Resisting Oppression and Accessing Wellness:

Counselling and activism as interrelated avenues to dignity and healing

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Abstract

The intention behind this thesis project is to explore the value of mechanisms that both tend to individuals' mental wellness and simultaneously act in resistance to forces of systemic oppression — interpreting oppression through the Freire (2018) lens, as a force that serves to dehumanize all people by pitting oppressors and the oppressed against each other, stripping all individuals of their agency and liberation (Freire, 2018). This project sets out to explore how counsellors can resist oppression through the therapeutic mechanisms they choose to employ as well as how activism can serve as a mechanism of therapy and resistance enacted. With a feminist/social-justice centred foundation, this project aims for praxical engagement through which theories can be enacted, questioned, and adapted in order to transcend "existing notions of what is possible" (Dutt & Grabe, 2014, p. 113). This project begins by contextualizing the central question and situating the author, expanding on the personal values and theoretical frameworks that inform this work. Following this, I explore how aspects of counselling work can qualify as strategic resistance to oppression, focusing on the development of bilingual counselling services and exploring how this type of accessibility is needed if we are centering social justice in our counselling work. Alternatively, I explore examples of direct action activism and identify how this work can qualify as therapeutic at both the individual and community level. To conclude, the final chapter includes a summary of the connections drawn between healing work and resisting systemic oppression as well as highlight some of the places researchers, counselling practitioners, and anyone adopting an anti-oppressive stance, may want to turn their attention to in the future.

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Chapter 1 - Resisting Oppression and Accessing Wellness

Twenty-five years and my life is still
Trying to get up that great big hill of hope
For a destination

I realized quickly when I knew I should
That the world was made up of this brother-
hood of man
For whatever that means

And so I cry sometimes
When I'm lying in bed just to get it all out
What's in my head
And I, I am feeling a little peculiar
And so I wake in the morning
And I step outside
And I take a deep breath and I get real high
And I scream from the top of my lungs
What's going on?

And I say, hey yeah yeah, hey yeah yeah
I said hey, what's going on?
And I say, hey yeah yeah, hey yeah yeah
I said hey, what's going on?

Oh, oh oh
Oh, oh oh

And I try, oh my god do I try
I try all the time, in this institution

And I pray, oh my god do I pray
I pray every single day

For a revolution

And so I cry sometimes
When I'm lying bed
Just to get it all out
What's in my head
And I, I am feeling a little peculiar

And so I wake in the morning
And I step outside
And I take a deep breath and I get real high
And I scream from the top of my lungs
What's going on?

And I say, hey hey hey hey
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And I say, hey hey hey hey
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And I say, hey hey hey hey
I said hey, what's going on?

Oh, oh oh oh

Twenty-five years and my life is still
Trying to get up that great big hill of hope
For a destination

"What's up?" - 4 Non Blondes

In 1989 Linda Perry wrote the music and lyrics to what would become a classic 90s alternative hit. "What's up?", preformed by the all female band 4 Non Blondes, comes across as a cry for revolution and a cathartic expression of distress caused by injustice. The late 80s, and early 90s, when this song was originally received and consumed by the masses, were rife with conflict as the world experienced and witnessed an array of social injustices. In the US, the Gulf War was wrapping up, race relations throughout the country were precarious (culminating with the Rodney King riots of 1992), and more generally populations who were not white, male, and middle class were facing various types of system-wide oppression. Fast forward to 2019 and "What's up?" rings truer than ever.We are currently witnessing human and environmental rights crises globally. In the USA, Latinx communities — throughout this project I will use the term Latinx rather than Latin American or Latino/a; Latinx is a term originating from queer communities that was created to disrupt gender binaries, offering people a linguistic alternative that takes into account the intersecting identities of Latin American descendants (Garcia, 2017)— are feeling the impact of Trump fuelled anti-migrant policies, with ICE rounding up and separating families (MacLean et al., 2019). While we have seen a growing number of corporations superficially embracing queer diversity, profiting from Pride related advertisements and products, queer folks are still targets globally, with trans folks, particularly trans women of colour, at a disproportionately high risk for being victims of assault and murder (Martinez & Law, 2019). Concurrently, Indigenous communities worldwide battle environmental degradation that threatens their ands and livelihoods, most recently in Mauna Kua where indigenous land defenders have been targeted for opposing the construction of a telescope on sacred mountain land (Case, 2019). It feels like many people are asking themselves "what's going on?". The beauty of Perry's song is not only

the question that is repeated throughout, but the admission of pain and distress as they invite us

to be witness to their sadness and feelings of peculiarity as they struggle to cope. Although it is

unclear exactly what prompted Perry's songwriting, we can imagine that within "this institution"

there was, and continues to be, an endless supply of injustice and pain which we must process

internally, question, and resist. This thesis project will read as my personal attempt to process

injustice and pain, and explore what might come next after we ask ourselves "what's going on?".

Grounding this project in what matters to me as a racialized queer woman and future counsellor,

I will be exploring various distinct (yet interrelated) phenomena that pertain to injustice, resis-

tance, and healing work. The central question guiding this work is multi-faceted: Can certain

forms of therapy qualify as valuable resistance to systemic oppression and can resistance, in the

form of direct action activism and community organizing, qualify as therapeutic on the individ-

ual and community level. This is a project centred on exploring praxis — "reflection and action

upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2018, p. 51). This thesis project will consist of

five chapters that will each cover distinct themes and serve varying purposes. In this chapter I

will contextualize the central question, expanding on the personal values, theoretical frame-

works, and intersections that inform this work. I will also expand on why this research is valu-

able to the counselling field, to future practitioners like myself, as well as to all individuals and

communities interested in prioritizing anti-oppressive principles while centering mental wellness.

Chapter two will serve as a literature review where I will explore the previous work and

theory that serve as the basis for this project. Namely, chronicling the feminist theory that has

revolutionized our understanding of the relationship between social constructs and mental well-

ness/distress. Additionally, exploring how Paulo Freire's (2018) work, his pedagogy of oppres-

sion and concept of *conscientizacao,* can inform us both in the counselling profession and in our every day lives centering justice and equity.

The third chapter will explore the mechanisms and impacts of offering non-English speaking communities counselling in their mother tongue. How does this type of accessibility forge a connection between mental wellness and resistance to systemic oppression? This chapter will be informed by a wide range of existing research that has explored the efficacy and value of bilingual counselling. Additionally, this section will explore some of the ways counselling organizations can radically centre social justice to the benefit of clients, counsellors, and their surrounding communities. My intention here is to identity some of the ways counselling work can directly challenge the status quo that still exists in the counselling field — ultimately maintained by systemic forces that seek to dominate and exclude marginalized folks' narratives.

The guiding theoretical frameworks that inform this project all maintain that it is critical to create safe spaces for people to exist without having their voices and bodies silenced and erased. This requires us to acknowledge the role of language and how the practice of counselling has both intentionally and inadvertently excluded people who fall outside the dominant culture, this includes, but is not limited to, racialized/Indigenous folks, queer and non-binary folks, low-income individuals, and folks with disability. Furthermore, the third chapter of this work will illustrate the significance of identifying and resisting oppression that may appear less sinister and outwardly violent. Such micro-aggressions require increased attention in and out of the context of counselling practices, as research suggests that micro-aggressions can severely impact the perception of safety and belonging held by marginalized individuals (Hook, 2016).

