considered a typical level of caution. As one advocate who works with pedestrian fatality cases reflected:

> I won't jaywalk … You can't-- got to wait for the little man to show up and then we'll cross. I never liked jaywalking anyway, it made me nervous.

And another advocate who works with sexual abuse victims stated:

> I can't believe there's so many [expletive] people who abuse other young kids or stuff like that. I don't trust [ride share], no, I'll walk.

The shift in worldview also manifested in higher levels of cynicism connected with the criminal justice system, another reflection of the increased mistrust that advocates expressed developing over the course of their work. One person claimed,

> I often think if I were in my victim's position, would I have reported, would I have even come to court? A lot of the times it's like I probably wouldn't even showed up.

For the advocates, who arguably are some of the leading experts in knowing how to navigate the criminal justice system, their distrust and misgivings shifted how they might respond if faced with the same circumstances of their clients.

This worldview shift not only impacted behaviors, but also impacted how the advocates interacted with people they were close to. Many of the advocates were viewing life from a lens that was different from their friends and families. They disclosed becoming frustrated when those close to them would not take the same worldviews, or when loved ones did not hold the same views about safety and society. Given the traumatic experiences and crimes that dominated the advocates' daily work life, they sometimes became frustrated when those in their personal lives did not share their same mindset.

Trauma Exposure: Secondary Traumatic Stress Symptoms

This shift in worldview also corresponds to the STS the advocates reported. While no quantitative measures were given to specifically assess for STS, or PTSD symptomology, the advocates reported experiences that were consistent with the symptoms seen in STS or with a PTSD diagnosis. Figley (1995) categorized STS into three domains, psychological distress/dysfunction, cognitive shifts, and relational disturbances (Bercier & Maynard, 2015), all of which were evident in the advocates' experiences.

Psychological Distress/Dysfunction

Psychological distress and impairment can include hypervigilance, somatic symptomology, or other mental health concerns including symptoms of depression and/or anxiety (Bercier & Maynard, 2015). Hypervigilance was a common reaction noted among the advocates, including an increased awareness of their surroundings and a high level of focus to what was happening around them. The advocates also could see how this hypervigilance impacted their daily activities. One advocate reflected they noticed their commute was impacted after having to read constantly about violent attacks that were alleged to have been committed by unhoused individuals.

> It made me very hypervigilant because I was commuting on [public transit] when I first started working here. Every homeless person I saw I felt like I would hold on to my bag and then just walk really fast. That was the first thing that I realized that changed.

For many of the advocates, this hypervigilance and the small changes in how they engaged in their daily routines was the first sign of STS. Many of the advocates also noticed how it was impacting their physical health. For example, somatic symptoms, mental health concerns manifesting as a physical ailment, were commonly noted.

> There are times where I think the way that it impacts me, it's like I will just get sick. I have a really bad immune system so I will just get tired early. I will have to call in sick because it's too much for me right now.

Other advocates revealed feelings of always being tired, and not wanting to spend time with friends and family because they were too exhausted.

Cognitive Shifts

Cognitive shifts include a heightened sense of vulnerability and feelings of helplessness and a loss of control (Bercier & Maynard, 2015). Many of the advocates shared this sense of helplessness and loss of control being connected to the criminal justice system. The unique nature of an advocate's job is to be a guide for crime survivors through the criminal justice system (Globokar & Erez, 2019). While advocates are aware of the challenges inherent in this bureaucracy, their constant exposure to trauma appears to increase their feelings of hopelessness and lack of control or power. As one advocate described, this is often the result of seeing crime victims traumatized as part of the criminal justice proceedings.

> I think the one time that I had to leave a room or separate myself, I felt a lot outraged was a victim who was just being hounded by a defense attorney. He was a Mayan speaker; Spanish was his second language. The interpreter just got really fast in court, he was not understanding a lot of the questions and the defense attorney was almost antagonizing him and asking compound questions. Which is even more complicated for somebody who doesn't speak Spanish to try and answer.

Even with the relative position of power the advocates had, as compared to the crime survivors, they often felt as though they had no ability to make situations for the survivors better. This lack of control was reflected in how the advocates felt about their abilities not only in their day-to-day work, but also at larger existential levels.

> …we could help people. We could get a guilty verdict. Everybody's happy but it doesn't negate the fact that it happened, the crime happened. What is a guilty verdict going to do? What is this person going to jail, how can that help somebody that's been gang raped? How does that help? I understand the logic is that it provides a sense of justice. It can help but not everybody feels that way.

This statement captures the common idea of feeling helpless, and even if everything goes *right*, this does not necessarily lead to a positive ending or healing for the survivor.

Relational Disturbances

Relational disturbances were reflected in lower levels of trust and difficulties in the participants' intimate relationships. All the advocates discussed how their job had impacted their personal relationships. This included feeling disconnected because they could not share details of their job, becoming easily upset with loved ones, or not wanting to spend time with friends and family.

For many of the advocates, the challenges in their interpersonal relationships partly suggested feeling that loved ones could not understand their experiences at work, in addition to not being able to talk about many things. The advocates reported a common experience for individuals in similar helping professions, mainly that the trauma and violence they witnessed was not within the realm of most peoples' experiences. Indeed, that is what makes the impact of trauma so hard for individuals. It is hard to explain the emotional and physical impact these experiences have on you if the other person has no reference point. As one advocate discussed:

> I can't talk to my [family] about it … because like, 'how was work today?' It's like, 'Oh yes, I sat in on a homicide trial and they showed the pictures of the body.' That is not what they want to know at the dinner table. Then you don't want to transfer that to them because that's not what they experience every day.

Isolation and a decreased desired to interact with others also impacted interpersonal relationships for the advocates. They identified multiple reasons for this, including feeling too tired to socialize or wanting to be alone. For some advocates, even when they were with loved ones they did not engage and continued to feel disconnected

even when in the presence of others. Participants also identified feeling as though they were not positive people to be around, and that sometimes the moods that were a result of their workday impact their loved ones.

> I'm sure there are days that I am terrible to be around, but I don't know that that is a whole, I think maybe it's a couple of times here and there.

A high level of disengagement became a noticeable pattern for some of the advocates as well. Some of them shared that family and friends also had reflected that the advocate was different in some way.

> At first, I didn't think it bothered me until some people from my personal life started saying, 'Oh, you've been MIA lately or sometimes I feel like when I'm talking to you, you're not really there.' To me it was like, 'What are you talking about?', but then the more I think about it, I feel it's because I can't help but think about certain crimes that happened to people or I feel like, 'Why am I complaining about my life when all these people are going through these things?', and I can't do anything to help them. That's how I feel like it's definitely changed the way I act with people in my personal life.

Trauma Exposure: Burnout

In the literature, burnout is frequently identified as a unique concept separate from STS, and it is not specific to trauma but instead represents prolonged exposure to stressful demands at work (Hensel et al., 2015). Burnout is specific to occupational tasks and feeling overwhelmed by work. Studies have demonstrated a significant overlap between burnout and STS (Cieslak, Shoji, Douglas, Melville, Luszczynska, & Benight, 2014; Maier, 2023), which also was also the case for the advocates in the current study.

> Sometimes I wondered if I find in the right place career-wise.

For the advocates, the stress of the job was closely linked to wanting to be able to advocate for their clients. The experiences of burnout described was linked to wanting to support their clients, and reflecting on whether they had the capacity to do so some of the time.

> That part of me being anxious to get answers for the victim really burns me out sometimes because it's just taking on their feelings of anxiety and sometimes fear, uncertainty.

For the advocates, the feelings of being overstressed in the job often reflected a concern that they were not completely and fully there as an advocate for their clients. They internalized a need to be a source of support and strength for their clients, but sometimes it felt overwhelming to do so.

The large amount of work also contributed to their burnout. All the advocates reported caseloads in the hundreds, and while many clients did not require day to day attention, the work was constant. Additionally, there were times when a client did not have needs for many months, and then later would reach out to the advocate for something. Collectively, the high caseloads, unpredictability, constant need to be flexible in their workday to meet the demands of others (e.g., court, lawyers, clients), and the large volume of tasks that needed to get done, took a toll on the advocates. As one advocate noted: "'We'll go, go, go, go, until we burnout."

The advocates talked at length about their exposure to trauma, and STS symptoms that manifested as part of their work. Related to this, they also identified areas of prevention or intervention which they felt would help them cope with the trauma they were exposed to in the course of their work.

> I try to take a day off every month just for myself, just to get my mind off of this place and the work because it is very difficult sometimes just coming here every day, Monday to Friday.

Prevention: Colleague Support

The advocates identified their colleagues as the biggest source of support, and as an important tool to help them cope with the stressors of their job. All the advocates noted that talking with their colleagues was an important coping mechanism for them.

> Definitely talking with other colleagues. It's just about stuff that's happened, rant a little bit and then, after a while, I'll get better.

The key reason colleagues were such a critical resource was due to the shared experience they had. As the advocates stated, no one in their personal lives could understand the events the advocates were exposed to. Furthermore, advocates did not want to burden their loved ones with details of traumatic events or trying days. However, colleagues provided an invaluable insight and understanding. Being able to talk about what they had experienced in their work and being able to share private moments of processing (e.g., with jokes), was an important resource for the advocates.

Prevention: Recognizing Success

Many of the advocates also disclosed how far a "thank you" went in helping them feel better. They discussed how much of their work went unrecognized, or seemingly not appreciated. As one advocate shared, small tokens of acknowledgment provided reassurance and validation.

> After a whole day of people just being like, 'You're incompetent. You can't do this.' After to hear, 'Thank you,' or like, 'It felt so much better you were here.' I'm like, 'All right. I can do this. It's not so bad.

Indeed, many of the advocates expressed "*just the simple thank yous*" were significant for them and helped alleviate stress they were experiencing. These small gestures also reminded advocates of why they worked as an advocate, validation that allowed them to better cope with the demands of their job.

Discussion

While this study does provide some insight into the STS symptoms advocates experience during their work, there are some limitations. Primary of which is the participants all came from the same office in one state in the United States. It would be important, therefore, to determine if similar experiences were identified in different locations and in a variety of victim advocacy roles (e.g., community-based advocates). Further, there is a need to collect data from a larger number of advocates, particularly male identified individuals. Moreover, given the brevity of some of the interviews in this study, it's possible that some additional content may be acquired by expanding the number of interview topics and/or including more follow-up questions. There also is a need to administer quantitative measures of STS symptomology to advocates and track their experiences over time. This would offer additional information about whether advocates are meeting full criteria for PTSD or other mental health diagnoses. Tracking this over time could provide insight into potential time periods of advocates' vulnerability, highlighting when intervention may be most needed.

It also would seem important to understand the experiences of individuals who were able to maintain longevity in their career, and what variables contributed to that tenure. For instance, were these advocates recipients of greater emotional and/or logistical support, or do they feel more appreciated in their role?

Victim advocates are a helping profession that may be at higher at risk for developing STS, a reflection of their constant exposure to details about traumatic events and crimes, their need to be empathetic to clients and to be their advocate, and their high caseloads and demanding work schedules. This risk was reflected in the interviews with novice victim advocates based in California conducted in this study. All the advocates shared that because of their work, their worldviews had shifted to be more negative, they experienced symptoms of STS, and had feelings of burnout.

The shift in worldview was an important theme present in the advocate interviews. They all disclosed how their views of the world and of people had been now tinted with a distrustful lens. This shift also was present in advocates' perceptions of confidence in the larger system, or more specifically their lack of confidence that the judicial system would help survivors of crimes. This aligns with previous research that has shown among social workers, when they felt they had less power or control over outcomes they had a greater risk of burnout (Regehr et al., 2004). This raises concerns about sustainability in a profession that requires a sense of power, a sense that you as an advocate can help a client. While the carceral system can be judged by many to be inherently flawed, to have newer advocates express feeling of defeat introduces concerns about the longevity of people in this profession. Advocates can have a significant and positive influence on survivors' emotional well-being, and so it is important to address the emotional challenges advocates face given the possibility that burnout can lead to attrition (Maier, 2023). A longer work tenure, with the associated experience and wisdom, would be a critical factor in helping an advocate to be better positioned to support their clients in navigating this system.

Another area of concern identified in this study was the impact that STS symptoms had on the advocates interpersonally. They reported being disengaged from their personal relationships and feeling isolated. This was partly related to advocates not wanting to engage with others, and feeling others would not understand their experiences. Collectively, these experiences contributed to the risk of burnout, with the advocates reporting that they felt high stress at work and at times wanted to avoid work.

Risk for Novice Victim Advocates

The experiences reported by the victim advocates in this study were consistent with other research (Maier, 2023, Powell-Williams et al., 2013; Regehr et al., 2004; Szoke et al., 2023) that has reported the high risk for STS in the helping professions. The findings also provide evidence that STS symptoms begin early in a person's career. The early development of STS and burnout has implications for whether advocates can remain in their career, which then has consequences for the level of support (emotional and logistical) that survivors of violence are able to receive. The knowledge and wisdom that comes from being in a position for years, or even decades, would serve to benefit survivors of violent crime. However, if professionals are not supported in being able to navigate these stressors, it is unreasonable to expect many would be able to stay in their career long enough to reach an expert level of skill.

Prevention

The advocates in this study did provide insight into prevention and intervention or social justice efforts that could serve as a resource for themselves and their colleagues. While the advocates talked about their informal use of colleague support, there could be ways to formalize this to reap larger benefits. Having social support has been shown to reduce STS, with evidence that cumulative support over time may be most helpful (Hensel et al., 2015). As is true with other helping professions, often the stories and traumas that advocates are exposed to cannot be shared with individuals outside of their organization. As such, it is essential to establish intentional social supports within the workspace as a primary/secondary and universal prevention strategy. This may include managers or supervisors setting up weekly support groups, where advocates are permitted to talk about and process their experiences. Social support also may include regular (e.g., biweekly, monthly) community spaces that allow advocates to meet in a capacity that is not directly related to work. This might include shared meals or space to do activities (e.g., crafts, games, etc.). This would foster a space that allows advocates to engage with others, and to remind them of the importance of socializing and avoiding isolation.

Another area of primary and universal intervention should focus on acknowledging the contribution of victim advocates. As the advocates shared, a simple thank you goes a long way. An intervention that aims to acknowledge advocates' work may not need to include large gestures, but instead smaller and more frequent ones. This could involve small thank you cards from supervisors that identify something specific the advocate has done well. In staff meetings, it also may be helpful to identify one advocate each meeting and talk about some of the

positive work they have done, giving specific and concrete examples. Further, there could be systems set up by managers or supervisors where colleagues are able to provide small acknowledgements, such as notecards, to thank an advocate for work they have done. Especially in jobs where the advocates are constantly going from one task to the next, deliberate initiatives that cause them to pause and reflect, even briefly, on their positive contributions, may serve as an effective intervention.