Changing the focus from how therapy can enact anti-oppression, to the ways resistance work can itself be therapeutic, chapter four will zoom out and explore more generally how activist work impacts the mental health of organizers. While my intention is to show how enlivening this work can be, this chapter will also shed light on some of the possible negative effects of centering social justice for certain individuals who may have increased vulnerability due to their intersecting identities (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011; Crenshaw, 1991; Reynolds, 2009). Ultimately, I want this project to explore why people engage in opposing systemic oppression, the pros and cons of doing this work, and how this might inform the work of counselling practitioners who are looking to aid their clients and communities in uplifting themselves. This chapter will present the readers with various examples of what drives people to engage in activism and how that work may add to their sense of agency, humanizing the world around them, transforming pain into resistance and liberation from oppression. This will include a discussion on the concept of ecological grief and how environmental activists are channeling this form of grief to energize the work they do resisting further environmental abuses (Cunsolo Willox, 2012). Chapter four will also explore the ways Vancouver's drug user communities have used harm-reduction activism as a way to assert their human rights, increasing their sense of agency, empowerment, and sense of belonging.

To conclude, chapter five will provide readers a brief summary of the connections drawn between healing work and resisting systemic oppression as well as highlight some of the places researchers may want to turn their attention to in order to further explore this complex yet critical relationship. Additionally, I will present readers with some of the innovative ways young people of colour are resisting systemic oppression using media and new technology to ultimately hu-

manize themselves and create (and benefit from) a sense of community and belonging. A brief

discuss of cultural discontinuity, in the context of higher level education, will be included. Cul-

tural discontinuity is defined by Taggart (2017) as a "school-based behavioural process where the

cultural value-based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students […] are

discontinued at school" (p. 732). Increased awareness to the harm caused by cultural discontinu-

ity is compelling racialized students to seek out their cultural heritage and resist the ways acade-

mia has historically centered the preferences, success and voices of students and faculty deemed

valuable by the dominant culture.

<div align="center">Frameworks underlining this work</div>

The intention behind this project is to explore the value of mechanisms that both tend to

individuals' mental wellness and simultaneously act as resistance to systemic forces that oppress

us all — interpreting oppression through the Freire (2018) lens, as a force that serves to dehu-

manize all people by pitting oppressors and the oppressed against each other, stripping all indi-

viduals of their agency and liberation (Freire, 2018). This work is significant for the field of

counselling because it explores how counsellors can resist oppression through the therapeutic

mechanisms they employ as well as how activism, which can be accessed by all people, may also

serve as a mechanism of therapy and resistance enacted. The central question of this project is

rooted in feminist theory which has traditionally called for a non-neutral stance, preferring an

intentionally politicized approach for resisting and peeling back various layers of systemic op-

pression, underlined by the idea that the personal is always political (Capdevila & Unger, 2006,

p. 5). In applying feminist theories to psychotherapy, all aspects of the therapeutic practice are

"challenged with the tools of feminist theory, with the goal of making therapy not only non-op-

pressive but actively liberatory" (Brown, 2010, p. 4). Under this framework personal problems are understood as a reflection of the ways systems of oppression operate on individuals and as such clients cannot be understood without understanding the social, cultural and political context in which they live (Capdevila & Unger, 2006, p. 5). This assertion that the personal is political means that feminist therapy is constantly being utilized by different people to draw attention to oppression and the need for outrage, protest, and justice (Fine, 2011, p.4). With a feminist/social-justice centred foundation, this project aims for praxical engagement through which theories can be "enacted and questioned with the aim of transcending existing notions of what is possible" (Dutt & Grabe, 2014, p. 113). Callaghan (2005) contends that feminism offers a "theoretical orientation that explicitly resists individualist conceptions of the self" in turn creat-ing "connection between theory and practice, between knowledge and action" (p. 151). Inspired by the concept of *conscientização* — conceptualized by Freire as a process through which individuals learn to perceive social/political/economic contradictions and are driven to take action against systems of oppression — this project seeks to reconcile my personal ethics, centred in social justice, with the work I hope to do as a future counsellor (Medina, Burks-Kee-ley, Costa-Guerra, & Ibrahim, 2016).

This project also coincides with my own journey to embody anti-oppressive principles, as I commit myself to unlearning oppression, actively decolonizing myself, the ways I envision the therapeutic process, and more generally working against settler-colonialism in my own commu-nity. While this paper is not about me, in some ways, it is me. The research and exploration con-ducted in this project is transformative for me personally, as I reflect and adjust my lens (and ac-tions) to centre anti-oppression and love in my life and work.

Further, this project is also inspired by the writings of Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) who writes extensively about intuition and returning to ones wild nature in 'Women who run with the wolves: Myths and Stories of the wild woman archetype'. This book has assisted me in my personal journey to process and externalize the distress that has resulted from existing in a hegemonic society that ultimately seeks to silence and erase me based on my intersecting identities as a queer woman of colour. Estes (1992) uses one particular fable titled 'The Red Shoes' to illustrate what happens when people turn away from what she calls the "life made by hand" — our instinct-driven wild nature that enables us to resist being shackled by societies oppressive forces (p. 264). Estes (1992) asserts that injury to instinct can cause people to normalize the abnormal, to be silent in the face of injustice and oppression, and "cut away their rightful rage" (p. 265). Further, Estes (1992) declares that when our wild nature is threatened, we "lose our power to lobby for the elements of soul and life we find most valuable" (p. 264). This thesis project is also a personal project of tuning my instincts and returning to the handmade and wholly mindful life, asking myself: What matters most to me? What enlivens me and how can I best embody praxis and sustain being "amazingly alive" (Richardson and Reynolds, 2012, p. 2)

Justice and love

"Déjeme decirle, a riesgo de parecer ridículo, que el revolucionario verdadero está guiado por grandes sentimientos de amor. Es imposible pensar en un revolucionario auténtico sin esta cualidad […] Todos los días hay que luchar porque ese amor a la humanidad viviente se transforme en hechos concretos, en actos que sirvan de ejemplo, de movilización." (Guevara, 2014, p. 23).

"At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality […] We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity will be transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force." (Guevara, 2005)

This project is also rooted in my belief that social justice work, and counselling work, is synonymous with love work. hooks (2000) calls on us to acknowledge and honour the connection between social justice movements and what they identity as a 'love ethic' (p. xix). Similar to hooks (2000, 2001) who identifies "love as a transformative force" (p. xix) and the "foundation of all meaningful social change" (p. 16-17), Freire (2018) reflects on the struggle for rehumanization from oppression and the role of love, asserting that true solidarity is only available when there are tangible acts of love that involve risk and praxis (p. 50). Reynolds (2012) echoes Freire's take on love and resistance, noting the significance of a "revolutionary love that is an act of courage and commitment to others" (p. 24). On activism, Reynolds (2008) contends an 'ethics of resistance' is required through which activists can "unapologetically embrace therapeutic and revolutionary love" ultimately 'doing love' by engaging in activism (p. 5). While a thorough exploration on the role of love in the therapeutic practice is beyond the scope of this project, I believe that part of decolonizing healing requires a shift in how we view 'professionalism' in the counselling field. Callaghan (2005) highlights the role of postcolonial and feminist theory in shifting the counselling/psychology field away from the historically individualist Western models that have centred discourses of professionalization which "operate overtly to trivialize or marginalize political, critical, and community oriented work" (p. 143). Consequently, as Lin-

klater (2014) asserts, non-Western communities have continuously received culturally inadequate

care which has in turn further oppressed, traumatized, and alienated already vulnerable people.