Additional prevention efforts should include self-care. The advocates in this study claimed that self-care was discussed in their workplace, and that it was highly encouraged. However, many of them reported feeling as though there was not enough time to engage in self-care. They expressed that most of their days were filled with meeting the needs of clients and the job, which left little time for anything else. It seems important for workplaces to not only continue to encourage self-care practices, but also create opportunities and require advocates to engage in these practices. This may include regular brief check-ins where advocates report the self-care they have done for the day or the week, or dedicating specific times in the week where they are released from traditional work duties so they can engage in self-care. Mindfulness practices and self-compassion training have been shown to support advocates and reduce burnout, so offering spaces and time for advocates to practice mindfulness mediation would be a critical resource (Szoke et al., 2023). Managers or supervisors also need to model self-care behaviors for their advocates. In many helping professions, self-care is encouraged and highlighted, yet too often people do not engage in the practice. If self-care is indeed essential, it must be scheduled and allotted the time, like all other work duties.

Micro Level Interventions

Mental health professionals can play a pivotal role in assisting early career advocates. Advocates should be encouraged, and supported (possibly financially), to access talk therapy services. It is important for advocates to develop coping skills to manage their stressors and vicarious trauma, and mental health professional can help with this need. If advocates are better able to process their experiences and create a healthy coping toolbox, their risk of STS and burnout will be significantly reduced. It is also critical to recognize that advocates are entering into this type of work with their own history and lived experiences. Thus, it is likely that advocates may have their own history of trauma, which will intersect with the stories they hear from their clients. Providing trauma mental health responsive care, therefore, can help with addressing this history and possibly promote advocates' well-being and longevity in their field.

Macro Level Interventions

Much of what victim advocates do is invisible. Many people will not know that victim advocates exist unless they themselves become the victim of a violent crime and are offered this resource. Even among other helping professionals, the role of the victim advocate is largely unknown. As a result, this highly vulnerable population of workers is not receiving the level of attention and intervention they most likely need.

At a systematic or social justice level, it is necessary to raise awareness around the role of victim advocates. With awareness, there will be opportunities for more people to understand the value of victim advocates. This also can help key stakeholders better comprehend this profession, which is critical in terms of advocating for funding and resources. High caseloads and burnout place advocates at a significant risk for mental health challenges. Jurisdictions must provide adequate funding to increase the number of advocate positions so that these professionals can provide a higher level of care, while reducing their chance of burnout (De La Rue, Ortega, Castro Rodriguez, 2023). Therefore, increasing awareness may help to advocate for more positions, and as a result, spread the caseloads across more individuals.

Advocates experiences of disempowerment and despair also needs to be addressed in systematic ways. As a society, we must transform how we respond to violence, which will require putting survivors at the center of any response (Sered, 2019). Currently, as part of the carceral system there is a strong emphasis on trying to get the greatest possible penalty for the person who caused harm. This is seen as the ideal way to get *justice* for

the survivor. This response is problematic in two main ways. First, not all cases of violence will lead to charges or persecution. And second, people often do not report the level of closure or peace they anticipated following a guilty verdict. There is a societal narrative that *justice*, as defined by punishment, is a path to healing. Putting survivors at the forefront will require a more intentional focus on healing, and therapeutic support. Survivors want to have validation that what happened to them is wrong, they want their pain to be taken seriously, and they do not want to be blamed or judged for what happened to them (Sered, 2019). Centering on healing and changing how we view the work of supporting crime victims will allow for a different atmosphere for advocates to navigate.

Many of the advocates in this study reflected on the sense of pride they got from their work, and they described it overall as rewarding.

"It's rewarding at the end of it if you work towards it. I just feel a lot of people nowadays, just from my own personal experience, they go for immediate satisfaction, so like biotech companies, like Google or places that give them beer on tap while they work or something like that. Sometimes my colleagues, me and my co-workers' joke around saying, 'Why don't we get anything like that?', but then, knowing that we're working to hopefully change people's lives, especially affected by crimes, pretty satisfying."

In conclusion, making advocates work visible and showing them appreciation can contribute to advocates remaining in their challenging field for a longer period of time. As one advocated reflected, "*if people just understood that we are humans too.*"

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Appendix A

Individual Interview Protocol

1. Can you describe the work that you do as a Victim Advocate?
    a. Can you describe your experience working with victims of crime?
    b. What obstacles / barriers come up for your during the course of your job?
2. From your experience, how do victims of violent crimes perceive your office?
    a. What resources and challenges are there as part of being under the District Attorney umbrella?
3. What collaborations / partnerships are necessary for the work you do?
    a. What are the challenges / barriers in building these partnerships?
4. What resources do you wish you had as part of your job?
    a. How knowledgeable are you about the criminal justice process / procedures?

Vicarious Trauma

For the purpose of this study vicarious trauma will be defined as follows: Vicarious trauma is the transmission of traumatic stress through observing, exposing oneself to, and/or hearing stories of traumatic events or suffering of an individual, and the resulting changes that may occur in your thoughts, feelings, body, relationships and beliefs about yourself, others, the world, and the future.

5. Can you describe a time during the course of your work as a Victim Advocate when you experienced vicarious trauma?
    a. What were the qualities that encapsulated that experience?
6. When you think back to when you were experiencing vicarious trauma, can you identify what might have been helpful?
7. How has vicarious trauma influenced your life? Ideas about yourself? Relationships?

Closing

8. What do you wish people knew about Victim Advocates?
9. What aspects of your job are most rewarding?

Community Engagement Training and Research in Counseling Psychology: A Two-Part Pilot Study

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Abstract

For decades, leaders in the field of Counseling Psychology (CPSY) have called for scholars and practitioners to engage more with our communities as a manifestation of our values. However, questions remain about the extent to which our field has risen to meet these calls. This two-part pilot project is an attempt to answer those unanswered questions by evaluating the current state of CPSY's involvement in community engagement practices and scholarship. Part 1 is a 30-year content analysis of community engagement scholarship in three flagship CPSY journals; in Part 2, early career counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training were surveyed to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices. Results revealed counseling psychology may not have effectively integrated community engagement practices into our training or our scholarship, pointing to possible areas of growth for the field.

Keywords: community engagement, engaged scholarship, participatory research, training, advocacy

Community Engagement Training and Research in Counseling Psychology: A Two-Part Pilot Study

Community engagement—an intentional bridge between professionals and communities—is a necessary mechanism for promoting social justice and equity. Despite its demonstrated utility in rectifying harms historically and currently perpetuated through research processes and health care systems, many faculty, clinicians, and graduate students in fields as diverse as biology, English, mathematics, and psychology, have been shown to be unprepared for community engagement (e.g., Applegate, 2002) and to avoid conducting engaged scholarship (e.g., Bell & Lewis, 2022).

Counseling psychologists are trained to operate with social justice, multiculturalism, and equity as core, field-specific values. As a result, it would make sense for individuals trained in counseling psychology (CSPY) to lead the way in community engagement practices and scholarship, as it is a natural embodiment of our stated values. Indeed, leaders in the field have called repeatedly for counseling psychologists to train in and conduct community engagement practices especially as the field embraces liberatory aims (e.g., D'Andrea, 2005; Singh, 2020). Despite this, questions remain about the extent to which CPSY has risen to meet these calls.

Defining Community Engagement

Although there are multiple definitions of community engagement, it is generally understood to be a process of "working collaboratively with and through groups of people…to address issues affecting the well-being of those people" (CDC, 1997, p. 9). As such, community engagement can involve any activity, including "teaching, research, or outreach that connects disciplinary expertise, theories, or ideas to public concerns" (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 128), in service of transforming policies or practices to improve the health of communities and community members (Lang Center, 2022). Community engagement can, therefore, be thought of as activities that involve *collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships* between professionals and external communities (Texas Tech University, 2021).

Community engagement, especially between academics and community partners, is not new and has been implemented for decades under various names (UofL Community Engagement, 2022). In fact, the establishment of land-grant institutions through the 1862 Morrill Act was explicitly intended to create higher education institutions that would engage with and be beneficial to the public (Peters et al., 2005). One main mechanism for this public benefit was engaged research, including Participatory Action Research (PAR; Friere, 1972; Lewin & Lewin, 1948), Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR; Israel et al., 2010), and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR; McIntyre, 2000). All of these approaches acknowledge and rely on the expertise of community members as research collaborators with the goal of producing culturally and contextually situated knowledge and solutions (Saltmarsh et al., 2011).

Despite the well-established approaches to engaged scholarship, community engagement has not always been prioritized by academia. Indeed, several scholars in the United States (U.S.) and beyond have cited multiple institutional barriers to community engagement by faculty (e.g., Jump, 2015; Maynard, 2015; Watermeyer, 2015). In recent years, however, engagement has been promoted with increased frequency as various disciplines recognize its importance in furthering social justice and equity (O'Hara et al., 2021) and ensuring knowledge is of "service to the nation and the world" (Boyer, 1996, p. 20), rather than confined to professionals.

Relevance of Engagement for Counseling Psychology

The values undergirding community engagement have notable convergence with the values that have historically shaped the field of CPSY. In particular, social justice has been a "critical and defining feature" (Fouad et al., 2006, p. 2) of CPSY since its inception, which prepares scientist-practitioners to not just heal the ills created by systemic and systematic oppression, but also to advocate for systemic change to prevent those ills from occurring

in the first place (Hage et al., 2007). More recently, social justice was added to the pivotal Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC; Sue et al., 1992), reflecting its centrality in providing culturally relevant services to diverse groups (Ratts et al., 2016). In terms of research, CPSY's commitment to social justice is evident in the *content* of CPSY publications but may be less evident in CPSY's research and pedagogical *practices* as most studies published in CPSY journals still use quantitative empirical methods that may not adequately capture participants' voices (Fish & Syed, 2020).

To truly abide by social justice values, counseling psychologists cannot pick-and-choose aspects of social justice to incorporate into their practice and scholarship while leaving other components untouched. As attested by O'Hara et al. (2021), inequitable practices create further inequities. While traditional practices and research methods have utility, counseling psychologists must avoid relying solely on such methods at the risk of compromising their values. Indeed, truly manifesting a commitment to social justice and multiculturalism necessitates "a reevaluation of multicultural competence that includes advocacy and other forms of community intervention" (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 253). Without community intervention, counseling psychologists cannot hope to fully embody their commitments to multiculturalism and social justice.

What Stands in the Way?

For decades, CPSY leaders have called for the field to partake in engaged practices and scholarship (e.g., Roysircar, 2006; Singh, 2020) to combat the "intellectual incarceration and monocultural ethnocentrism" (D'Andrea, 2005, p. 524) of traditional, individualistic scholarship practices. Community engagement frameworks align with CPSY's core value system, offering pathways to improved equity, multiculturalism, liberation, and social justice in research, training, and pedagogy (Bell & Lewis, 2022). However, despite the clear rationale for counseling psychologists to conduct community engaged practices, it is unclear to what extent CPSY training and research actually encourage community engagement.

Institutional and systemic barriers could be one explanation for why community engagement may not be widely adopted by counseling psychologists. Despite CPSY as a field promoting social justice, equity, and multiculturalism as core values, these are not the values upheld by academic and healthcare systems as a whole (Keeler et al., 2022). As in other disciplines, the impact of work in CPSY is still largely measured via historically prioritized outputs. In clinical spaces, impact is measured in number of clients seen; in academia, outputs like peer-reviewed publications and presentations, winning awards, and obtaining grants are the gold standard (UofL Community Engagement, 2022). Unfortunately, these impact measures are individualistic, and may fail to align with the outcomes most valued by community partners.

Accordingly, counseling psychologists who wish to establish themselves as engaged scholars and practitioners must navigate a values conflict between the individualistic outcome measures expected by their organizations and institutions and the communitarian values promoted by CPSY. Although universities increasingly acknowledge the value and relevance of engaged scholarship (Beaulieu et al., 2018), and many healthcare settings have explored alternative treatment models to bring services to clients (O'Donnell et al., 2019; Schrager, 2021), these institutions and organizations still often lack policies and infrastructure to support and recognize individuals who conduct engaged practices and research (Bell & Lewis, 2022; UofL Community Engagement, 2022).

On the training side of engagement, similar issues arise. In the face of growing societal attention to issues such as racial justice, climate change, and health inequities, CPSY graduate students are increasingly interested in engaged practices as a means to manifest their scientist-practitioner identities (Keeler et al., 2022). However, these students are often met with inadequate university resources and support to assist them in conducting community-engaged work (Keeler et al., 2022), as the individualistic, highly specialized disciplines in academia lack the interdisciplinary, community-based value infrastructures needed to support these endeavors (Sandmann et al., 2008). Indeed, faculty and students reported being *discouraged* from partaking in community engagement due to the time demands required to build partnerships and sustainability (e.g., Maynard, 2015; O'Meara & Jaeger,

2006). Additionally, there is a lack of research on the degree to which institutional programs and agencies are emphasizing community engagement training.

Current Study

Despite CPSY's alignment with the core values that guide community engagement and repeated calls for counseling psychologists to train in and conduct community engagement practices, questions remain about the extent to which CPSY as a field has effectively responded to these calls. As such, this two-part pilot study aims to bring attention to the norms and practices in CPSY training and research. Part 1 of the project is a 30-year content analysis of community engagement scholarship in the top three CPSY journals; in Part 2, early career counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training were surveyed to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices.

Author Positionalities

The positionalities of the authors undoubtedly affected our initial motivations for undertaking the current study, the methods we employed, and the lenses through which we viewed the results. The first author (A) identifies as a white, American, cisgender, heterosexual, economically stable woman and mother who is a U.S. citizen and faculty member at a land-grant institution with a strong engagement focus. Her research both prior to and since joining the faculty at her current institution largely utilizes engagement methodologies based on mutually beneficial partnerships with community members. Many of these partnerships extend well beyond research to include consultation and advocacy. However, she was not introduced to such community engagement practices in her doctoral program and recalls needing to learn them on her own or with the assistance of academic and practitioner colleagues and mentors post-degree. The second author (B) identifies as a white, cisgender, heterosexual graduate student and U.S. citizen. Her research interests broadly include psychotherapy and supervision processes, psychology training and education, and systems-level interventions. As a doctoral advisee of (A), she has had exposure to engagement practices throughout her training and believes academia's involvement in community engagement is necessary to attend to society's most urgent issues.

Part 1: Content Analysis of Targeted Counseling Journals

Part 1 of the project explores the extent to which engaged scholarship is written about or published in the field of counseling psychology. To do so, we conducted a summative content analysis of the three flagship counseling psychology journals (i.e., *The Counseling Psychologist*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*). Summative content analysis is a qualitative content analysis approach that is often used to analyze the types of articles or the content of articles published in journals or textbooks because of its employment of both manifest and latent content analysis methods (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Manifest content analysis quantifies the representation of certain words in a text or collection of texts (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999), while latent content analysis explores the usage of those words (Holsti, 1969). By combining these two approaches, summative content analysis both identifies word usage and interprets the context of that word usage (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Methods

Judges

The judges included one faculty member (the first author) and one undergraduate student who was trained by the first author over a series of weeks in content analytic methods. After consulting with engaged scholarship experts at her university's Office of Engagement, the first author selected 10 keywords organized in five searches to capture engaged scholarship topics. The keywords included: (a) Public scholar* OR public engage*; (b) engage* scholar* OR scholar* of engagement; (c) translation* science OR translation* research; (d) research-practice

partner*; and (e) Participatory Action Research OR Community-based Participatory Action Research OR Youth Participatory Action Research.

The first author also determined the inclusion criteria, which included (1) the article was published between 1990 and December 2022, and (2) the article was about engaged scholarship or utilized engaged scholarship methods. Citations from the initial search were all saved in an EBSCOHost folder. The judges then screened those articles for adherence to the inclusion criteria. After the final articles were selected, the first author created a coding scheme to identify the type and focus of the articles. The judges individually coded each article based on the coding scheme and then met to review results, discussing discrepancies until consensus was reached. Interrater reliability estimates indicated a near perfect level of agreement ($\kappa = .83$, $p < .001$; Viera & Garrett, 2005) in the coding.

Procedure

Using their respective databases, we searched *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP)*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology (JCP)*, and *Counselling Psychology Quarterly (CPQ)* from January 1990 to December 2022. Five searches were performed for each journal based on the keywords.

This initial search resulted in a total of 19 hits: 9 from *TCP*, 9 from *JCP*, and 1 from *CPQ* (see Table 1). The judges did an initial review of the title and abstracts of those hits. Any articles that clearly met inclusion criteria based on this initial review were retained; when it was unclear through this initial review whether the article met inclusion criteria, the full text of the article was reviewed by both judges and discussed. These reviews resulted in the elimination of 11 articles that did not meet inclusion criteria. The full articles were then coded by the judges.

Table 1

Content analysis keyword search results by journal

	Journal of Counseling Psychology		The Counseling Psychologist		Counselling Psychology Quarterly		Total retained articles
Search terms	*Initial search*	*Retained articles*	*Initial search*	*Retained articles*	*Initial search*	*Retained articles*	
Public scholar* OR public engage*	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Engage* scholar* OR scholar* of engagement	2	0	3	0	0	0	0
Translation* science OR translation* research	4	1	2	0	0	0	1
Research*-practi* partner*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participatory action research OR community-based participatory action research OR youth participatory action research	3	3	3	3	1	1	7
Total retained articles		4		3		1	8

Results

The purpose of this part of the study was to explore the representation of engaged scholarship topics and methods in counseling psychology journals. Once reviewed, only 8 articles (see Table 2) met the inclusion criteria, representing 0.18% of articles published in the three flagship counseling psychology journals from January 1990 to December 2022. Four of these articles were published in *JCP*, representing .21% of the total articles published in the journal, three were published in *TCP*, representing .20% of the journal's publications, and one was published in CPQ, representing .09% of the journal's publications. Of note, no articles that met inclusion criteria were published before 2005, and all but one of the articles were about PAR methods.

Table 2

Details of articles meeting inclusion criteria

Journal	Author (year)	Title	Type (Conceptual or Empirical)	Focus (Research, Practice, or Both)
CPQ	Smith et al. (2022)	*Counseling psychology and participatory justice: 'Sharing the university'*	Conceptual	Both
JCP	Kidd & Kral (2005)	*Practicing participatory action research*	Conceptual	Research
JCP	Tashiro et al. (2007)	*The causal effects of emotion on couples' cognition and behavior*	Empirical	Practice
JCP	Fine et al. (2021)	*Critical participatory action research: Methods and praxis for intersectional knowledge production*	Conceptual	Research
JCP	Levitt et al. (2021)	*The methodological integrity of critical qualitative research: Principles to support design and research review*	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Creswell et al. (2007)	*Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation*	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Smith et al. (2010)	*Best practices in the reporting of PAR: Embracing both the forest and the trees*	Conceptual	Research
TCP	Tucker et al. (2017)	*Socially just leadership approach to community-partnered research for reducing health disparities*	Conceptual	Research

Note. CPQ = Counselling Psychology Quarterly; JCP = Journal of Counseling Psychology; TCP = The Counseling Psychologist

Seven articles were conceptual, either describing participatory approaches to research and engagement or providing guidelines on how to effectively conduct and present participatory research. Two of these articles (Levitt et al., 2021; Creswell et al., 2007) were about qualitative research methodology more generally and included PAR as one of those methodologies; the remainder of the seven conceptual articles were explicitly focused on a particular type of participatory research. For example, both Kidd and Kral (2005) and Smith et al. (2010) described how to conduct and report on PAR, outlining strategies for both conducting PAR and presenting results of PAR studies. Smith et al. (2022) went on to situate PAR within a broader context of participatory justice, describing social justice projects that utilized the methodology and commenting on the necessity of training graduate students and others so they are prepared to use participatory methods. Fine et al. (2021) and Tucker et al. (2017) focused on participatory research approaches beyond PAR. Fine et al., (2021) focused particularly on Critical PAR (CPAR), describing the origins and main principles of the approach and providing an example of a CPAR project. Tucker et al. (2017) described Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and its fit with the aims of CPSY before providing recommendations for how counseling psychologists can take the lead in establishing community-university partnerships.

Only one empirical article met inclusion criteria (Tashiro et al, 2007). This was also the only article that was retrieved by search terms other than PAR, CBPR, or YPAR. In this article, Tashiro and colleagues utilized a translational research approach to examine how emotions caused maladaptive cognitions and behaviors in couples.

In alignment with the aforementioned study purposes, six of the eight articles were focused exclusively on research, describing participatory methods for the purpose of informing how research is conducted in the field. The empirical article by Tashiro et al., (2007) was focused on practice with the intention of informing couples therapy and the article by Smith et al., (2022) focused both on research and practice, describing the utility of participatory methods for both research and other clinical/collaborative activities. Of note, although all of the included articles identified through the PAR, CBPR, or YPAR search terms were about research, none of them actually used participatory research methods in an empirical study.

Part 2: Survey of Engagement Related Training Experiences

In Part 2 of the study, we surveyed currently enrolled psychologists-in-training and early career counseling psychologists to ascertain the extent to which they were (or are being) trained in engagement-related practices.

Methods

Participants

Participants included 36 individuals between the ages of 23 and 56 ($\bar{x}$ = 33.4) who were either currently enrolled in an American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited Counseling Psychology doctoral program (n = 18) or had graduated from such a program within the last 10 years (n = 18). For the early career professionals (ECPs) in the sample, year of graduation ranged from 2012 to 2021 ($\bar{x}$ = 2018); for currently enrolled students' year in program ranged from first to sixth, with the majority of the sample being in their third (n = 7) year. Most of the respondents (n = 30) attend/attended a Ph.D. program, with the remaining attending a Psy.D. program.

Regarding the demographic composition of the sample, 28 of the participants self-identified as cisgender female and eight cis-gender male. The majority of the sample identified as white (n = 26), with the remainder of the sample identifying as bi- or multi-racial (n = 3), Asian or Asian American (n = 3), Latinx (n = 3), Black or African American (n = 1), and MENA (n = 1). One of the respondents identified as an international student.

Measures

In addition to gathering demographic information, the online survey included 24 closed- and open- ended questions that centered on four topics (see below). The questions were designed for the purpose of this study by

the two authors, as well as members of their research team, all of whom are CPSY doctoral students. To create the items, the team began with the keywords utilized for the content analysis that were developed alongside engagement experts and then refined and added to those items based on our reflections about our actual or desired training in community engagement. Because the purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain respondents' perceived training and preparation, only self-report items were included in the survey.

At the start of the survey, respondents were provided with the following orientation: "For the purpose of the following questions, 'engagement practices' are defined as activities in which you are working directly with community members **in your role as a professional** (i.e., this definition does not include engaging with the community for personal or other non-professional reasons). This can include professionally related community outreach, consultation, advocacy, activism, or research. **Providing clinical services in community settings (i.e., through practicum or internship) is not included."** This exclusion was made because, based on the nature of training, it is presumed that most students in APA-accredited programs would have such experience through practica and/or internships.

Training experiences

Respondents were asked to rate whether they received any of eight kinds of community engagement training through their doctoral program on a three-point scale including Yes, No, or Not sure. Instructions indicated respondents should only consider training they received through their program rather than though professional development opportunities that occurred outside of their program. The community engagement training included community consultation, community outreach, community advocacy, community activism, PAR, YPAR, CBPR, and translational sciences. For each of the training topics on which the respondent answered yes, they were then asked to indicate how they received the training by selecting one or more of eight response options (Required course, Elective course, Other required program activity, Other elective program activity, Independent project, Project with primary advisor, Project with other faculty member in program, Project with faculty member outside of the program).

Program emphasis on community engagement

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (*not emphasized at all*) to 6 (*highly emphasized*), the extent to which they perceived their doctoral program to emphasize community engagement. They were also asked to explain why they rated their program as they did.

Preparation to conduct community engagement work

Three questions gathered information on how respondents' felt preparation for conducting community engagement work based on training they received in their doctoral program. One question asked respondents to indicate, on a scale from 1 (*not at all well*) to 10 (*extremely well*), how well their doctoral program is preparing/did prepare them to conduct community engagement work. Two additional open-ended questions asked respondents to reflect on the ways their doctoral program does/did effectively prepare them for community engagement practice and what they wish they will/would have learned about community engagement practices during their doctoral program.

Alignment between actual and desired training

Respondents were asked to indicate how their actual doctoral preparation in community engagement practices aligned with their desired doctoral preparation in community engagement practices using a five-point scale (*I received much less/a bit less/the precise amount/a bit more/much more training than I wanted in community engagement practices*).

Procedures

After securing IRB approval, participation was solicited at three time points between August 2021 and April 2022 via listservs (e.g., Div17, Div17ECP, CCPTP) and social media (e.g., ECP Facebook group, CPSY Facebook group). Three solicitations occurred due to low response rates (see limitations section). The solicitation

included a short description of the study, which described the study purpose as attempting to examine the preparation students and early career professionals received in community engagement practices during their doctoral training, as well as a link to an online Qualtrics survey. No compensation was provided for participation. The first page of the survey included an informed consent form; respondents who consented to participate were directed to the online survey.

Results

Training experiences

Results indicated that, with the exception of community outreach and community advocacy, more respondents had not received training in each of the identified community engagement areas than respondents who had (see Table 3). This was especially true regarding training in participatory research methods (i.e., PAR, CBPR, and YPAR) and translational science. Of the respondents who provided data on their training experiences, 68.9% had not received training in any participatory methods; a rate that dropped to 51.7% when translational science training was integrated.

Table 3

Participant perceptions of education in community engagement and methods of training

	Training received			If yes, method of training							
Type of community engagement	No	Not Sure	Yes	Required course	Elective course	Project with advisor	Independent project	Project with other program faculty	Project with faculty outside program	Other required program activity	Other elective program activity
Community Consultation	14	2	12	10	1	3	0	0	1	1	0
Community Outreach	11	4	13	6	0	2	2	0	2	3	1
Community Advocacy	11	2	12	7	1	0	2	0	1	3	2
Community Activism	14	2	11	6	1	1	1	1	0	1	2
PAR	18	1	9	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
YPAR	26	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
CBPR	19	4	5	1	3	1	1	1	0	0	0
Translational Science	18	3	6	3	0	3	2	1	1	1	0

Across the various methodologies, 28.6% reported receiving training in PAR, 21.4% in translational science, 17.9% in CBPR, and only 3.6% in YPAR. The mechanisms through which respondents received this training varied considerably (see Table 3). For example, across all methodologies the most common way students received training was through required coursework (n = 9), followed by either elective coursework (n = 6) or projects with their primary advisors (n = 6). People also commonly received training through independent projects (n = 5). Interestingly, although the majority of respondents indicated only one mechanism for training, 35.6% of the respondents indicated they had received training in more than one way (e.g., elective course and project with primary advisor).

The proportion of respondents who had received training in community-based activities (e.g., community consultation, outreach, advocacy, and activism) was greater, on average, than the proportion of respondents who had received training in engaged research methodologies. However, training rates remained relatively low in these categories as well, with none exceeding 50% of respondents (Outreach: 46.4%; Advocacy: 42.9%; Consultation: 42.9%; Activism: 39.3%). In keeping with these higher rates of received training, over half (57.1%) of respondents indicated they had received training in two or more of the community-based activities.

Similar to training in engaged research methodologies, the most common mechanism for learning about the community-based activities was required courses (n = 29) (see Table 3); this was especially the case for community consultation. However, unlike the training in engaged methodologies that was also received through a variety of other mechanisms, community-based activities were proportionately much less likely to be learned through methods beyond required courses (e.g., Independent projects, n = 5; Elective courses, n = 3).

Program emphasis on community engagement

The average respondent ratings of their program's emphasis on community engagement were 2.96 on a scale from one to six (range = 1-5) with a somewhat bimodal distribution (see Figure 1). Explanations for rankings were clear at the extremes of the scale. Respondents who rated their program a "1" noted their programs "had very little [training]—we didn't even have consultation coursework" or "did not provide any training on community engagement." At the other end of the spectrum, respondents who rated their program a "5" noted community engagement was "commonly brought up and discussed" and that "the program I am in always is purposeful about…talking about decolonization and getting involved in communities." In the middle of the scale range, however, explanations for rankings became less distinguished. One respondent who rated their program as a "2" stated "Community engagement is discussed but there are very few course activities or assignments that allow for community engagement experiences." Another respondent who rated their program a "4" noted "Community engagement is mentioned in nearly every class, but there is not a lot of information on practical application of community work."

Lack of practical guidance on how to do community engaged work was a theme that arose in explanations of multiple respondents who rated their programs in the two to four range. For example, respondents who rated their programs as "2," "3," and "4," respectively, stated "While they encourage community engagement, there are no formal ways that they teach us how to or give us real opportunities to do so;" "I felt that we often discussed outreach and advocacy…but we weren't necessarily trained in specific skills or practices related to community engagement;" and "My program stresses community engagement in our mission often and has many clinical/outreach opportunities to be involved in the community. However, the structured training is more theoretical." It seems, therefore, that respondents' ratings of their programs were largely focused on the emphasis of the program rather than on the training received.

Preparation to conduct community engagement work

In alignment with participant ratings of their program's emphases on community engagement, respondent ratings of how well their doctoral programs prepared them to conduct community engagement work were also in the mid-range, with an average rating of 4.57 on a scale from one to ten (range = 1-8). In describing the ways

their programs effectively prepared them for community engagement practices, many respondents noted the "strong focus on multicultural/diversity training" that "emphasized ethical guidelines/principals in giving back to the community." In addition, several respondents noted that although they "have…knowledge about the local community" and "strong support from faculty" to do community engagement, they felt they needed to "do things by myself" because they "never had opportunities for [community engagement] in graduate school." Accordingly, also in response to this prompt several respondents again noted a lack of "application work" or attention to community engagement practices.

Perhaps because of the sentiment felt by many of the respondents about their lack of preparation, several participants noted they wish they would learn or would have learned "literally anything" about community engagement practices from their doctoral programs. As one respondent noted, "I feel like there is so much I didn't learn. I'm in a faculty position now and I feel like I'm learning more from my students and community organizations in the area than I ever did from my program." Similarly, another respondent noted "I wish I would have learned what skills or concepts I would need to know, or what aspects of engagement I should be thinking about and considering."

Alignment between actual and desired training

Finally, respondents were also asked to indicate how their actual doctoral preparation in community engagement practices aligned with their desired doctoral preparation in community engagement practices. Unsurprisingly based on the above-mentioned results, nearly all of the respondents indicated they received either a bit less or much less training than they hoped to receive on community engagement practices (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Results revealed that, since 1990, only eight articles were published on or used community-engagement methods in the three journals examined, representing .18% of the journals' total published articles. For comparison, the authors ran the same keyword searches in the *Journal of Counseling and Development (JCD)*—the flagship journal of the American Counseling Association—and found that this journal alone published eight articles on community engagement since 1990. These results suggest there was an underrepresentation of scholarship or using community engaged practices in the counseling psychology journals investigated in the current study.