That said, this project is concerned with highlighting some of the ways activists and

counsellors can move beyond simply challenging dominant discourse, addressing the more press-

ing objective of "replacing such discourses and practices with viable alternatives" (Sanders,

2007, p. 59).

Situating the Researcher

"To acknowledge privilege is the first step in making it available for wider use. Each of

us is blessed in some particular way, whether we recognize our blessings or not. And each

one of us, somewhere in our lives, must clear a space within that blessing where she can

call upon whatever resources are available to her in the name of something that must be

done." (Lorde, 1988, p. 129)

As a first-generation Nicaraguan-Canadian, bilingual, racialized, queer woman of colour,

this project is rooted in my personal sense of ethics and the biases that accompany my perspec-

tive and experience. Exploring resistance through therapy and therapy through resistance is both

liberatory for myself as I dually navigate privilege and marginalization. My intention is that this

project also serve as liberatory for a diversity of folks who experience marginalization and who

might benefit from an in-depth exploration of mechanisms of therapy and resistance. Tomic

(2013) borrows from Narayan to explore the experience of marginalized groups who operate

within two sets of practices in two different contexts, where they move between their own spaces

and the spaces of the dominant society (p. 18). Ultimately, I see myself in what results from oc-

cupying this unique space as individuals are empowered with a unique vantage point from which they can "interpret and transform the society to which they belong" (Tomic, 2013, p. 18). Using this framework, and the various other frameworks I have referred to, I hope for this work to inform the accessibility and mechanisms of resistance and therapy enacted, contributing to the counselling fields understanding of the needs of traditionally marginalized populations.

More generally, this research is significant because systems of oppression (patriarchy, racism, capitalism, heteronormativity, etc) affect all individuals and by collectively resisting them we are actually facilitating safer and more meaningful lives for all peoples. The value of exploring resistance in and out of counselling is also compounded as we experience certain global shifts which increase the risks faced by human and non-human bodies (landscapes, bodies of water, animals) that are deemed disposable and unimportant by the dominant society (Cunsolo Willox, 2012). Social, cultural, environmental, and political shifts are also increasing the urgency with which the world must respond to injustice, as our social media age forces us to engage in the experiences of marginalized human and non-human bodies.

While it is my bias that certain forms of therapy and efforts to tend to mental health and wellbeing are revolutionary in themselves because they go beyond what society has set up for certain folks (people of colour, people in poverty, queer/trans folks, migrant folks), this project aims to manage my personal biases in order to provide readers a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and risks of marrying resistance work and healing work.

Moane (2006) employs the concept of 'niches of oppression' to describe the unique ways oppressed individuals and groups can "create their own contexts in which they resist oppression and create opportunities for pride, self-expression, solidarity and connection with others" (p. 76).

This concept of 'niches of oppression' summarizes why both bilingual counselling and direct action activism matter to me — despite representing very different mechanisms, both provide people tools for healing and resistance, facilitating pride and connection with others and potentially healthier human existences.

Chapter Two - Literature Review:

Feminist theory and Freirian pedagogy

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde, p. 112, 1984)

Lorde's interpretation of what it is like to work within a system created to sustain itself and prevent deflection invites us to reflect on the ways communities in resistance can create their own tools for dismantling systems that oppress. Academic research and literary works serve as tools that can either reinforce the systems or serve to critique and dismantle them. In what follows, a range of scholarly and literary work from the twentieth century up to the current year will be reviewed to contextualize this exploration of mental wellness and anti-oppression resistance work. The intention of this literature review is to recognize the places where these topics have been explored and centred, while highlighting the ways in which the relationship between social justice and mental health have been overlooked in the literature and within the field of counselling.

Foundational literature

The development of feminist theory and feminist therapies has produced an abundance of literature which explores the relationship between liberation from oppression and increased mental health. Brown (1994) defines feminism as "collection of political philosophies that aim to overthrow patriarchy and end inequalities based on gender through cultural transformation and radical social change" (p. 19). Utilizing feminist therapies, all aspects of the therapeutic practice are "challenged with the tools of feminist theory, with the goal of making therapy not only non-

oppressive but actively liberatory" (Brown, 2010, p. 4). Brown (2010) posits that the distress and dysfunction which brings clients to therapy is not seen as 'pathology' under the feminist therapy lens. Rather, these traditionally psychopathologized dysfunctions are seen as a natural response of resistance to patriarchal systems of oppression, these patriarchal systems ultimately being the primary source of human distress (Brown, 2010; Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Comas-Diaz, 2013).

Wyche and Rice (1997) explore the implications of doing therapy through a feminist framework. They posit that feminist therapies operate under the assumption that misogyny, patriarchal systems of oppression, and imbalanced power relations exist in all women's lives and are ultimately emotionally, physically, and spiritually damaging (Wyche & Rice, 1997, p. 69). Further, Wyche and Rice (1997) highlight key principles of the feminist therapeutic approach, focusing on the strengths-based nature of the modality through which dysfunction is alternatively seen as the logical and understandable effort to respond adaptively to oppressive occurrences (p. 69). The points made by Wyche and Rice (1997), Brown (2010), and many other authors exploring feminist theory before the emergence of the third-wave of feminism explore the abstract concepts that were being developed as feminist theory grew out of bubbling social unrest. Reflecting on the value of feminist literature produced prior to the expansion of third-wave feminism, readers may want to be critical of whose voices were being centred and whose voices (and experiences of oppression) were excluded from the narrative. While both works from Brown (2010) and Wyche and Rice (1997) are comprehensive explorations of the principles centred by feminist theory and therapy, they fail to address the practical ways feminism can be actioned in order to improve the human experience for a diverse range of folks, including the men who are also impacted by the patriarchal system.

Consequently, early feminist literature has generally been criticized for neglecting to analyze how other identity categories — such as race, sexuality, gender-identity, class, citizenship, and ability, to name a few — intersect with power and oppression (Lorde, 1984). Crenshaw's (1994) exploration of intersectionality has become a seminal text for exploring the complex intersection of power, oppression, and identities, revolutionizing how we engage in anti-oppressive work and feminism. Crenshaw's (1994) analysis, heavily informed by critical race theory, highlights the ways multiple identity categories intersect and create differences in how oppression is experienced. This in-depth analysis illustrates how women of colour have been historically neglected by mainstream white feminism, with Crenshaw utilizing statistics and case studies where the physical and psychological wellbeing of women of colour have been threatened by the intersections of race and gender. Crenshaw's (1994) work and the concept of intersectionality has moved feminist theory toward a more inclusive approach that seeks to deconstruct the insidious ways systemic oppression influences various realms of our society and our lived experiences, including the language we use, the ways we engage with the law, and popular culture. The intersectionality framework that Crenshaw moves forward facilitates more nuanced and critical understandings (and resistance) to previously essentialized analysis of oppression and identity categories. This anti-oppressive framework has been valuable to folks seeking a more dynamic approach for understanding and resisting oppression. Furthermore, the intersectionality framework underlines this thesis project as I seek to explore the complex relationship between resistance work (in and out of therapy) and mental wellness.

Like Crenshaw's work, Freire's (2018) Pedagogy of the Oppressed also serves as a foundational framework for this thesis project. Freire (2018) warns of the dangers of "superficial

conversions to the cause of liberation"; a key motivator for my commitment to a praxical en-

gagement with counselling work and activism (p. 8). The Freirian perspective, fuelled by the

concepts of conscientização, praxis, and an analysis of the relationship between oppression and

dehumanization, has informed the work of activists and scholars since its publication in 1968.

Conscientização, a concept Freire initially resisted translating into English, is defined as "a

process to acquire the necessary critical thinking tools so that students, instead of internalizing

their oppression, understand how institutions of power work to deny them equality of treatment,

access, and justice" (Freire, 2019, p. 17). Freire's penchant for raising social consciousness

stemmed from the "class dislocation and the experience of hunger" he faced as a child living in

the impoverished Morro de Saúde (p. 12). As such, Pedagogy of the Oppressed can be interpret-

ed as a re-humanization project, where praxis — "reflection and action upon the world to trans-

form it" (p. 51) — is the modus operandi through which all peoples can be liberated.

As Ira Shor notes in the afterword to Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire's work has man-

aged to stay relevant internationally through cultural and political shifts because at its foundation

are some core tenets that it shares with other pedagogies and discourses centred around anti-op-

pression. Freire's theory and practice espoused that all pedagogy was political. Further, his work

explicitly communicates that "any pedagogy or curriculum which does not question the status

quo, tacitly or actively endorses it" (Shor, p.187). Despite what is now recognized as his use of

less-than-accessible language, Freire did not write or work out of the ivory tower, rather, he rep-

resents one of the most important activist-scholars of the twentieth century. While his analysis of

oppression, and the pedagogy he prescribes in resistance, is not complete, overlooking the com-

plex ways various identity categories influence how oppression is felt, Freire's work remains

critical for feminist, anti-racist, multicultural, and environmental movements seeking a more just and humane word for all.

This thesis project is informed by some foundational literature, like Freire and Crenshaw, that has informed the work of academics, activists, and counselling practitioners also aiming to centre anti-oppression and be actively liberatory. The remainder of this literature review will now turn attention to articles that explore the impact of both phenomena to be covered in detail in chapters three and four: the offering of bilingual counselling to traditionally marginalized/non-English speaking communities and engaging in activism as a 'doing' of therapy.

Bilingual Counselling as Revolutionary Therapy

Smith-Adcock's et al. (2006) research serves as support for the need to develop bilingual counselling in order to propel marginalized communities forward in the dominant society. Smith-Adcock et al. (2006) posit that in order for minority populations such as Latin-Americans to thrive in an English-dominant context, they must be provided with the equivalent social supports that English speaking populations are able to access. This article focuses specifically on Latino school aged children and youth, exploring the role of Spanish speaking counsellors in supporting these children and their families as they navigate unfamiliar cultural expectations and an unfamiliar school system. Smith-Adcock et al. (2006) also suggest that the availability of Spanish-speaking counsellors is critical for incorporating entire family systems into therapeutic care. This is identified as important due to the high rates of Spanish-speaking parents who cannot communicate comfortably in English.

A 13-item questionnaire was designed by the researchers to assess various elements involved in the perceptions of the needs, significance, and accessibility of bilingual counselling

held by district-level directors of student services. A discussion of the data analysis sees Smith-

Adcock et al. (2006) acknowledging that the development of bilingual counselling programs

must go beyond "addressing language barriers" and must also pay attention to mitigating cultural

barriers faced by students and their families (p. 99).

Despite the identified limitations of the study (such as a small sample), Smith-Adcock et

al. (2006) posit that in order to adequately address the needs and concerns of Hispanic families,

two areas must be addressed: "that of direct services to children and families in schools and the

training of future school counsellors" (p. 99). Ultimately, the researchers conclude that minority

populations like Spanish-speaking families in the US require increased attention in schools and

in the context of social services. They suggest that increased resources, tailored to the language

needs of these minority populations, would not only benefit Spanish-speaking populations, but

also benefit the experiences and efficacy of school administrators, counsellors, counsellor-train-

ing programs, and society at large.

Perez Rojas' et al. (2014) exploration of language switching sets out to support the notion

that bilingual counsellors provide bilingual speakers more appropriate support than non-bilingual

counsellors can. Although the conclusions of this research suggest that there are many com-

pounding factors which influence how competent and effective bilingual counsellors are per-

ceived, this article is significant because it allows us to reflect on the difficulty of measuring

therapeutic efficacy empirically. Perez Rojas et al. (2014) ground their research project in the

changing demographics of the United States, highlighting that there is a rapidly increasing popu-

lation of Americans who are bilingual and who speak both English and Spanish. They also sug-

gest that as multicultural counselling continues to develop, special attention must be paid to the

role of incorporating both clients' languages into their care (Perez Rojas et al., 2014). The central

hypothesis of this study is that the invitation by a therapist to switch languages when the client

has difficulty expressing him/herself would have a positive effect on client perception of thera-

pist credibility, multicultural competence, and client-therapist bond (Perez Rojas et al., 2014).

Perez Rojas et al. (2014) designed the study as an audio-analog study. The participants of

this study become analog patients who were exposed to an audio recording of a simulated thera-

py session between a bilingual therapist (Dr. Esposito) and bilingual client (Ana) played by hired

actresses (both female and Latin American). Using the analog mechanism, participants are limit-

ed to imagining their perceptions of therapy if they were the client in the recorded scenario. The

results of the tests ultimately did not support their initial hypotheses that the invitation to switch

would positively affect participants' perceptions of therapist (Perez Rojas et al., 2014). They note

several limitations that may contribute to why qualitative and analog style studies (which capture

only a specific point in therapy) have largely found language switching ineffective, while case

studies have found more merit in language switching during the therapeutic process (Perez Rojas

et al., 2014, p. 70).

Additionally, this research study includes bilingual speakers who possess high proficien-

cy in both languages. There are many bilingual populations who, despite being bilingual, may be

much more comfortable speaking in one language over the other (Spanish as opposed to the

dominant English). This nuanced difference could potentially greatly impact how the invitation

to language switch is perceived by clients and would be a consideration for future research.

Contrastingly, Santiago Rivera's et al. (2009) qualitative study of language switching

suggests there is overlooked value in language switching and more generally bilingual coun-

selling. This project seeks to explore how bilingual therapists use language switching with their

clients and to explore what may cause clients to language switch during therapeutic sessions. Re-

search in this study consisted of qualitative interviews carried out by a research team consisting

of 5 bilingual psychologists. Nine therapists participated in the study, with ages, experience, eth-

nicity, and first languages varying. All therapists spoke both English and Spanish with varying

proficiencies and were identified as currently providing therapy to bilingual Spanish-English

speaking Latino clients, using both languages in therapy. Research participants were interviewed

by two members of the research team, based off of a semi-structured interview protocol which

was designed to cover a range of questions pertaining to the interviewees experience with bilin-

gual clients, scope of practice, and process of therapy.

Results of this study conducted by Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) suggest that therapists

effectively utilize language switching to follow the client's lead and in order to be "sensitive to

clients' English language proficiency" (p. 439). Further, interview responses suggest language

switching provides counsellors tools for building meaningful therapeutic alliances, bounded in

solidarity and the accentuation of commonality rather than difference (Santiago-Rivera et al.,

2009). Reflection from participants on why clients may utilize language switching suggests that

some clients may find it easier to talk about, and express, emotions when speaking in Spanish.

Additionally, may clients present their identities to the counsellor differently depending on which

language is being spoken (i.e. speaking in English can minimize client sense of confidence and

strength).

Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) conclude their study by asserting that the ability to switch

languages, and provide bilingual clients adequate bilingual care, facilitates "greater access to

client experiences, increases emotional expression, and helps the therapist facilitate the therapeutic process" (p. 440). Further, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) note that because research participants involved in their study were not all of Latino heritage, it is important to continue exploring the possibility that language match may be more important in enhancing therapeutic exchanges between counsellors and bilingual clients than ethnic match. This is a particularly significant observation in the Canadian context where there is not a large population of Latin-American counsellors, yet emerging counsellors in areas that serve Latin populations may be encouraged to learn and practice in Spanish as well as English.

Finally, the research of Koyama and Bartlett (2011) brings forth some important considerations when exploring the radical nature of bilingual counselling. While I argue that bilingual counselling is revolutionary simply because it provides populations outside of the dominant culture with forms of self care, it is also important to consider how counselling agencies may co-opt meaningful forms of therapeutic resistance in an attempt to appear inclusive or social-justice oriented. Although the context of Koyama and Bartlett's (2011) research is not bilingual counselling, their exploration of bilingual education policy as political spectacle brings attention to the risks of adopting cultural/language sensitivities in organizations and agencies. In addressing political spectacles and their mechanisms for "sustain[ing] inequalities and maintain[ing] power differencials" (p. 173), Koyama and Bartlett (2011) open space for analyzing how bilingual counselling can be misused by counsellors seeking to broaden their client-base. In their qualitative interview style study, Koyama and Bartlett (2011) illustrate how the struggle for increased bilingual eduction in US public schools has historically been co-opted by policy makers and administration heads in an attempt to appear progressive and proactive. Further, they illustrate how

"words and numbers" (Koyama and Bartlett, 2011, p. 182) can misrepresent the power of certain

mechanisms that are challenging to measure. Although largely unrelated to bilingual counselling,

the observations made by Koyama and Bartlett (2011) suggest that beyond offering bilingual

counselling, therapists should be made accountable to the ethical use of bilingual capacities, as

well as other factors, such as ethical cultural competency. Beyond utilizing bilingual therapy,

counsellors (educators in the context of this study) should be encouraged to actively take part in

advocating for the demographics that they claim to serve.

In conclusion, Koyama and Bartlett (2011) contend that in the face of individuals or or-

ganizations misrepresenting their intentions to centre inclusivity and consciousness, localized

political actions, spearheaded at the 'ordinary'-people level may be an "antidote to political spec-

tacle" (p. 183). This may prove sage advice for counsellors and clients seeking to expand the

reach of bilingual counselling — rather than placing the onus on institutions (counselling train-

ing schools and counselling agencies) to introduce bilingual counselling, counsellors advocating

for adequate bilingual counselling services can adopt their own performative means for centring

the needs of minority populations.

<div align="center">Activism as a form of Therapy</div>

While the resources mentioned above focus on exploring the liberatory capacity of bilin-

gual counselling for bilingual clients who may traditionally not be privileged enough to have ac-

cess to mental health supports, the next portion of this literature review will present how the link

between direct action activism and health/well-being are being understood by current research.

First, Klar and Kasser (2009) conduct three separate survey studies to explore whether engage-

ment in activism could be linked to higher levels of well-being. The three surveys involve dis-

tinct participant populations in order to display a comprehensive representation of the relation-

ship between activism and sense of well-being. Participants were recruited from a college partic-

ipant pool and a national sample of activists found online. Similar measuring scales were used

across the three studies, with certain variations depending on the specific demographic being

surveyed. Some of the scales used measured commitment to social justice, commitment to en-

gagement with activism, level of risk connected to activist work, and various facets of psycho-

logical well-being. The third study involved participants potentially expressing political activism

(in the form of a written letter advocating for a chosen cause) and the evaluation of whether this

increased participants' sense of well-being. Following the complex data analysis of the three

studies, Klar and Kasser (2009) assert that there is some viable support to suggest "engaging in

political activism is associated with higher levels of well-being" (p. 771). This study supports the

idea that activism can be a self-healing action which can have a positive effect on individuals'

psychological health and well-being. Interestingly, Klar and Kasser (2009) also note that despite

activists sensitivities to perceived injustices, the sense of vitality produced by engaging in con-

crete actions that oppose injustices is significant. Additionally Klar and Kasser (2009) suggest

that high-risk activism (including illegal actions) is less likely to yield high well-being outcomes.

This is a significant consideration as research into activism is continued, acknowledging that not

all forms of activism actually facilitate well-being, rather, some forms are tied to increased dis-

tress and risk.

Contrastingly, Vaccaro and Mena (2011) explore the risks associated with activist work,

taking into account how intersectionality disrupts individuals' ability to benefit from their en-

gagement in activism. The findings of this study are meaningful because they present the unfor-

tunate reality of people whose level of vulnerability bring them to activism yet who struggle to

reap benefits from their activism. This phenomenological study presents us with the experiences

of self-identified queer activists of colour. Through interview style questions, participants speak

on their personal journey as activists who have been drawn to the work because of their level of

vulnerability as queer people of colour (POCs). In this in depth review of narrative and experien-

tial data, Vaccaro and Mena (2011) contend with the burnout and risk facing participants. They

note that despite participants' many strengths in dealing with difficulty and marginalization, cer-

tain aspects of their engagement with activism and other personal characteristics were placing

these participants at higher risk for meaningful distress and potentially suicidal ideation.

Taking into account the unique factors at play for each individual, Vaccaro and Mena

(2011) explore how the accessibility of social supports, establishment of personal boundaries,

ability to practice self-care, and the varieties of internal and external pressures affect the health

and well-being of queer activists of colour. They find that participants who lack social supports

and self-care mechanisms are more likely to suffer from their activist engagement. Additionally,

they note that for people with multiple minority identities, heightened vulnerability is likely to

increase the possible risks of activism.

In their unique study of lifelong feminist activists, Dutt and Grabe (2014) seek to exam-

ine the lives and experiences of three activists living in distinct sociopolitical and geographic

contexts. The research is grounded in the intention to understand the "psychological mechanisms

and experiences that are involved in sustaining and growing each woman's commitment to social

change" (Dutt & Grabe, 2014, p. 111). They set out to explore what factors contribute to an indi-

vidual committing their life to a social cause. They also want to know what helps sustain and

grow an individuals commitment as they are faced with barriers, as well as exploring the role of activism in helping individuals develop a sense of identity and personal ideology.

This study used interviews archived in the Global Feminisms Project database with three prominent feminist activists. Dutt and Grabe (2014) identify their study as an idiographic narrative analysis. Their analysis was guided by the social psychological concepts of positive marginality, conscientización, and social identity theory which they explain in great detail throughout their study. The three activists explored were identified as lifelong feminists who dedicated their lives to continuously developing critical consciousness and engaging in concrete actions in their fight to promote equity/social justice. All three women, despite existing in very different contexts (American, Nicaraguan, and Indian) shared in common the development of conscientizacion and their experience as marginalized bodies highlighting their need to respond to oppressive systems within society. The women also displayed significant connections with how their sense of identity developed with their engagement in activism, as well as how their sense of self developed from the community they were a part of.

In summing up their findings, Dutt and Grabe (2014) note that their study of three distinct narratives serves as a reminder of the variations between how activism is experienced depending on culture and context. Further, Dutt and Grabe (2014) choose to conclude their study by centering the importance of alternative narratives, suggesting that the importance of "understanding the experiences of marginalized individuals through their own narratives" must not be overlooked, a final point which stands out in relation to the work I hope to do.