Results of the content analysis revealed no articles were published related to public scholarship or engagement, research-practice partnerships, or engaged scholarship, and only one was published on a topic connected to translational science. The remaining seven articles that met inclusion criteria were all identified using search terms linked with participatory research methods. However, all of these articles were conceptual in nature, with no published articles in any of the three flagship journals since 1990 actually using participatory research methods in an empirical study. These findings appear to be consistent with results of the survey, which demonstrated limited training in engaged practices, including participatory research methods.

Of the surveyed individuals who shared information on their training experiences, more than 68% reported receiving no training in any participatory research methods, a proportion that was reduced when translational science practices were included in engaged methodological training. Of those who were trained, the majority reported receiving training on PAR. The primary mode of training on these methodologies was through required or elective coursework, though only 17% of the sample indicated they were required to take a course that covered any engaged scholarship method.

A somewhat larger proportion of the sample reported receiving training in community-based activities (e.g., community consultation, outreach, advocacy, and activism). Nonetheless, less than half of the respondents reported receiving training in each these domains, suggesting a minority of counseling psychologists have been prepared to undertake such activities upon graduation. Similar to training in engaged methodologies, the majority

of survey respondents who reported receiving training in community-engaged practices indicated that training was provided through required courses.

These results, which raise questions about training in community engagement practices in CPSY, were amplified by participants' reflections on their training. Though our results revealed a diversity of experiences across participants, our findings nonetheless suggested that although community engagement was discussed in programs, those discussions rarely included instruction on how to conduct effective community engagement practices or scholarship. As a result, participants largely reported feeling underprepared for community engagement and desired more training in all community engagement areas.

Limitations

The results of this two-part pilot study should be considered in light of several limitations. Regarding the content analysis, we only examined articles that were published in three journals in the CPSY field. This choice was made intentionally given the aim of the content analysis was to explore the representation of engaged scholarship in the top three CPSY-specific journals. However, because counseling psychologists also regularly publish in other journals, expanding the investigation to include additional journals could more accurately capture the full range of community engaged scholarship produced by counseling psychologists. In addition, if a larger number of individuals were involved in the development of the keyword and coding search terms, the results may have been different. In particular, utilizing different search terms (e.g., including "stakeholder" or "community partner*") may have led to the identification of a larger pool of relevant articles. Similarly, different coding categories may have resulted in different aspects of the articles' structure or focus being emphasized in the data analysis process.

Regarding Part 2 of the study, because of the aim and structure of the survey items, the sample size could be considered sufficient. This is largely because no guidelines have been established for the ideal sample size for surveys containing open-ended questions (e.g., Hennick & Kaiser, 2022) and no analyses were planned beyond descriptive statistics. Nonetheless, the results are certainly limited by the number of survey respondents. Unfortunately, despite three rounds of participant solicitation involving more than ten different listservs and platforms over an eight-month range, interest in participating in the study remained low. This could be due to larger trends in decreasing email survey response rates, which have been declining since the 1980s (Sheehan, 2001) or because of the topic of the study. As the purpose of the study was described in all participant solicitations, it could have been that individuals who had not received any exposure to community engaged practices during their doctoral training chose not to respond. If that were the case, results of the current pilot study, as low as they were, may actually overestimate training in community engaged practices in CPSY training programs.

Implications

Despite the aforementioned limitations, and the fact the current study should undoubtedly be replicated with a larger sample size, results point to possible specific and necessary implications for training, research, and advocacy.

Implications for training

Overwhelmingly, results of the current study suggested CPSY programs emphasize the importance of community engagement and its alignment with CPSY aims and values. Simultaneously, however, the programs did not seem to prepare students to actually do community engagement work and scholarship. These findings are consistent with the results of the content analysis, which revealed published scholarship was primarily focused on discussing (i.e., conceptual) rather than doing (i.e., empirical) engaged scholarship. To overcome this issue, CPSY programs may want to prioritize training that builds upon the values of community engagement to outline tangible steps in engagement practices and scholarship and to give students hands-on community engagement learning opportunities.

Some CPSY programs already have such training in place. For example, a few participants noted they were required to conduct a social justice practicum or project that necessitated community engagement (Hage et al.,

2020); others noted they were able to gain experience in participatory research methods through research projects with advisors or other faculty. However, such learning opportunities did not seem to be the norm and, particularly with regard to engaged scholarship methods, were not commonly addressed in required courses or program activities. Programs may, therefore, consider integrating required coursework or activities into their curricula so all students can experience community-engagement work regardless of their own preliminary interest about or their advisor's involvement in community engagement.

Required community-engagement training activities can take multiple forms. Required research methods courses could introduce students to the principles and steps of engaged scholarship methodologies (e.g., PAR, CBPR, YPAR); if accompanied by experiential, community-based, or service- learning, such courses would also enable students to receive hands-on experience in conducting or at least initiating a participatory project (Abraham & Torner, 2021). Requiring additional program activities that necessitate counseling psychologists-in-training to learn the core competencies of community engagement (i.e., how to partner with community organizations, listen effectively to community needs, and work collaboratively alongside community members towards mutually-beneficial aims) and gain experience conducting outreach, advocacy, or activism could increase the likelihood that these individuals acquire the requisite competencies and experience to perform community engagement work after graduation (Neville et al., 2021). Several CPSY programs already have such requirements. For other programs, one way to build opportunities for students to gain this experience is by establishing both long- and short- term partnerships with community partners who can help to educate the students. Programs can also integrate community-based teaching pedagogy (Blanchard & Furco, 2021) into new or existing courses.

Implications for research

As results of the study suggested, counseling psychologists and counseling psychologists-in-training do not seem to be consistently trained in engaged scholarship. It is, therefore, not surprising that the content analysis revealed research utilizing engaged methodologies is not being published in our flagship journals. However, this trend should not continue and changing it will require not only the aforementioned training for future counseling psychologists but also training and encouragement for current CPSY scholars.

For academics, such encouragement could come from institutions in the form of earmarked internal funding for engaged scholarship as well as "structures, incentives, training and support" (Brazzell, 2019, para. 11) to make community engagement and engaged scholarship core requirements of being an academic (Cavallero, 2016; Hebel, 2016; Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). In addition, institutions could integrate support for the creation of cross-disciplinary collaborations and partnerships (UofL Community Engagement, 2022) that can facilitate the creation of sustainable collaborations, so partnerships are not disrupted when faculty go on leave or students graduate.

In addition, APA as a whole and APA's Division 17 (Society for Counseling Psychology) in particular could do more to support engaged research. Publishing books and guides for how to participate in public engagement and integrate engaged research into graduate training (e.g., Nelson, 2004; Tropp, 2018) are critical. However, tangible support in the form of free and accessible online training on engaged scholarship for researchers, grants specific to research using participatory methods, and assistance finding engaged research mentors in the field could all help to support practitioners and researchers who would like to conduct engaged research. The flagship journals in our field could, as well, encourage counseling psychologists to conduct and publish engaged scholarship by creating special issues on community-partnered research or specifying the scholarship of engagement as a particular manuscript type that can be submitted. Future research could survey senior counseling psychologists to explore their engagement with communities to examine the effectiveness of institutional and field-specific support structures for such work and their freedom to conduct this work.

Implications for advocacy

Increasing CPSY training in community engagement practices and scholarship will likely necessitate one specific type of engaged practice—advocacy. For students to be trained and gain experience in community

engagement, trainers (i.e., faculty) need to be supported and incentivized to conduct such work themselves. However, for that to happen, barriers to engagement in academic systems may need to be addressed through focused advocacy efforts.

As multiple authors have noted (e.g., Keeler et al., 2022; Morin et al., 2016; Murray, 2002; Nelson, 2005), typical reward structures for tenure and promotion in colleges and universities create significant challenges for faculty to engage with communities. For example, especially at research-intensive universities where the majority of CPSY programs are situated, considerable weight is given to securing external funding and publishing as a sole author in empirically focused peer-reviewed journals. However, historically, external funding has not emphasized "translation and engagement with contemporary policy, practices, and problems" (Morin et al., 2016, p. 152); nor is engaged scholarship an individual endeavor best disseminated through publications by a single author in venues that are typically inaccessible to community members (Berlatsky, 2014). Faculty who are invested in community engagement may, therefore, need to advocate for themselves and recruit others to advocate on their behalf so tenure and promotion procedures better consider engagement outcomes (e.g., policy changes, media coverage, societal impact) alongside traditional scholarly outputs (Keeler et al., 2022).

To prepare for advocacy efforts, faculty and administrators could familiarize themselves with existing university models that allow for tenure or promotion on the basis of, or with attention to, engagement (e.g., Abel & Williams, 2019; Jordan, 2007). Resources are also available online through, for example, Campus Compact, which hosts a repository on how "community engagement and community engaged scholarship (CES) can be recognized and incentivized through faculty reward mechanisms, including tenure and promotion policies and practices" (Campus Compact, 2023). In addition, in advance of advocacy efforts, faculty and administrators may want to learn more about altmetrics (Julien & Bonnici, 2014; Konkiel et al., 2016), alternative metrics of scholarly impact, which have been increasingly considered for their utility in advancement decisions in academia.

Conclusion

That community engaged practices and research are worthwhile endeavors is, at this point, well-recognized both within and outside of CPSY. Despite this, and even with the alignment between engagement and CPSY values, results of the current pilot study suggested CPSY may not be emphasizing community engagement in our training or scholarship to the extent possible. To live out our social justice and liberatory values and aims, we need to do better. Taking the steps to ensure counseling psychologists are well-prepared in engagement methods and are supported in conducting engagement work is a necessary step in our field's advancement.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests:

There are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Figure 1.

Participant perceptions of doctoral program emphasis on community engagement

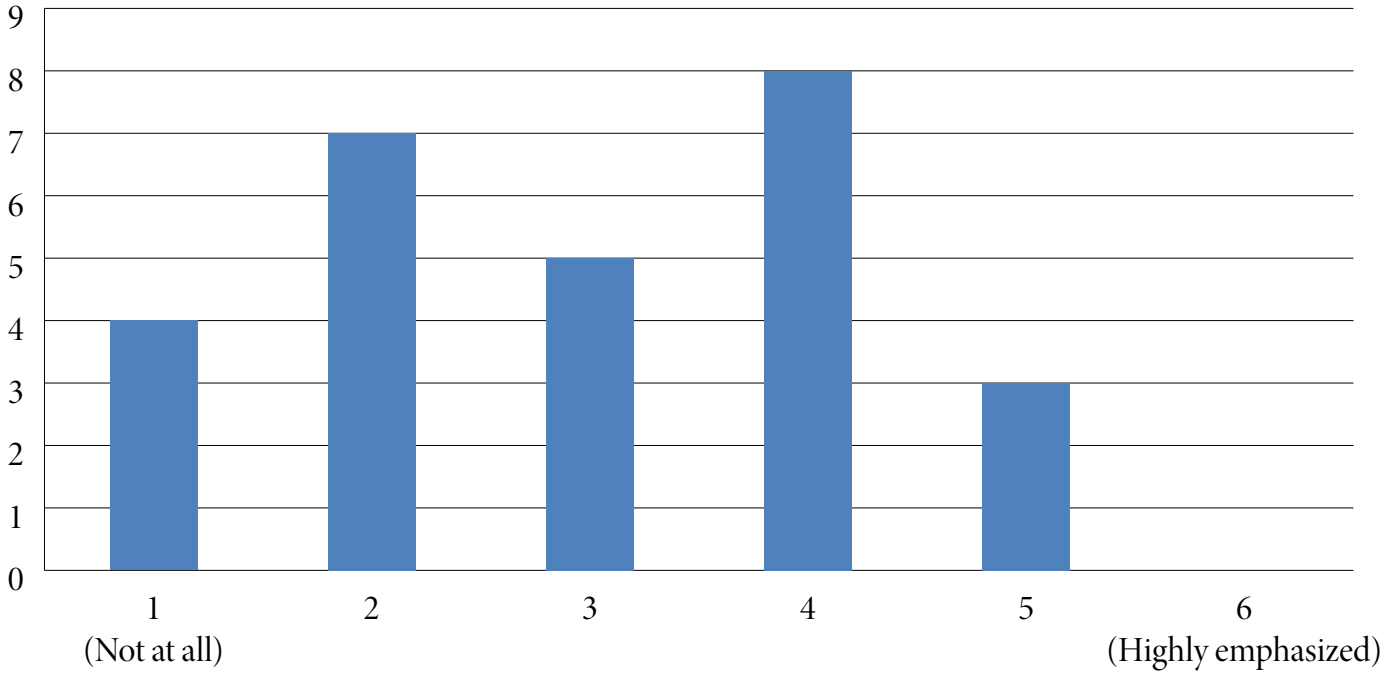
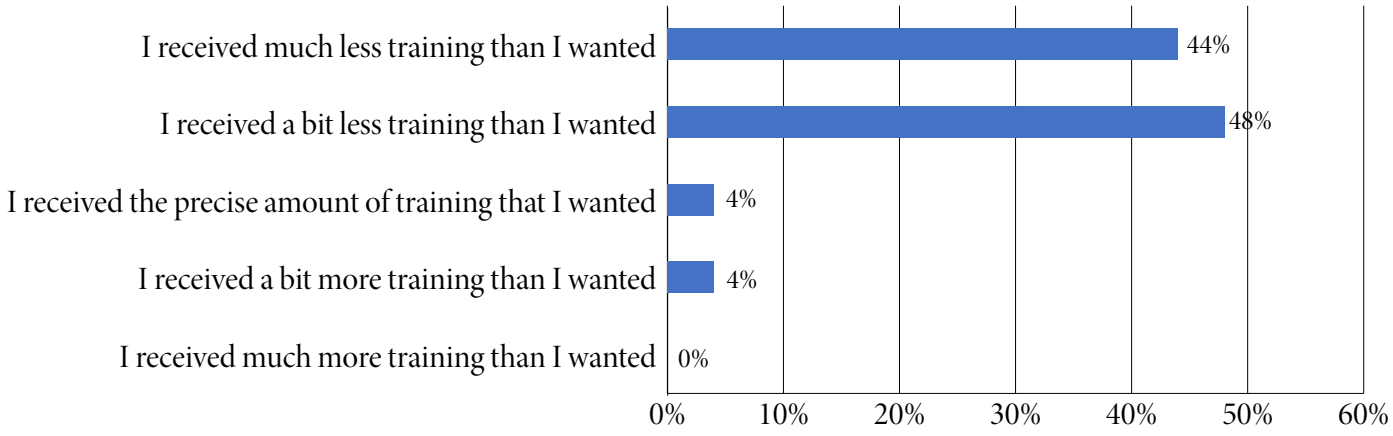


Figure 2.