Finally, Gilster (2012) explores the difference between the benefits of volunteer work and engagement with activism in their survey-based study. Gilster (2012) notes that although the

physical and psychological health benefits of volunteerism have been the subject of previous re-

search, the physical and psychological effects of neighbourhood activism have largely gone un-

der-researched. Gilster (2012) sets out to make important distinctions between volunteer work

and activism and then explore the different implications of engaging in either action. Survey data

from a previous community-level health study conducted in Chicago, Illinois was used and ex-

amined in relation to the research questions Gilster (2012) found relevant. Following the data

analysis, using regression models, Gilster (2012) found that participation in neighbourhood ac-

tivism was strongly related to well being. Gilster's (2012) findings suggest that sense of empow-

erment, and working for a collective good, positively interact with individual sense of wellness.

In accordance with some of the findings presented by Klar and Kasser (2009) regarding high-risk

activism, Gilster (2012) found that less-risky/more mundane forms of community activism may

yield higher personal benefits.

Following a thorough reflection on the limitations of their study, Glister (2012) concludes

by noting that further research of community activism, and the potential wellness benefits of en-

gagement in this work, must be pursued. This study highlights the important distinction between

activism and volunteerism and can be used to inform how I approach this semantic difference in

my current study of the interaction between environmental activism and personal wellbeing.

Conclusion

Regardless of the evidence for the importance of both bilingual counselling and social

justice based activism as steps toward health and oppression-resistance, more research and dis-

cussion must be carried out to facilitate a deeper understanding of the potential for resistance and

therapy to jointly contribute to healthy and meaningful human existences for both clinicians and

the general public. Further, a piece of this necessary future discussion involves developing a better understanding of the potential risks and additional considerations which must be included in the discussion of resistance as therapy and therapeutic mechanisms as resistance.

Chapter Three - Praxical engagement in counselling work:

A case for bilingual therapies

Sólo le pido a Dios	I only ask of God
Sólo le pido a Dios	I only ask of God
que el dolor no me sea indiferente	That pain be not indifferent to me,
que la reseca muerte no me encuentre	That the arid death does not find me,
vacío y solo sin haber hecho lo suficiente.	Empty and lonely, without having done
23	enough.
Sólo le pido a Dios	
que lo injusto no me sea indiferente	I only ask of God
que no me abofeteen la otra mejilla	That injustice be not indifferent to me,
después que una garra me arañó esta suerte.	That they do not slap me on the other cheek
	After a claw scratched me this luck.
Sólo le pido a Dios	
que la guerra no me sea indiferente	I only ask of God
es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte	That war be not indifferent to me,
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente	It is a huge monster and it crushes hard
es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte	The poor innocence of the people.
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente	
	I only ask of God
Sólo le pido a Dios	That deception be not indifferent to me,
que el engaño no me sea indiferente	If a traitor is more powerful than many,
si un traidor puede más que unos cuantos	That these many don't forget him easily.
que esos cuantos no lo olviden fácilmente.	
	I only ask of God
Sólo le pido a Dios	That the future be not indifferent to me,
que el futuro no me sea indiferente	Hopeless is the one who has to leave
desahuciado está el que tiene que marchar	And live a different culture.
a vivir una cultura diferente.	
	I only ask of God
Sólo le pido a Dios	That war be not indifferent to me,
que la guerra no me sea indiferente	It's a big monsters and it crushes hard
es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte	The poor innocence of the people.
toda la pobre inocencia de la gente	

(1982). Solo le pido a dios [Recorded by M. Sosa]. On Mercedes Sosa en Argentina [streamed recording].

Reflejando en esta canción de protesta, popularizada por la bella Mercedes Sosa, este proyecto

intenta a honrar a todos afectados por el 'monstruo grande' que pisa fuerte. Especialmente a to-

das las personas que han muerto en el intento peligroso de lograr una vida con seguridad y esper-

anza.

A Mariee Juárez, Juan De León Gutierrez,

Jakelin Caal Maquin,

Carlos Gregorio Hernández Vásquez,

Felipe Gómez Alonzo,

Wilmer Josué Ramírez Vásquez,

que descansen en paz y en resistencia.

Recently I assisted with and attended a community organized fundraiser in support of detained migrants currently held in ICE detention centres along the U.S.-Mexico border. Photos of the deceased children named above were presented to the fundraiser attendees, their names loudly stated by the main event organizer, a young El Salvadorian community member who felt compelled to raise funds for RAICES, a prominent advocacy group based out of Texas that is connecting detained migrants with legal support. We shared a moment of silence for these children whose deaths have left many of us reflecting on our own families histories and the journeys of migration that have shaped our life trajectories. In this small, overcrowded, overheated Baptist church (often volunteered as a venue for local social justice centered events) community members from distinct ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds mourned these children who have perished as a result of global disparity and the institutionalized violence faced by the poor and the racialized. As I reflect on the injustices occurring globally against people fleeing violence, poverty, and environmental crises, my thoughts turn to the plethora of ways that we continue to fail these vulnerable people even once the nightmare of migration is over.

In this chapter, I aim to contextualize the current human rights violations that have facilitated the deaths of children like Carlos Gregorio Hernández Vásquez and Jakelin Caal Maquin, ultimately centering on how the field of counselling can better meet the needs of migrant communities who join our communities of the global North facing higher chances of mental health issues, stemming from previous (and continued trauma), rooted in experiences of marginalization (poverty, racism, discrimination, etc) which impact mental wellness (Colen et al., 2018; Maclean et al., 2019; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). My intention is to explore how resistance to systemic oppression can be mechanized by counselling organizations and individual practitioners when we

host the "discussions that most institutions do not make time for" and in doing so, prevent the

dominating culture from simply holding sway in these structures that define how we live

(Tamasese and Waldegrave, 1993, p. 90). Reflecting on the pain of marginalized and oppressed

peoples, Tamasese and Waldegrave, (1993) assert that "at a functional level, societies, disci-

plines, agencies, including family therapy agencies, cannot afford the non-hearing of this pain"

— a sentiment of urgency through which this thesis project is rooted in (p. 91). More specifical-

ly, I will centre on the value of bilingual counselling as a praxical step toward resisting the domi-

nant culture which so often designs spaces and services that are inaccessible to those outside this

culture. I will turn to existing literature to explore the impact of access to bilingual counselling

services within Canada and the U.S., highlighting both the benefits and potential challenges as-

sociated with bilingual counselling services. Ultimately, my attention — guided by the principle

that everything is political — is turned to the ways counselling agencies and practitioners might

enact their politics of liberation and pragmatically disrupt systemic oppression in their work.

<p style="text-align:center">Contextualizing migration patterns and the construction of the 'migrant crisis'</p>

Hegemonic colonial projects have historically (and continuously) dominated over and

destroyed communities globally. Neoliberalism and free market policies have further created vast

economic disparity and have become tools for oppression, stunting democracy, impeding self-

sustainability, and further strengthening the divide between the global North and South. Roy

(2015) asserts that "violating human rights is integral to the project of neoliberalism and global

hegemony" which deems democracy as a threat to the free market. As such, hegemonic coun-

tries, such as the United States, have demonstrated vested interests in intervening to topple de-

mocratic governments that are not market-friendly. The socio-political and economic chaos that

has ensued in countries of the global south has resulted in the migration patterns that are now often referred to as 'migrant crises'. Rodríguez (2018) dissects the ways the 2015 European 'migrant/refugee crises' has been constructed to uphold the white colonial hegemony that has sought to dominate and erase racialized peoples. Mirroring the analysis by Rodríguez (2018), the Latin American 'migrant caravan' — and the Trump-era rhetoric/policy that has resulted — are products of the 'coloniality of migration'. Rodriguez (2018) uses the framework of 'coloniality of migration' to highlight the ways European countries are strategically omitting their involvement in creating the conditions that have forced people to flee their countries of origin. My parents saw themselves implicated in this pattern of migration in the late 80s, as their country was being torn apart by an American-backed civil war and the resulting resource shortages, economic stagnation, and socio-political unrest.