Percent of respondents endorsing each option of alignment between actual and desired training in community engagement practices



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The Power of Language: A Call to Critically Analyze the Discourse of the Human Service Professions

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Abstract

While human service professionals are trained to listen carefully to our clients, we receive little training on how to listen to and analyze the professional discourse that surrounds us. This article introduces critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a set of tools for unpacking how power works in forms of discourse such as policy, legislation, and communication between individuals with unequal amounts of power. To illustrate the process and purpose of CDA, this article analyzes policy text from the counseling profession. Specifically, the author analyzes the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Board of Director's charge to the 2024 CACREP Standards Revision Committee. The author examines active versus passive sentence construction, imperative and declarative sentence mode, and speech act values to explore what the language in the charge reveals about how power worked in the initiation of the standards revision process. The analysis reveals three differing yet co-existing depictions of power and concludes that the Board used these multiple depictions of power to make a claim about the legitimacy of the revision process. The article closes with implications for CDA as a research method and a tool for training and social action.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, power, CACREP, accreditation, counselor education

The Power of Language: A Call to Critically Analyze the Discourse of the Human Service Professions

One of the first sets of skills human service professionals learn is how to listen to our clients (Hill, 2020). We listen because clients' language matters, and we listen closely so we can get beneath the surface to access underlying meanings (Reik, 1983). Close listening is a skill not only for client-facing work, however. Human service professionals spend our work lives awash in language. Our professional discourse appears in the form of agency policies, state and national legislation, statements from professional organizations, training program curricula, hallway discussions among colleagues, and supervision sessions, among others. This language also matters: It shapes our conceptions of right versus wrong and professional versus unprofessional. It also shapes what we do (and do not) learn in our training programs and what we can (and cannot) do within our scope of professional practice including our engagement in social action and justice activities. When we tune our listening skills to the discourse of our professions, we can analyze how power operates in our systems of care; a critical and essential social justice competency. For instance, we can analyze how institutions structure professional training programs, how services are allocated within communities, or how some sociocultural values are upheld in human service work while others are ignored or discredited. We can then use our own language to enact change within these systems.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a useful set of tools for closely attending to language and unpacking how power works in spoken or written texts. Using CDA, analysts pivot between the details of a text, such as word choice, grammar, and sentence structure, and the larger social reality that the text operates within and helps to create. Some scholars have begun advocating for increased attention to the discourse we come across in our training and our professional work. For example, the social justice model of supervision developed by Dollarhide et al. (2021) calls for supervisors and supervisees to engage in discourse analysis to "deconstruct, dispute, and reject hegemony" (p. 108). Dollarhide et al. (2021) made a strong case for the value of discourse analysis in the context of supervision. However, there is much more room for human service professionals to engage critically with the discourse of our professions.

This article has two purposes. The first is to make a case for why counselors, psychologists, and others should learn the tools of critical discourse analysis and apply them to the discourse of the human service professions. The second purpose of this article is to provide an in-depth demonstration of CDA. Specifically, I use an analytical framework developed by Fairclough (2015) to analyze a statement from the organization that accredits training programs in one human service profession, counseling.

Theoretical Framework and Review of the Literature

Discourse analysis involves the examination of language as it is used in service of a particular goal or set of goals (Rogers, 2004). Researchers draw upon this qualitative research tradition to explore social systems via the texts produced within those systems (M. Luke & Gordon, 2011). Although educational researchers have been using discourse analysis for decades (Rogers, 2004), the method is not yet used widely in the scholarship of the human service professions, including counseling (M. Luke & Gordon, 2012). In fact, in an analysis of 250 qualitative counselor education dissertations published in 2017 and 2018, Waalkes et al. (2021) identified only one discourse analysis project. However, the published studies that are available yield intriguing insights.

In a series of articles (M. Luke & Gordon, 2011; M. Luke & Gordon, 2012; Gordon & M. Luke, 2016), Luke, a counselor educator, and Gordon, a sociolinguist, used discourse analysis to examine emails exchanged between school counseling interns and their university supervisors. Findings included the presence of several discursive strategies such as using professional jargon (M. Luke & Gordon, 2011), supervisor reauthoring as a means of professional socialization (M. Luke & Gordon, 2012), and differing uses of the pronoun *we* by supervisors and

supervisees (Gordon & M. Luke, 2016). Through these studies, M. Luke and Gordon (2011; 2012; Gordon & M. Luke, 2016) examined how the emails both structured and reflected social relationships including supervisor-supervisee, supervisee-client, and supervisor-supervisee-counseling profession.

What differentiates CDA from other forms of discourse analysis is its attention to power (Rogers, 2004). Depending on the analyst's purpose, examination of power in a CDA project might involve analyzing how the producer of a text uses elements of grammar to advance an argument, how a text reflects and/or sustains power differences, or how a text serves as a starting point to address a social problem (Rogers, 2004). Fairclough's work, which forms the analytical frame for this project, encompasses all three strategies of applying a critical lens to discourse. Fairclough (2015) stated that CDA "combines **critique** of discourse and **explanation** of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality, as a basis for **action** to change that existing reality in particular respects" (p. 6, bolding in the original). Thus, CDA provides not only analytical tools and methodological processes, but a perspective that the analyst's role involves both understanding social reality and working to change it. Put another way, CDA is both method and theory (Rogers, 2004).

Encounters with policies are frequent in both our professional and personal lives. As such, one common use of CDA is to analyze policy. In calling for a critical approach to educational policy analysis, Prunty (1985) defined policy as "the authoritative allocation of values" (p. 136). In other words, through policy, an organization or body with authority uses that authority to make a statement supporting the legitimacy of a set of values (Prunty, 1985). The body that writes and publishes a policy typically has power to enforce it, which puts policy in the category of discourse that Bakhtin, an influential Russian philosopher of language, described as "authoritative utterances that set the tone" (1979/1986, p. 88). Policy is powerful: Like other authoritative utterances, it is intended to be referred to, cited, and followed (Bakhtin, 1979/1986). Policy's power also makes it a frequent, and important, object of critical analysis. Woodside-Jiron (2004) asserted that the strength of policy analysis is two-fold: It reveals how power behind the policy is constructed, and it makes clear the impacts of that power in the lives of individuals who must follow it.

An example of policy analysis that is relevant to human service professionals is Barrett and Bound's (2015) CDA of state-level policies that prohibited "any school-based instruction, counseling, discussion, or activities that could be construed as being positive about or promoting homosexuality" (p. 267). Barrett and Bound used the term *no promo homo* to describe these policies, which they identified in nine states at the time of their analysis. Using Fairclough's approach to CDA, the researchers analyzed the language and impact of these policies. They concluded that although the policy authors claimed the policies were neutral, the policies were in fact harmful to LGBT students and to school communities. The authors also used CDA to examine how this posture of neutrality reproduces "unequal power relations in schools and society" (p. 280). In keeping with the aims and approach of CDA, Barrett and Bound started by examining policy text. Then, through processes of description, interpretation, and explanation, they developed a strong – and alarming – analysis of how policy supported and reproduced unequal access to power.

While Barrett and Bound's policy analysis was published several years ago, these policies are again on the rise. In a discursive atmosphere that includes policies limiting speech, civil rights, and access to services, along with oppositional texts such as the Unified Statement on Anti-LGBTGEQIAP+ Legislation (Association of Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], 2022), human service professionals must be equipped with tools to analyze the "authoritative utterances" swirling around us. CDA offers both a theory and method for doing so (Rogers, 2004). To advocate for greater use of CDA in research and training in the human service professions, I will provide an example of critical analysis of a discourse from the counseling profession. Specifically, I will use CDA to analyze an "authoritative utterance": the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Board of Director's charge to the committee that complete the most recent round of standards revisions. My research question is: What does the language of the charge reveal about how power operated in the initiation of the standards revision process?

Methods

Context

CACREP accredits more than 900 graduate counseling programs in the United States (CACREP, n.d.d.). With its large scope and close ties to the counseling profession, CACREP is a powerful player in the field. Whether a counselor graduated from a CACREP-accredited program can, in some cases, impact their access to professional licensure (Bray, 2014) and employment (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). And because CACREP standards communicate a preference for faculty who are themselves graduates of CACREP-accredited programs (CACREP, 2023), these accreditation standards have a profound impact on the academic job market as well.

The process of revising the accreditation standards unfolds over several years. The CACREP Board of Directors (Board), which is comprised of 13 to 15 members including counselor educators, practitioners, and members of the public (CACREP, n.d.a.), recruits and appoints a Standards Revision committee (SRC) to carry out the revision process. One of the first activities of the most recent revision process was the delivery of the Board's charge to the SRC. The charge identified the topics the SRC should attend to and the process it should use to do so (CACREP, n.d.e.).

The revised standards took shape through an iterative process in which the SRC produced drafts, released them for constituent feedback, and used the feedback to inform the next draft (CACREP SRC, 2020). After approval by the Board, the revised standards were published in July 2023 before going into effect in July 2024 (CACREP, n.d.b.). The revised standards that resulted from this process will shape how hundreds of programs operate, and how tens of thousands of students are educated, for many years. For example, a past revision required programs to shift from knowledge-based standards of assessment (e.g., what students know) to outcome-based standards (e.g., what students can do; Akos & Duquette, 2022). The revised standards also influence how powerful third parties, including state licensure boards, employers, and leaders of other helping professions, view the counseling field and its practitioners (Urofsky, 2013).

Object of Analysis

The object of analysis for this study is the charge to the SRC. By describing the text as a committee charge, I am drawing upon Fairclough's (2015) concept of *discourse type*. In Fairclough's framework, a discourse type is a set of conventions that constrain the expected content and form of a text. Conventions associated with the discourse type of committee charge include that it is issued by a body with greater power (in this case, the Board) to a body with lesser power (here, the SRC), it provides instructions and expectations for the recipient, and it refers to a task that both bodies understand to be the recipient's responsibility.

Within this discourse type, *charge* has two grammatical functions. First, it is a noun, describing both a specific expectation (as in, "the committee is responsible for three charges") and the text as a whole (as in the phrase "deliver a charge"). *Charge* is also a verb, as in, "We charge the task force with developing strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change." Because a charge explicitly lists expectations, the body that issues it can also use it to evaluate the resulting work. For example, the Committee Charges section of the American Counseling Association (ACA) Leadership Handbook (ACA, 2015) stipulates that "the Reports to the ACA President and Governing Council will reflect the progress of these Charges" (p. 15, capitalization in the original). This breadth of purposes for a committee charge, and the power dynamics implicit in its construction and delivery, make it a discourse type with rich opportunities for analysis.

The charge to the SRC is a useful text for illustrating the theory and method of CDA because it is a powerful message written and published by a powerful body. Thus, it provides fertile ground for engaging in critical analysis of how power operated at the start of the CACREP standards revision process. Of course, power can appear in discourse as an explicit expression of oppression or privilege. However, power can also take less overt and more complex forms. As the analysis and findings here will illustrate, CDA provides tools for analysts to move beyond surface-level expressions of power to illustrate the more nuanced ways power works within a text.

The object of analysis in this article promotes a focus on the process of revising the accreditation standards, a process, of course, that had a significant outcome. While not all human service professionals are familiar with CACREP, it is likely that many have been part of training programs that are heavily influenced by powerful accreditation bodies (e.g., the American Psychological Association [APA] Commission on Accreditation, the Council on Social Work Education). Additionally, beyond the specific context of accreditation, this demonstration of CDA provides an example to other students and practitioners of how they can engage in critical analysis of the discourse of their own professions. As the example analysis in this article will show, CDA provides not only a set of tools to uncover and describe the many ways power can operate within discourse, but an entry point to engage in meaningful social action.

Researcher Positionality

In CDA, as in many traditions of qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of analysis. I have a dual professional identity as a licensed professional counselor and a counselor educator. I completed my master's degree at one CACREP-accredited program and my doctoral degree at another. My choice of training programs was driven in part by accreditation status. I knew that graduating from a CACREP-accredited program would positively impact the process of getting licensed, just as I knew that having a PhD from an accredited program would benefit me in the academic job market.

As a master's student, I worked as a graduate assistant in my department. In that role, I helped the department prepare for the CACREP re-accreditation process. I learned that meeting CACREP standards is a significant effort, and that some of this work involves building and reshaping program foundations. Now, as a faculty member in a CACREP-accredited program, I am responsible for helping to maintain my program's accreditation status. I was not directly involved in the most recent standard revision process. However, I followed the process by reviewing documentation on the CACREP website and by attending a conference session held by CACREP leaders.

As a white woman, I hold racial and gender identities that are in the majority among both full-time faculty and students in CACREP-accredited programs (CACREP, 2023). I strive to incorporate social justice into my work as a counselor educator with a goal of preparing professional counselors to provide affirmative and culturally responsive services for all clients. I work toward this goal by exploring issues of power, privilege, and oppression with trainees; fostering trainees' commitment to social action; and engaging in reflection and social action myself (Dollarhide et al., 2021).

In CDA, another component of positionality is the researcher's theory of language. I believe that language is constructive. It not only reflects the world, but helps to build it (Wetherell, 2001). This philosophy of language as a tool of world-building is aligned with the epistemology of constructivism. While analysts can conduct CDA with any number of texts, I am interested in analyzing the texts produced in educational bureaucracies. My goal is to describe, explain, and interpret (Fairclough, 2015) the texts that construct powerful social institutions (A. Luke, 1997).

Data Collection

I retrieved the text of charge from the Standards Revision Committee News page of the CACREP website (CACREP, n.d.e.), where it was posted in July 2019. The text is 220 words in length and is comprised of four parts. The first three parts are separate charges. Charge #1 is a general directive to the SRC to "examine all aspects of the CACREP Standards" (CACREP, n.d.e.). Charge #2 is a list of eight specific issues the Board requested the SRC attend to. Charge #3 is related to the SRC's process, specifically the importance of gathering feedback from constituent groups. The final section of the text is a lengthy (52-word), complex sentence. This sentence establishes limitations on the Board's ability to alter the revised standards after the SRC has presented its final draft (CACREP, n.d.e.).

In addition to the text of the charge, I retrieved and reviewed other publicly available documentation related to the standards revision process from the CACREP website. The SRC authored some of these documents,

including a summary of the content of five virtual "chats" held in the Fall of 2020 (CACREP SRC, 2020) and a guide that accompanied the release of the third draft of the standards (CACREP SRC, 2022). I also accessed and reviewed the accrediting body's policies (CACREP, n.d.c.) with a focus on policies related to the standards revision process. These additional documents provided insight into the SRC's process beyond what was documented in the charge, the SRC's understanding of its role and rationale for some of its revisions, and some of constituent feedback and questions to the SRC. Because this study does not involve human participants, Institutional Review Board approval was not needed.

Data Analysis

I used Fairclough's (2015) framework to analyze the data. Fairclough's method of CDA is comprised of three stages or dimensions: description, which is focused on the words, grammar, and structure of the text; interpretation, which explores both how the producer used words and grammar to form a text and how readers make sense of it; and explanation, which connects the production and interpretation of the text to social life (Fairclough, 2015). Fairclough's *Language and Power* (2015) specifies areas of inquiry, or tools, that an analyst can use to describe, interpret, and explain. Fairclough identified many tools for analysts to use. Some areas of inquiry are components of grammar that many of us learned in our formal education, such as the use of pronouns, synonyms and antonyms, nominalizations, and passive versus active voice. Other tools are more specific to Fairclough's framework. One such tool, discussed previously, is *discourse type*. Fairclough used *discourse type* to label types of texts based on the presence of a shared set of conventions. Another tool that is specific to Fairclough's framework is *speech act*. Fairclough used *speech act* to describe the meanings given to sections of a text by the individual or group that created the text.

I conducted several rounds of applying Fairclough's tools to the charge to the SRC. I recorded notes for each of Fairclough's tools and added to and revised these notes during subsequent passes through the data. This ongoing movement among the domains of description, interpretation, and explanation allows analysts to rotate between two perspectives: a close reading of the features of a text and a broad analysis of how the text fits within, and helps to construct, its social context (Rogers, 2004). Following several passes through the text applying Fairclough's tools and taking notes, I re-read my research question. I then reviewed the notes and identified the tools that yielded the most information related to the workings of power. Through this process, I identified three tools/analytical entry points that yielded the richest insights regarding power relations in this text.

Active Versus Passive Voice

Producers of texts use passive voice to construct sentences in which the active agent is unclear (Fairclough, 2015). One common way to construct a passive sentence is to lead with a passive subject, as in, "The squirrel was chased up a tree." In contrast, active sentences foreground the agent responsible for the action. An active equivalent of the previous example is, "The dog chased the squirrel up a tree." Fairclough categorized active versus passive sentence construction as a grammatical feature of sentences that provides analysts clues related to the content of a text. In the case of a passive sentence, the speaker or writer of that sentence has decided to foreground the action itself while omitting the actor. There are several reasons a speaker or writer might choose to use passive voice to construct a sentence: They may not know who the actor was; believe passive tense communicates a sense of formality that aligns with the discourse type; wish to communicate that the action is the most important information in the sentence; or prefer to not call attention to, or possibly even conceal, the actor's identity.

Sentence Mode

Fairclough (2015) identified three modes of interest in CDA: declarative, imperative, and grammatical question. Because there are no questions in the charge to the SRC, this analysis centers the declarative and imperative modes. Imperative mode sentences are commands that typically start with a verb, as in, "Put the dog on a leash." Declarative mode sentences, in contrast, communicate information, as in, "Only leashed dogs are allowed in this park." Fairclough (2015) categorized sentence mode as a grammatical feature that communicates

something about the social relations between the speaker/writer of a text and its recipient. When a speaker/writer uses imperative mode, the implication is that the speaker/writer believes they have the necessary power or clout to be able to tell the other party what to do. For example, while a park ranger may feel comfortable telling a visitor to "Put the dog on a leash," a fellow park-goer may not.

Speech Acts

By closely attending to the use of active versus passive voice and sentence mode in the charge to the SRC, I was able to access another analytical entry point in critical discourse analysis: what Fairclough (2015) termed *speech acts*. Fairclough (2015) used *speech act* to describe what a speaker/writer is accomplishing by producing a text. In the example sentence "Put the dog on a leash," one speech act value is to give a command. This speech act value is readily available to the recipient of the messages and to others. Fairclough asserted that texts could have more than one speech act value. For example, the sentence "Only leashed dogs are allowed in this park," has a speech act value of providing information. However, in the social context of one park visitor coming across another who is accompanied by an unleashed dog, the sentence may also have a speech act value of subtly making a request. When a text has multiple speech act values, there are more meanings for the recipient and for observers to unpack.

After identifying these three analytical tools as providing the greatest insight into power relations in this text, I completed additional passes through the text and my notes. In these review passes, I focused on how the three tools interrelate to communicate larger messages about how power works in the text and in the standards revision process more generally. The result of this analysis follows.

Results

Multiple review passes through the charge to the SRC using Fairclough's (2015) analytical framework, and especially analysis of the tools of active versus passive voice, sentence mode, and speech acts, revealed three ways power works in the initiation of the standards revision process. The following sections describe the grammatical features and larger meaning of each depiction of power relations.

The Board Claimed Its Power

One depiction of power in this text is the Board clearly demonstrating its power and influence. The first example of this relation to power is the discourse type of committee charge. In line with the conventions of its discourse type, this text exists because a group with more power (the Board) entrusted a group with less power (the SRC) to complete an important task by following specified guidelines. Thus, the entire text is a statement of the Board's power: The Board can form a committee, appoint members, and set expectations for their work.

Imperative mode is common, as one might expect in a text with this discourse type. Using imperative mode, the actor (the Board) gives command to the receiver (the SRC). Examples include, "Infuse disability concepts into the eight core curricular areas" and "Review and fine-tune Section 4" (the section of the 2016 standards that addressed program evaluation; CACREP, n.d.e.). Imperative mode communicates that these items are outcomes expected from the SRC. Updates from the SRC during the revision process demonstrated the committee understood its role was to meet the expectations of the Board. For example, this sentence is from a document accompanying the release of the third draft of the revised standards: "Our goal is to follow the charges ["charges" linked to the webpage where the charge was published] set forth by the board and to provide revisions to the standards" (CACREP SRC, 2022, p. 1, capitalization in the original).

In the charge to the SRC, active voice also helps form the structure of the Board's open claim to power. In charge #2, the sentence stem that introduces the list of items for the SRC to attend to is written in active voice: "Issues the Board requests the SRC to examine are:" (CACREP, n.d.e.). Although this sentence stem begins with a passive subject ("issues"), the clause that follows uses active voice to communicate the relationship between the

Board and the SRC. Using active voice, the Board made a series of requests, and the SRC was expected to act upon them.

As stated previously, Fairclough (2015) claimed that a text could have more than one speech act value. In this text, the Board engaged in two speech act values that each communicated the Board's power. The first, and most obvious, is the speech act of giving an order. This speech act value is directly connected to the text's discourse type, committee charge. Readers of a committee charge expect it to present an order (or series of orders), which is certainly the case in this text. In the charge, the Board communicated its expected outcomes. The primary audience for these expected outcomes was the SRC; however, because the charge was posted publicly, constituents of the revisions process – including counseling programs, faculty, students, licensure boards, consumers, and others – formed a secondary audience.

The wide availability of the charge is evidence of a second speech act value. Through this text, the Board made a statement about which issues the SRC must address to make the CACREP accreditation standards, and thus the counseling profession, stronger. This speech act value is most present in charge #2, which is a list of specific issues for the SRC to attend to. The presence (and absence) of items in this list communicates what the Board found to be important in 2019. Topics that warranted mention from the Board included the professional identity of counselor educators, field placement sites, and doctoral education. Other topics were not included the Board's list. For example, with the exception of disability, the Board's list did not address topics related to diversity, equity, or inclusion. Rogers (2004) asserted that critical discourse analysts attend "not only what is present in the text, but what is absent" (p. 7). Viewing the charge to the SRC through the lens of its speech act value of making a statement allows readers to analyze which issues and topics the Board identified as most important, and less important, at the start of the standards revision process.

The Board Distanced Itself from Its Power

While the Board used active voice and imperative mode to clearly display its power, it used passive voice and declarative mode to communicate a more complex relationship toward its power in the revisions process. Charge #1 is a rich example of this complexity: "The SRC is directed to examine all aspects of the CACREP Standards" (CACREP, n.d.e.). This sentence is passive. Rather than leading with an active subject ("The Board"), it leads with the passive subject ("The SRC"). Fairclough (2015) noted that one impact of passive sentences is that causality is unclear. Drawing on other elements of the text, readers can infer that the Board is the subject of this sentence. However, in constructing this sentence, the Board chose to not name itself as the actor. Juxtaposed with this passive construction is a strong verb: "directed." Taken together, the imperative mode and strong verb in this sentence communicate that the SRC has taken its directions from a powerful yet unnamed subject.

Charge #3 provides another example of passive voice in this text. It begins, "Feedback is sought on drafts from a broadly defined constituency" (CACREP, n.d.e.). The passive construction of this sentence conceals both the subject giving this directive and the receiver responsible for carrying it out. Instead, the sentence construction highlights what the SRC must seek– feedback – along with the individuals and groups whose feedback the SRC must seek. In addition to its passive construction, another distinguishing element of this sentence is its mode. Fairclough (2015) observed that declarative sentences position their (here unnamed) subjects as givers of *information*; in contrast, in imperative mode sentences, subjects are positioned as givers of *commands*. Had the author used imperative mode, as it did in other parts of the text, this sentence might read, "Seek feedback from a broadly defined constituency." Instead, the sentence is a declaration from which the primary implied receiver, the SRC, must interpret its responsibility.

Indeed, declarative mode is another tool for the Board to distance itself from its power. In a text with a discourse type of committee charge, declarative sentences that do not clearly communicate commands stand out. One example is charge #1, the first sentence of the text, which in addition to being passive is also declarative: "The SRC is directed to examine all aspects of the CACREP Standards" (CACREP, n.d.e.). Charge #2 is declarative

as well. What the Board could have written as, "The Board requests the SRC to," instead reads, "Issues that the Board requests the SRC to examine are" (CACREP, n.d.e.). Interestingly, while the first list item following this stem preserves the declarative mode structure ("Professional identity of programs and faculty"), the mode then switches to imperative for each of the seven items that follow (e.g., "Evaluate and review standards comparing core vs. specialty area standards"). Because this text was presumably written by a group, this discrepancy between sentence modes in charge #2 raises the hypothesis that individual Board members may have differed in their conceptualization of the group's power in the revision process. Given the limited publicly available information on the process of developing the charge, however, such a hypothesis must remain tentative. Alternative hypotheses may be that the structure of the charge represents the merger of several separate documents or that the authors of the text had differing preferences on how to communicate their message.

One other notable way the Board distanced itself from its power in this text is by not explicitly naming itself as the author. Although the Board's authorship is implied, as in the sentence stem "Issues that the Board requests the SRC to examine are," this authorship is not stated directly. Instead, readers must engage in interpretation to determine that the Board is the author. The SRC has clearly formed this interpretation, as demonstrated in this sentence from its explanatory document accompanying Draft 3: "Our goal is to follow the charges set forth by the board" (CACREP SRC, 2022, p. 1). This decision to not name itself as the author of the charge to the committee underscores the complexity of the Board's power in this text. Of course, an alternate reading is that the Board saw its authorship status as so obvious as to not need to be named directly.

The Board Ascribed Power to Others

If the declarative sentences in this text allowed the Board to distance itself from its power, these sentences also highlight the power of other groups in the revisions process. Charge #3, which is related to the SRC's process, has particularly interesting grammatical features. In full, charge #3 reads, "Feedback is sought on drafts from a broadly defined group that includes programs, faculty, students, practitioners, counseling consumers, state counseling boards, and higher education administrators" (CACREP, n.d.e.). As stated previously, the construction of this sentence obscures each of the following: its author, its primary recipient, and the fact that it is a command. Instead, the sentence structure highlights the specific and varied constituent groups from which the Board has instructed the SRC to collect feedback. The grammatical structure of this sentence calls attention to constituents' contributions to the revisions process while masking the power and agency of both the Board and the SRC. By constructing charge #3 in this way, the Board implied that constituent groups hold considerable power in the standards revision process. The SRC's Guide to Draft 3 (CACREP SRC, 2022) underscored constituents' power, stating that "one of the charges and one of the most important aspects of the committee's work is to solicit feedback from constituents" (p. 1). At multiple points during the revision process, both the Board and the SRC called attention to constituent groups' important role.

In the final sentence of the text, which was not presented as a charge, the Board underscored the power of another group: the SRC. This sentence, which is quite complex, ends with a declarative independent clause: "[T]he Board will not introduce any significant changes to the work completed by the SRC at the final adoption meeting without due process" (CACREP, n.d.e.). In this clause, the Board used active voice to make a pledge to not overrule the SRC unless exceptional circumstances arise. Given the prevalence of passive voice in this text, including in sentences such as charge #2 that explicitly give commands, it is notable that the Board used active voice to construct the sentence pledging to not make last-minute changes to the SRC's work. Instead, this sentence begins by identifying the source of the SRC's power: The SRC has full access to constituent feedback while the Board does not (CACREP, n.d.e.). This complex sentence communicates another speech act value, which is making a promise. In a public way, the Board pledged to respect the outcome of the SRC's process.

A Statement of Legitimacy

I have used Fairclough's (2015) tools of attending to active versus passive construction, sentence modes, and speech acts to identify three different relationships to power depicted in the charge to the SRC. The Board openly claimed its power, obscured its power, and ascribed power to other groups, namely constituent groups and the SRC. The multiple orientations to power operating within this text suggest a fourth speech act value: a statement of the legitimacy of the standards revision process.

CACREP accreditation is a powerful force in counselor education, and revisions to CACREP standards can result in programs changing their curricula, policies, and personnel. To support the legitimacy of the revisions process, a powerful body (the Board) communicated publicly that it had endowed a chosen group (the SRC) with both a meaningful task and effective tools for completing it. Phrases such as "Issues that the Board requests the SRC examine" in charge #2 (CACREP, n.d.e.), followed by imperative mode list items, communicate the Board's power in setting expectations for the SRC. The Board's publication of the committee charge in July of 2019 is also supported by CACREP's own policies, which specify that the standards must be revised every seven years (CACREP, n.d.c.). In short, to establish the revisions process as legitimate, the text needed to underscore the Board's authority to issue the charge and the SRC's ability to act upon it.

However, to support the legitimacy of the revisions process, the Board also needed to demonstrate that the ultimate power lay in the revision process itself rather than in the body initiating it. This effort to locate power in the process rather than the Board is apparent in sentences that limit the Board's power implicitly (e.g., "The SRC is directed to examine") and explicitly (e.g., "the Board will not introduce any significant changes […] without due process" CACREP, n.d.e.). This effort is also apparent in charge #3, which masks the agency of both the Board and the SRC while highlighting the numerous constituent groups whose feedback is essential for the revision process to be considered legitimate. By distancing itself from its power, limiting its power, and ascribing power to the SRC and to constituent groups, the Board engaged in multiple strategies to locate power in the revisions process and thus to support the legitimacy of the process's outcome.

Discussion and Implications

In this article, I used Fairclough's (2015) analytical framework to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the CACREP Board's charge to the 2024 SRC. Specifically, I explored what the language in the charge reveals about how power operates in the initiation of the standards revision process. By analyzing active versus passive voice, imperative versus declarative sentence mode, and speech acts, I determined that there are at least three depictions of power at work in this text. Using active voice and imperative mode, the Board openly claimed its power. At other times, the Board used passive voice and declarative mode to obscure its power. The Board also used grammatical structures to limit its own power while highlighting the power of constituents and the SRC. I claim that these depictions of power, while seemingly operating at cross-purposes on the surface, all support the speech act value of attempting to bolster the legitimacy of the revisions process.

To arrive at this claim, I closely reviewed the text of the charge to the SRC many times and applied Fairclough's (2015) tools of analysis in a detailed and systematic way. This analysis also drew upon insights gained by reviewing related documentation, such as updates produced by the SRC (CACREP SRC 2020; 2022). It also reflects my positionality as a member of the counseling profession who was trained, and now provides training, in CACREP-accredited programs. By applying a different analytical framework or other member resources, a different analyst may arrive at a different claim. For example, an analyst who had greater first-hand knowledge of the process of developing the charge to the SRC may conclude that the text of the charge reflects less of a concern for the legitimacy of the process than a different value such as assuring the perspectives of all Board members were represented in the final product.