The Central American diaspora that migrated to Canada and the U.S. consists of distinct migration stories and experiences post-migration. This thesis project aims to work through a decolonizing framework — an approach that "involves the practice of disrupting the effects of colonialism, which seeks to privilege and promote the dominant group's ideology and cultural practices while erasing those from a marginalized group" (Bermudez et al., 2019, p. 311). Thus, as Yu (2011) notes, it is important to acknowledge the ways many migrant communities contribute to the project of settler-colonialism. Although a full discussion of the role of migrants in sustaining settler-colonialism is beyond the scope of this project, some considerations are necessary. Settler-colonialism has licensed the disappearance of indigenous peoples and the expropriation of indigenous spaces and continues to do so (Bond and Inwood, 2016, p. 721). This violent attempt to erase indigenous bodies and histories from the Canadian landscape has simultaneously

enabled various systems and institutions to demarcate who is visible/matters and who has the

right to thrive in our current settler-colonial context. Relating this to my families experience, I

can see that despite my parents having valid reasons for seeking Canada, we have "participated

in and been beneficiaries of Canada's colonial project" (Phung, 2011, p. 292). An added layer of

complexity stems from the attempts often made by immigrants and racialized people at achieving

equality with Canadian settler subjects, which works to simultaneously place their political and

social status above indigenous peoples (Phung, 2011, p. 292). Certainly more research and litera-

ture needs to examine the ways individuals, and helping professions like counsellors, can address

the harm caused by settler-colonialism, beginning with prioritizing the decolonizing frameworks

developed by Indigenous community members and mechanizing reparations.

In 2019, the government of Canada is slated to resettle 29,950 refugees and the U.S. gov-

ernment is expected to resettle 30,000 (Government of Canada, 2019, Krogstad, 2019). In the

U.S., the foreign-born population is estimated to grow to 78 million by 2065 (Szaflarski &

Bauldry, 2019, p. 2). One outcome of increased global migration is that the inhabitants of coun-

tries of the global north are becoming less monolingual. That is, there has been a substantial and

steady increase in the number of people who speak two languages or primarily speak languages

other than English (Grenier, 2017). Compounded with increased psychological vulnerability, a

result of pre and post-immigration experiences, it is imperative that immigrant communities have

access to mental health services that take into account their multiple languages.

<center>Revitalizing commitment to the most marginalized</center>

Waldegrave and Tamasese (1993) chronicle the development of the 'just therapy' ap-

proach highlighting the dangers of therapeutic practices that are not decolonizing or multicultur-

al, noting that colonization no longer operates by the "might of the sword, no longer with the decimation through disease, but through the gentle conversation of a therapist assuming the rightness of her/his value system" (p. 101). Here, value system can also be expanded to include the languages counselling agencies choose to prioritize. Bermudez et al. (2019) assert that counselling practitioners must develop awareness to the taken-for-granted discriminatory practices within the field, including the priority given to english speaking clients and the impact this has on non-english speaking community members. In their study of Latin American immigrants living in Canada, Tomic (2013) identifies the ways language can be mechanized as an "instrument of power", illustrating how the construction of 'being' ESL is tied to a devalued immigrant identity (p. 2). Compounded with other systemic barriers that people outside of the dominant culture may encounter, Bermudez et al. (2019) note that a lack of accessibility to mental health support is a large reason for the existing health/resource disparities for non-english speakers in North America. Castaño, Biever, González, and Anderson (2007) assert that the "inability of psychotherapists to communicate in the dominant language of their clients can compromise the quality of services delivered by creating a barrier to cultural understanding and result in the misinterpretation of the clients' communication" (p. 667). Ultimately, counselling practitioners can no longer claim to centre ethics and justice in their work if they are not actively working to dismantle the many ways certain people are excluded. Rather, incorporating other languages to meet the needs of diverse clients becomes a way to enact resistance, a praxical approach that both resists the dominant culture and increases the possibility for more people to access healing and wellness.

<div align="center">Bilinguality - shaping identity and lens</div>

Addressing the value of bilinguality, Polanco and Epston (2009) posit that it "offers playful approaches to language by heightening the multiplicity of possible meanings that exist within words" (p. 65). Polanco and Epston (2009) note the richness that comes with being bilingual as "events or things are not solely named by words on paper – dictionary words", rather, bilingual individuals are able to renew or reinvent words and meanings according to their experiences (p. 65). These reflections illustrate the virtue of speaking two languages and creating meanings with both, meanings that come to define us and our lived experiences. Counselling agencies cannot overlook this. Simply put, as Field et al. (2010) assert, "accurate communication is critical to both therapy and supervision" (p. 50). This assertion calls on the field to better equip itself for supporting bilingual and monolingual clients who may speak English with low proficiency or not even at all. As much of the literature on multicultural competency suggests, there is a connection between acknowledging clients' cultural backgrounds — which often influence their values — and facilitating connective and safe counselling services (Ratts, 2008). These forms of acknowledgment also extend to language, and the space created by practitioners for clients to communicate using the languages they are best able to express themselves with. As Santiago-Rivera, Altarriba, Poll, Gonzalez-Miller, and Cragun (2009) note, if clients cannot express themselves in the language they are most proficient, they are less likely to feel engaged in the therapeutic process — less likely to feel seen and heard, and in turn, less likely to feel empowered through their engagement (a central objective of anti-oppressive/feminist therapies). What follows will explore the virtues and complexities of bilingual counselling services, specifically turning attention to English-Spanish counselling services in the United States.

<center>Language switching</center>

Aside from the feelings of consideration and care that receiving counselling services in a mother tongue may procure, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) assert that bilingual individuals "represent emotional words differently in their two languages and typically associate these words with a broader range of emotions in their first language " (p. 33). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) explore the ways language interacts with memory and emotion, pointing to previous research which suggests "experiences and the accompanying emotions are encoded in memory in the language in which the experiences occurred" (p. 437). Further, they suggest that bilingual clients may want to switch between their two languages depending on which language brings memory, emotion, and description closer to the surface (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). As such, bilingual counsellors can employ language switching in their practice as a technique to assist client memory retrieval (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). Additionally, some practitioners in the Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) study reported employing language switching as a means to establish trust and rapport with their clients, and to ensure that critical information involving confidentiality and consent be accurately received by clients. Finally, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) posit that the language prioritized during sessions impacts the self-image the client puts forward (or develops) throughout the therapeutic process. For instance, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) point to the connection between client self-confidence/engagement and their articulation skills as they attempt to navigate between multiple languages.