Containing multiple speech act values and written for multiple audiences, the Board's charge to the SRC is a complex text. CDA provides a powerful framework for analyzing this text within its social context. CDA

allows analysts to shift continuously between a microanalysis of the words, grammar, and structure of this text and a macroanalysis of what this text means within the social reality of teaching, practicing, and participating in counseling. If language is constructive (Wetherell, 2001), then this text has formed the foundation for an additional text – the 2024 revision of the CACREP standards – that reshapes how counseling students are trained across the country for years to come. If language reflects the social reality in which it exists, then the analysis of this text has revealed the complexity of power relations within one of the human service professions.

Implications for Constituents of Accrediting Bodies

If language is the site of social change (Fairclough, 2015), perhaps this analysis will prompt greater interest and engagement in standards revision processes going forward. Indeed, one implication of these findings is the importance of constituent feedback in the revisions process. The SRC used constituent feedback to inform its work (CACREP SRC, 2022), and the Board identified limited access to constituent feedback as the main reason it would not significantly alter the SRC's work without due process (CACREP, n.d.e.). Readers who review the charge to the SRC closely may come away feeling empowered about their role in the revisions process. Thus, when the SRC or an analogous committee in another profession releases a draft for review and invites constituents to give feedback, readers may be reasonably sure that the committee will review and value their feedback and may be more willing to take the time to give it.

However, constituents' close analysis of the charge to the SRC may also spur them to ask more questions about the standards revision process and the Board's role in it. For example, what does *due process* mean in this context? What is the threshold for a change to be considered "significant," and who makes this determination? Did the Board have other expectations for the SRC, and if so, where are they documented? How did the Board compose and revise the charge, and who participated? Further information on the processes of writing the charge, revising the standards, and navigating the final adoption meeting is needed to shore up the statement of legitimacy that is one of the speech act values of this text. Drawing upon the demonstration of CDA presented here, constituents of CACREP or other accrediting bodies can engage in their own critical analysis of similar texts. Through this analysis, constituents can generate questions or concerns to raise during the process of revising accreditation standards.

Implications for Students and Practitioners of the Human Service Professions

In addition to analyzing how power works in the standards revision process, another goal of this article was to make a statement about the usefulness of CDA among human service professionals. Compared to other traditions of qualitative research, discourse analysis is rare (M. Luke & Gordon, 2012; Waalkes et al., 2021), and CDA even more so. This absence is difficult to understand given the expansion of CDA in education research (Rogers, 2004). It is also difficult to understand in the context of a growing emphasis on training students to identify and work to address social forces that shape clients' lives (Burnes & Christensen, 2020; Dollarhide et al., 2021).

When used to analyze meaningful texts, CDA has the potential to move the research and practice of the human service professions toward greater attention to social context and to relationships between the micro and the macro. As the analysis in this article demonstrated, CDA provides professionals with a systematic approach to analyzing power in language that can then become the foundation for meaningful understanding and potential social change. For example, a human service professional who critically analyzes accreditation standards is in a better position to make a case for why a specific standard should be added, revised, or removed. Perhaps more than most qualitative research traditions, CDA includes a clear mandate to not just analyze, but to act.

A. Luke (1997) observed CDA has both a deconstructive moment and a constructive moment. Its deconstructive moment involves the analysis of discourse within its social context, paying particular attention to power relationships and sources of social inequity (Rogers, 2004) Researchers could harness CDA's deconstructive moment to engage in social action through analysis of policies that affect clients, human service professionals, and

those who train these professionals. Examples include proposed legislation; state licensing regulations; statements from professional organizations; other texts produced by CACREP; texts produced by other accrediting bodies such as the APA Commission on Accreditation; student handbooks; and course syllabi. Researchers also could use CDA to examine power and privilege in texts generated through interactions between human service professionals and clients, supervisors and supervisees, instructors and students, tenure-track faculty and non-tenured instructors, and others.

Further, CDA has a constructive moment (A. Luke, 1997) in which students and practitioners learn the principles of CDA and apply them to their social context and the texts that form and reflect this context (A. Luke, 1997). Letourneau (2015) suggested counselor educators teach students the fundamentals of CDA and then direct students to analyze texts such as assessment protocols, manuals for specific theoretical approaches, or state-level lists of disciplinary actions taken against licensed human service professionals. Applying this suggestion, an educator in counseling, psychology, or another human service profession might ask students to study Barrett and Bound's 2015 article analyzing *no promo homo* laws. After reading the article, instructor and students could engage in social action by applying Barrett and Bound's methods to the current wave of anti-LGBT legislation that is limiting how school personnel can support all students.

In their model for social justice supervision, Dollarhide et al. (2021) went beyond identifying possible CDA interventions to use with supervisees to embed a critical form of discourse analysis within the model itself. Dollarhide et al. included "dominant discourse analysis throughout all systems related to supervisees' and counselors' identities" (p. 108) among the most important interventions for furthering social justice in supervision. Echoing Fairclough's (2015) statement that CDA was the basis for social action, Dollarhide et al. positioned discourse analysis as the first step in a multi-step process that results in "disrupt[ing] oppression in the supervisory and counseling relationship, in the supervisory and counseling process, and in the counseling profession as a whole" (p. 108). Both Letourneau's (2015) and Dollarhide et al.'s (2021) work illustrates potential uses of CDA's constructive moment to support student and practitioner learning. While these scholars were writing specifically about the professional counseling, members of related fields, such as psychology and social work, also could engage in critical analysis of the dominant discourses of their own profession.

Conclusion

Counselors, psychologists, and other human service professionals train and work in environments that are formed by and awash in discourse. This article put forward the argument that members of these professions, who are already skillful listeners, have much to gain by listening carefully to the professional discourse that surrounds us. CDA offers a theory and a set of tools for uncovering how power works in discourse; an essential skill to perform social justice activities. The article demonstrated the process and findings of CDA by analyzing one specific text: the 220-word statement that initiated the most recent revision process for the accreditation standards in counselor education. While not all human service professionals are directly impacted by the outcome of this specific process, many may benefit by taking up the tools and theory presented in this article. Critically analyzing how power works in a piece of professional discourse is one form of social action. Additionally, beyond the analysis itself, the tools of CDA provide an entry point into other forms of social action and justice that practitioners can enact on behalf of our clients, our professions, and ourselves.

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"Putting My Life Into a Story": A Preliminary Evaluation of a Digital Narrative Intervention Combining Participatory Video and Narrative Therapy

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Abstract

This article describes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a digital narrative intervention that combined participatory video (PV) and narrative therapy practices to engage Latinx immigrant young people in processes of personal and societal change. Drawing on ethnographic field notes, process recordings, audio recordings of intervention implementation, and focus group data, this program evaluation offers empirical evidence of the impacts of this innovative, digital narrative intervention on Latinx immigrant young people (ages 18-24) in New Orleans. A constructivist grounded theory approach to data analysis resulted in three main themes: critical self-awareness, Latinx and immigrant pride, and media literacy. This study unites PV and narrative therapy as complementary approaches to working with marginalized groups to share their stories, suggesting that the combination of these two storytelling practices resulted in several positive outcomes for participants.

Keywords: participatory video, narrative therapy, Latinx youth, immigrants, program evaluation

"Putting My Life Into a Story": A Preliminary Evaluation of a Digital Narrative Intervention Combining Participatory Video and Narrative Therapy

Background

In the last few decades, video production has become an increasingly accessible, affordable, and popular activity, resulting in a proliferation of user-produced digital media. Telling stories in digital through media production is now recognized as an important form of self-expression for young people, affording opportunities for self-representation, political participation, and identity development (Blazek, 2017). For ethnic minorities and other marginalized youth, digital narrative interventions have proven useful tools for exploring racial identities (Burkholder & Gube, 2018), documenting and speaking out about injustice (Cahill & Bradley, 2011), and countering dominant, often harmful and limiting, narratives (Luttrell, 2012).

Dominant narratives about Latinx young people, one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States (U.S.) (Frey, 2020), are rooted in a history of racial exclusion and discrimination (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2008) that pushes them to the margins of society. Many Latinx young people in the U.S. today, including those involved in this research, came of age during the Former President Trump's administration, which was marked by racist-nativist policies coupled with anti-Latinx and White supremacist rhetoric (Huber & Cueva, 2012). Though not new, Former President Trump's anti-immigrant agenda laid bare the U.S. immigration system's continued focus on exclusion, and caused heightened fear, anxiety, and feelings of marginalization in Latinx young people (Fernández, 2021). To meet the needs of our rapidly diversifying society and foster the well-being, inclusion, and participation of all its members, helping professionals must prioritize efforts to combat the marginalization of Latinx young people and to promote social action and justice activities. Extant literature suggests that participatory video (PV) and narrative therapy (NT) are effective tools for doing so (Blazek, 2017).

Participatory Video

PV (also known as collaborative or participatory filmmaking) is a term broadly used and applied to a diverse array of media production practices involving ordinary people working together for personal and societal transformation. For the purposes of this article, PV is defined as a process of social intervention that aims to mobilize and empower participants through their active involvement in the production and distribution of their own media narratives. Key concerns of PV include an emphasis on the process of media-making, issues of self-representation and authorship, and engaging and mobilizing marginalized groups.

An understanding of the emergence of PV as a community intervention method helps illuminate its relevance for community practice with Latinx youth. The practice and theory of PV dates to at least the 1960's, when social movements against cultural imperialism converged with technological advances that made media production equipment more affordable, portable, and available, eventually resulting in the birth of what we consider PV today (Ruby, 2000). PV has roots in Latin America, where Third Cinema, a liberatory, decolonizing film/video tradition originating from Third World countries, emerged as a challenge to Western social documentaries that represented the "other." Media producers in Latin America distinguished themselves through a focus on using film/video as a medium for social change; they sought to decentralize the communicative and cultural power of mass media by putting the means of production and distribution into the hands of people who were typically film/video "subjects" (Ruby, 2000).

As more participatory approaches to media production practices were being embraced in Latin America, a series of films produced in the remote Fogo Islands of Canada resulted in the identification of common methodological principles that were developed into an adaptable model of participatory filmmaking now known as PV (Nemtin & Low, 1968). The Fogo Islands project, which focused on community members' perspectives on the Canadian government's plan to resettle island inhabitants to the mainland, was a collaboration between

a documentary filmmaker, a community development worker, and island residents (Nemtin & Low, 1968). This project resulted in a defining feature of PV's philosophy: recognition that the participatory filmmaking *process,* which afforded community members opportunity to practice reflexivity, provide feedback, exert control over their own representation, and catalyze change efforts, was equally as impactful as the films produced (Nemtin & Low, 1968).

PV has since been used in many different community contexts for varied purposes such as health promotion/communication, community organizing and advocacy, community development, and conflict resolution (Milne et al., 2012). In the allied health fields, PV has begun to garner attention as a community-engaged, visual approach to qualitative research that uses media production tools for collaborative knowledge generation (Lilly, 2023, Brooks & Poudrier, 2014). Helping professionals have also employed various forms of PV in therapeutic settings, demonstrating its utility as an intervention approach (Miller Scarnato, 2018, 2019). However, there is a dearth of research examining the use of PV as a narrative therapy intervention – a gap this research aims to fill. To our knowledge, this article is the first to evaluate the impacts of a digital narrative intervention utilizing PV within a narrative therapy framework.

Narrative Therapy

NT is a post-structuralist and non-pathologizing approach to working with individuals, groups, and communities (White, 2007). Using a collaborative approach in resistance to traditional power hierarchies in psychotherapy, NT builds upon and applies the work of several post-structuralist theorists including Bruner's theory of the narrative construction of reality (Bruner, 1991) and Foucault's idea of resurrecting subjugated knowledges as a challenge to psychological discourse (Foucault, 1980). Put simply, NT is based in the belief that humans make sense of the world through stories and aims to apply that understanding in collaborative therapeutic settings with groups and individuals who have experienced hardship and trauma by working with people to make meaning of life events, primarily through oral storytelling and written narratives. NT practitioners position people as the experts on their own lives, and view problems, traumas, and hardships as separate from people. By recognizing a person's power to re-author, or re-story, the events of her life into preferred alternative stories, narrative therapists use storytelling processes to empower people by decreasing the influence of problems on the person's life and increasing the person's perception of her influence over problems.

Intervention Development

The digital narrative intervention was developed and implemented in collaboration with a local organization called Puentes New Orleans. Originally founded to connect Latinx families to needed resources following Hurricane Katrina, Puentes began working with Latinx youth in 2008. Noting a critical gap in youth-focused programs for Latinxs in the area, Puentes began shifting organizational priorities to increase their focus on Latinx youth in 2015, launching a college access program for high school students.

The author and primary investigator (PI) began collaborating with Puentes as a doctoral student and fellow in a program focused on community-engaged scholarship. A partnership with Puentes was suitable given the PI's research and advocacy focused on immigrant populations. During early conversations, Puentes staff and board members shared with the PI the findings of a community needs assessment they conducted to inform future programming efforts, as well as their plans to launch an organizing initiative for Latinx youth aged 16-25. Because there was a dearth of programs serving Latinx young people in the area, this new initiative would focus on building their power and participation through a combination of creative expression and informed social action. Through continued conversations, the PI raised the possibility of a digital narrative approach to the organizing project based on her past experiences using PV to engage Indigenous youth in Latin America in critical consciousness-raising and training in using NT with groups. Both PV and NT aim to empower individuals and groups to author their own narratives through storytelling processes meant to facilitate personal and societal transformation, which aligned with Puentes' goals for the project. Puentes' leadership embraced the idea of including a digital

narrative component in their work with Latinx young people and we began to conceptualize a digital narrative intervention that would combine PV and NT to complement the work of the youth organizing initiative. A project team was assembled consisting of the PI, and three Puentes staff members: the Director of Development, the Youth Organizing Program Manager (a social worker familiar with narrative therapy), and the Digital Media Organizer (a youth organizer with experience in photography).

A participatory design (PD) process was used to actively involve youth in intervention development. PD is a research approach in which the people who will take part in a system or intervention play a critical role in designing it (Hagen et al., 2012; Neuhauser, 2017). PD has frequently been used with young people as it recognizes their unique social context and their ability to define and generate responses to the problems impacting them (Hagen et al., 2012). This approach offers clear and adaptable tools and techniques to support young people's active participation through a process of mutual learning, making design decision-making processes accessible to users and improving intervention outcomes (Hagen et al., 2012; Neuhauser, 2017). A PD approach was chosen and implemented for the development of this intervention because it "helps us to develop interventions that are engaging to young people and therefore, are more likely to be used, increasing the overall reach and impact of the intervention" (Hagen et al., 2012, p. 6). We used a PD framework specifically for use with young people that is underpinned by three main principles outlined by Hagen and colleagues (2012): (1) young people act as co-designers throughout the process; (2) young people are design partners in idea generation and feedback loops, and; (3) interventions are evaluated from young people's perspectives.

Intervention and Project Goals

Following a PD approach, the project team held several meetings open to all young people involved in Puentes' programs during which attendees were engaged in various PD techniques to actively involve youth as co-designers of the intervention. Specifically, we used the PD methods of card sorting, focus groups, and crowdsourcing (Hagen et al., 2012) during these meetings. This process resulted in the following collaboratively determined goals for the intervention, reproduced here in the language we devised together for inclusion in fundraising and promotional materials and used in research reports concerning related projects (Lilly, 2023, p. 11):

- to provide Latinx youth with a safe and welcoming space to discover and share their own voices, stories, and struggles, and to locate their stories within a historical and cultural context connected to systems of power and oppression that participants can identify and interrogate;
- to mobilize Latinx youth around issues identified through storytelling processes to further understand and combat oppression and its effects on their lives;
- to teach Latinx youth how to effectively incorporate digital media tools in organizing and advocacy campaigns designed to counter oppression.

Once these goals were established, the project team worked together to finalize the digital narrative intervention, seeking feedback and providing opportunity for youth input throughout the process. This research reports findings from a preliminary program evaluation of the digital narrative intervention. The pragmatic purpose of this evaluation was to document and analyze the digital narrative intervention process for continued adaptation and implementation. Data collection and analysis sought to answer the questions: What impacts did the intervention have on participants? To what extent did the intervention meet its goals? Young people were also actively involved in determining the methods used to evaluate the intervention, which are further described below.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Workshop participation was voluntary and open to any Latinx young person involved in Puentes' youth organizing initiative. Participants were recruited through a verbal pitch provided by the PI at three regularly scheduled youth organizing meetings. Potential participants were also provided an information sheet about the workshops and instructed to contact the PI following the meetings if interested in participating. Five Latinx young people participated in each workshop, for a total of 10 participants (18-24 years old), of whom six were female and four were male. Participants included four young people from Honduras, three from Mexico, two from Guatemala, and one from Nicaragua. Participants are identified by chosen names to protect their identities – Lia, Arturo, Giselle, Sofia, and Javi participated in the first workshop; Tatyana, Manny, Teresa, Camilo, and Jasmine in the second.

Intervention Workshops

The intervention was implemented through two workshops that guided participants through PV and NT activities. The first workshop began in October 2018 and concluded in December 2018, and the second workshop began in November 2018 and concluded in January 2019. Each workshop began with a three-day intensive training to introduce participants to media production activities and facilitate narrative therapy exercises. Specific activities and exercises are described in Appendix A. The workshops were co-facilitated by the Digital Media Youth Organizer and the PI. After the three-day intensive, participants continued to work together to complete their videos for approximately three months with support from co-facilitators.

Ethnographic Methods and Analyses

We used ethnographic methods to examine the intervention process and its impacts on participants. Ethnography was chosen as an appropriate method because it generates in-depth observational data from the field. Young people felt that this approach would be non-intrusive during the workshops and best capture their experience of participation. In concert with the university IRB, this study was determined to be limited to evaluative activities as the information was collected for the purpose of examining the outcomes of the program to improve its effectiveness and inform future program development. However, participants provided verbal consent to be observed and audio-recorded and were aware that the data generated would be used for program evaluation and research purposes.

The observational data generated included: ethnographic field notes recorded during or within 24 hours of each workshop session (eight fieldnote entries comprising a total of 52 pages) and audio recordings of group interactions and discussions during the intervention (18 separate recordings with a total duration of 10 hours, 41 minutes). These data sources were included in the analysis along with data from two audio-recorded focus groups with participants. Focus groups lasted approximately two hours and were held one month after each workshop ended. The first focus group included four of the five participants from the first workshop, and the second one included all five participants from the second workshop. During the workshops and focus groups, audio was recorded using a professional-quality recorder placed on a tripod within range of participants' voices. The PI transcribed all recordings for analysis.

Data Analyses

A constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach (Charmaz, 2014) was employed to analyze the data iteratively and inductively. CGT is "a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 187). This approach was used because it is a flexible, yet rigorous analysis method focused on understanding participants' experiences (Chun Tie et al., 2019) that stresses "social contexts, interaction, sharing viewpoints, and interpretive understandings" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). All data were analyzed iteratively and inductively using the constant

comparison method (Charmaz, 2014), which proceeded through three phases detailed in Table 1. To provide an audit trail that helps ensure procedural precision and rigor, the PI recorded analytic memos throughout the analysis process, detailing why and how analytic decisions were made and documenting the PI's own thoughts and feelings. The rigor of the study was further enhanced through triangulation of data sources (e.g. examining field notes in tandem with transcripts of audio-recordings from the same date, comparing data across the two focus groups) and member-checking (participants were sent a draft of results for feedback).

Table 1

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) Analytic Process

Phase	Purpose	Approach	Team Members	Examples
Initial Coding	Begin to identify patterns in and assign meaning to data; inform continued data collection	Inductively generate and compare codes, remaining close to the data and embedding action in codes; record analytic memos to document the researcher's thoughts and feelings	PI	Initial codes: understanding oneself, feeling disadvantaged, feeling proud of ethnic heritage, recognizing immigrants' accomplishments, learning visual language, engaging with media, identifying formal techniques
Focused Coding	Transform data into abstract concepts; continually reassess assigned meaning to refine analysis	Review, organize, and hierarchize codes; identify and define the properties and dimensions of core categories; identify relationships between categories	All members of project team	Core categories: self-awareness, impacts of power and oppression, Latinx pride, immigrant pride, media vocabulary, active viewing
Theoretical Coding	Produce a theory grounded in the data that explains the phenomenon being studied	Integrate and synthesize codes, integrating extant theory; explain relationships between categories	All members of project team with input from youth participants	Theoretical codes: critical self-awareness, Latinx and immigrant pride, media literacy

Results

Our analysis resulted in three main themes that offer empirical evidence of the impact of the digital narrative intervention on participants: critical self-awareness, Latinx and immigrant pride, and media literacy.

Critical Self-Awareness

Our analysis revealed that participating in the intervention facilitated processes of critical self-awareness in participants. Producing media together that shared their personal stories helped change the way participants looked at themselves and fostered a more critical perspective on how power and oppression impacted them. The experience of being interviewed by a peer during the Episodes of Life exercise was a particularly powerful

vehicle for seeing oneself from a new perspective. When we debriefed immediately following the exercise, Jasmine expressed: "I never thought about my life like that. It was new for me. I have never thought about putting my life into a story before, but it was good because I started to understand myself more. It made me find myself more." Giselle also shared that she saw herself in new ways and better understood the uniqueness of her experiences, stating: "I was pretty nervous being interviewed. But I feel like I learned that maybe what seems normal or not that interesting to me might be interesting to other people, or like, different from what they've experienced. And so, I guess it gave me a new view of me too."

After participating in the intervention, participants were able to articulate an understanding of the systematic disadvantages and experiences of discrimination associated with immigrant status and race. During a focus group, Teresa shared: "One of the things I realized is that we all migrated to an English-speaking country without speaking the language, and some of us don't have permanent status. Those things put us at a disadvantage here." When discussing our dissemination strategy for their finished videos, Camilo connected his experience to systemic injustices, stating "I have started to feel that we don't get the same opportunities that we should. And with all the things that are happening, I feel like this [video] can really help people to understand us better." Expressions like these demonstrate youth's critical self-awareness of the structural disadvantages they experience as immigrants in the U.S.

Latinx and Immigrant Pride

Participants also described gaining a deeper appreciation for and pride in their Latinx heritage. Lia shared:

> At the beginning, I felt like I was Latina and I am maybe treated differently here [in the U.S.], but now I feel more proud of who I am. Because when I was shooting the scenes for my film, I saw people working really hard. And when I heard the stories of people in here [within the group], I started to understand what we all have to go through in order to have a better life. And that makes me feel so proud of who I am and where I come from.

Manny also revealed a sense of Latinx pride when thinking about the impact he hopes his video makes:

> If someone I don't know is watching my video, I just want to let them know that they don't have to be ashamed to be Hispanic. And if they are being bullied or made fun of for being different, that they just embrace it even more. Being Hispanic isn't bad. I'm so proud of being Hispanic. I can speak two languages and most people cannot."

For Jasmine, the experience made her think more deeply about the contributions of immigrants:

> I feel like [Trump] thinks he's making America great, but he's really not because we're the ones who build this stuff. We're the ones who built his White House, so like, he can't even tell us not to go in the White House because we built it.

Having the opportunity to work together to produce videos that conveyed their stories helped participants recognize their unique strengths and resources as Latinx peoples and immigrants.

Media Literacy

In addition to learning media production skills, we found that participating in the intervention increased participants' media literacy, strengthening their ability to read and critically engage with the visual language of media. This was demonstrated through discussions of short films about immigrants that we watched during the intervention. After watching one of the films, Javi stated the following in our discussion:

> I like how it only showed people from behind, like their backs, because that was like equalizing since they were all shown in the exact same way. They're all immigrants – like, look, here's this guy, here's this guy, and every time it's a different race but it's the same thing showing the back of their heads, which

> is a way of visually making you connect those people. They're all immigrants, and you never see their faces.

In discussing this film, Javi demonstrates his grasp of the visual language used to convey the diversity and unity of the immigrant population. Discussing another film, Tatyana reflected:

> They don't spell things out for you. They don't make it super clear, so you have to work a little bit to figure it out for yourself, like fill in the blanks. So that kind of made me pay attention more. Because I'm watching it, thinking like "Oh, what's going on here? How do these people know each other?" And that can be a good thing, to keep people's attention.

In this instance, Tatyana was able to identify the importance of keeping an audience engaged and one approach the film used to do so. After viewing and discussing several films together the first day of the intensive, Jasmine returned the second morning, excited to talk with the co-facilitators about a film she had watched at home. I jotted the following in my field notes:

> Jasmine came in and immediately told me that she couldn't stop seeing all the things that we learned yesterday while she watched a film about teen pregnancy that evening. She started explaining the plot, but also how the film was told from different perspectives, the visual style, the use of focus and sound to tell the story, how it had almost no dialogue, the transitions it used. She started showing me the film and was pointing all these things out as it played. I encouraged her, saying "Yes, now you have a new way of seeing films. You can interpret them based on what you learned." She said she would visualize the editing timeline while watching it, imagining the different tracks for music and dialogue.

This example shows how Jasmine was able to apply what she had learned about creating films while watching them, exercising her new vocabulary, and accurately identifying formal techniques in describing the filmmaker's choices to us.

Discussion

Both PV and narrative therapy are alternative approaches to working with people to share their stories within their respective fields – PV emerged as an alternative to mainstream media production practices that place media professionals in a position of authority over the stories of marginalized groups, and narrative therapy was developed as an alternative to pathologizing therapeutic traditions that place therapists in a position of authority over the stories of clients. In resistance to practices that tell stories about and represent the "other," PV and narrative therapy recognize people as knowledge holders, championing their ability to author their own narratives and represent themselves. Based on these synergies, we developed, implemented, and evaluated an innovative digital narrative intervention that used PV within a narrative therapy framework to promote Latinx immigrant youth's empowerment.

The results of our preliminary program evaluation suggest that the digital narrative intervention for Latinx young people resulted in changed perspectives in multiple ways. The use of PV within a narrative therapy framework afforded participants the opportunity to author their own media narratives, which helped them gain new perspectives on themselves (critical self-awareness), on their communities (strengthened pride in Latinx and immigrant identities), and on media messages (enhanced media literacy). These findings attest to the value of combining PV and narrative therapy practices and suggest that the intervention was able to work toward its intended goals.

In alignment with our first goal, the intervention provided Latinx young people with a "safe and welcoming space to discover and share their own voices, stories, and struggles" (Lilly, 2023, p. 11). We created this space by employing narrative therapy exercises meant to protect participants from re-traumatization while inviting them to share their stories with one another. Participants described how the experience of documenting and sharing

their stories using digital media afforded them a new perspective of themselves and increased their awareness of the impacts of power and oppression on their life experiences (critical self-awareness), relating to the second part of this goal focused on contextualizing life experiences within systems of power and oppression. From a narrative therapy perspective, becoming critically self-aware changed participants' relationships to the problems they encountered in life, allowing them to see beyond individual circumstances and gain an understanding of the multi-systemic, multi-level factors that contribute to individual and collective problems. This finding is consistent with extant research examining outcomes of PV (Blazek, 2017) and narrative therapy (Angus & McLeod, 2004), suggesting that both processes may have contributed to critical self-awareness. We found that the combination of PV and narrative therapy facilitated critical self-awareness by helping participants to see their stories as part of social discourse through the process of being interviewed, documenting their stories on video, and producing videos that allowed them to share their stories with broader publics.

Our findings also revealed that the intervention increased participants' sense of pride in their identities as Latinx peoples and as immigrants. Extant literature has shown that a strong sense of ethnic-racial identity increased Latinx young people's hope (Yager-Elorriaga et al., 2014) and helped them recognize and make meaning of racism (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Participants expressed a renewed appreciation for their membership in these identity-based groups, conveying a sense of collective identity formation which is vital to collective social action (Flesher Fominaya, 2010).

Participants' pride in their Latinx and immigrant identities and critical self-awareness resulted in an important shift from individual, problem-saturated narratives to stories that conveyed a sense of participants' collective struggle against oppression, which motivated youth to act on issues important to them. Youth's desire to use their videos as part of social change efforts demonstrates progress toward our second goal of mobilizing youth. After participating in the intervention, youth expressed many ideas and motivations for sharing their films as part of their mobilization efforts and subsequently continued to incorporate digital media tools in their organizing and advocacy campaigns, as encapsulated in our third goal.

We also found evidence suggesting that the digital narrative intervention increased participants' media literacy – an unintentional though unsurprising outcome, given that producing media has proven an effective way of developing media literacy (Friesem, 2014; Šupšáková, 2016). Learning to critically read media is an important skill for media producers who are aiming to convey their own media messages, thus, we engaged participants in viewing and discussing a variety of videos. Through our viewings and discussions, youth demonstrated an ability to identify formal production choices, apply new vocabulary, and understand media messages – key components of media literacy that support youth's ability to actively engage with media messages (Soep, 2012). An enhanced ability to understand and critically interpret the construction of narratives may also support youth's ability to identify, guard against, and counter racial and other forms of bias in media stories that might negatively impact youth's sense of self if left uncritiqued (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). Media literacy skills are also beneficial for effectively incorporating digital media into organizing and advocacy campaigns, in relation to our third goal.

This study unites PV and narrative therapy as complementary approaches to working toward the empowerment of Latinx immigrant youth, offering evidence that the combination of these two storytelling practices resulted in several positive outcomes for participants. However, the results of this qualitative, preliminary program evaluation are not intended to generalize beyond the participants involved in this particular digital narrative intervention. Future research on the use of PV within a narrative therapy framework should explore whether similar outcomes emerge from other contexts. Despite these limitations, this study offers empirical evidence of the ways in which an innovative digital narrative intervention (the first to utilize PV within a narrative therapy framework) impacted the Latinx young people with and for whom the intervention was developed. The findings presented here support the continued use of PV and narrative therapy in community practice with marginalized groups.

The findings of this program evaluation also bear implications for helping professionals. These findings might inspire practitioners to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate media storytelling practices in therapeutic settings with the intent of furthering and strengthening a client's capacity to author her own narrative. Practitioners may discover that utilizing PV or other participatory digital media approaches helps young people gain new insights into their own identities and social contexts – a key developmental task that impacts the health and well-being of adolescents and young adults (Sawyer et al., 2012). As this study revealed, interventions utilizing PV within a narrative therapy framework hold great potential to positively transform the lives of young people who experience marginalization, offering them the opportunity to gain critical self-awareness, pride in their identities, and valuable media literacy skills, all of which can help propel them to social action in their communities and beyond.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest in relation to this work.

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