Considerations

Of important consideration is the question: when is language switching valuable and who is it most serving? Perez Rojas et al. (2014) make the important distinction between language switching that is warranted and effective and language switching that is not clinically warranted,

suggesting that this technique is very much a tool to be employed on some occasions, not arbi-

trarily, and most importantly, with the client in mind. In their analog study on the impact of the

invitation to language switch on the therapeutic process, Perez et al. (2014) explore the claims of

previous research conducted by Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) that client cultural identity interacts

with the attitudes clients develop toward therapists who language switch. The results of their

study suggest that an invitation to switch languages does not improve client perception of thera-

pist multicultural competency or alliance (Perez et al., 2014). That said, this particular study uses

a sample of bilingual university students who perhaps have a mastery of the English language

that makes them less likely to be impacted by the invitation to switch away from the dominant

English language, a limitation Perez et al. (2014) carefully consider. Ultimately, Perez et al.

(2014) highlight the need for additional research into the impacts of bilingual counselling on

clients and therapists, noting that their analog study is limited to vignette-like insights as opposed

to case studies that take "into account the totality of treatment between bilingual client and ther-

apist" (p. 70).

<center>Intergenerational family counselling</center>

Turning away from the topic language switching, another point of interest for research

and practice in bilingual counselling is its value in family counselling and school settings. In

their qualitative study of the need for bilingual school counsellors in the U.S., Smith-Adcock et

al. (2006) posit that in order for bilingual students to receive adequate support and care, school

administrations and counselling programs must consider staffing practitioners with bilingual lan-

guage proficiency — ideally with similar ethnic/cultural backgrounds as their bilingual students.

Another large consideration in this study is the need for bilingual school counsellors in order to

incorporate entire family systems into therapeutic care, a critical approach for addressing con-

flicts that stem from cultural-generational differences between parents and youth (Smith-Adcock

et al., 2006). The intergenerational element of bilingual counselling is also explored by Sciarra

and Ponterotto (1991) who were early in highlighting the ways language switching impacted the

communication patterns within families in and out of therapy. Sciarra and Ponterotto (1991) were

also early in their call for increased training grants and empirical research surrounding bilingual

therapy training programs, asserting that demographic trends would only increase the need for

bilingual therapists capable of servicing non-english speaking communities.   Nearly fifteen

years later, the Smith-Adcock et al. (2006) questionnaire-style study, geared toward student ser-

vice directors across several Florida school districts, reveals a pressing need for bilingual school

counsellors to address the personal, academic, and career needs of Spanish speaking students and

their families (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006). A discussion of their data analysis sees Smith-Adcock

et al. (2006) acknowledging that the development of bilingual counselling programs must go be-

yond "addressing language barriers" and must also pay attention to mitigating cultural barriers

faced by students and their families (p. 99). This consideration highlights a critical element of

anti-oppression resistance work within the field of counselling — praxical engagement in this

work requires us to be critical of all the ways systemic/institutionalized oppression impact our

clients and their communities. Returning to Waldegrave and Tamasese's (1993) 'just therapy' ap-

proach, counsellors centering anti-oppressive principles must find creative and subversive ways

to address all systemic barriers their clients face, both when accessing counselling services and

outside the therapeutic setting.

What is needed?

As Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) note, there is a pressing need for quantitative research that explores the client perspective in bilingual counselling scenarios. Further, they posit that bilingual research must also be expanded to include more languages to account for the diverse bilingual communities that need to access suitable mental health support (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). This thesis project focuses in on English-Spanish bilingual counselling because there is a foundation of existing literature to turn to. That said, other languages must be included in the discussions and research surrounding bilingual therapies, which must also be extended beyond the U.S. context.

Polanco and Epston (2009) remind us that counselling modalities are not confined to the language in which they 'grow up', and that models of therapy can find new life and value in a new linguistic context of practice (p. 64). Therapeutic models finding 'new life' in other languages requires the development of quality training programs (and thorough supervision) in non-dominant languages (Field, Chavez-Korell, and Rodríguez, 2010). Field et al. (2010) highlight the need for specific supervising models that are grounded in cultural competency. They focus on Latina-latina supervising dyads and the considerations necessary for best supporting Latina supervisees who aim to work primarily within the Latinx community. In their study on culturally competent supervisory models, Field et al. (2010) recognize the different levels of cultural identity development and how the varying levels that practitioners identify with impact how they relate to each other, and further, how they work together. This is an important consideration, moving beyond simply how therapist and client might relate depending on various factors, into a more careful analysis of how supervisor and supervisee experiences will likely vary due to their own cultural identities, even when sharing a culture. The Multicultural Developmental Supervisory

Model (MDSM) that Field et al. (2010) explore — "both culturally grounded and empirically based" — focuses on "dyads and the complex relational dynamics that result in both opportunities and challenges to a specific training situations" (p. 48). Ultimately, if counselling practitioners are unable to access the support and tools necessary to reflect and develop their bilingual practice, they are less likely to be willing and qualified to engage in anti-oppressive/culturally competent bilingual counselling work that has added layers of complexity.

<div align="center">Praxical engagement and the challenges that emerge</div>

While it is evident that there are institutional barriers within the field that make it challenging for languages outside of the dominant english to be included in counselling practices, it is imperative that we begin to prioritize this across the field. The counselling methods for working with non-english speaking communities that have dominated the field are no longer sufficient. Castaño et al. (2007) posit that utilizing translators often "result in denying clients their voice, altering hierarchical structures and dynamics, and essentially paving the way for misrepresentation or misperceptions" (p. 668). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) offer some insight into practical methods to employ for monolingual english-speaking practitioners working with bilingual clients. Based on their research, they suggest therapists invite clients to "communicate the experience in his or her native language and then ask the client to reflect on the disclosure in the therapist's dominant language" (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009, p. 442). Further, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) present the opportunity to enact resistance by creatively working with clients, suggesting therapists use a voice recorder to "provide the client with an opportunity to 'rewind' and explain what was communicated", potentially facilitating a deeper understanding of the issues and emotions clients face (p. 442).

Similarly, Bermudez et al. (2019) assert that having properly translated clinical materials is part of sustaining an ethical and 'good' practice, "reflecting the ability to be culturally sensitive and competent" (p. 310). Bermudez et al. (2019) posit that it is not enough to simply provide clients with translated materials, rather, agencies and practitioners have a responsibility to provide clients translated materials that capture nuance and are culturally informed. Their study explores the differences between translation methods, highlighting the methods which produce ethical translated materials (Bermudez et al., 2019). They identify 'one way translation' through which a "translator who is an expert in both languages reviews a text or measure in its original language and directly translates it into the target language" as yielding less culturally and linguistically nuanced materials than materials translated through the Modified Serial Approach (p. 312). Ultimately, Bermudez et al. (2019), echoing the concerns of Castaño et al. (2007) that bilingual counselling practitioners have not been adequately trained to effectively produce reports in languages other than english, suggest agencies adopt a community-based five level tier approach to translation. In their study, this approach incorporated several methods of translation from the one-way-forward translation to consulting with a community caucus that included over a dozen local monolingual Spanish speakers who were briefed and given space to make edits and recommendations on translated documents Bermudez et al. (2019).

Ultimately, working through anti-oppressive principles and centering praxis requires counselling practitioners and organizations to be creative, reflective and critical of the places clients may experience harm. Returning again to the teachings of Waldegrave and Tamasese (1993), harm is no longer confined to outright violence and discrimination. Rather, counselling practitioners and all people seeking to dismantle oppressive systems must be aware of the impact

of daily micro-aggressions on the wellness of marginalized communities. Hook et al. (2016) pro-

vide an in depth exploration of micro-aggressions that occur in counselling and counselling out-

comes from the perspective of the client. Although a full discussion on micro-aggressions in the

context of counselling is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to note that the current

literature asserts counsellors hinder the therapeutic process when there is not enough cultural

competency or critical reflexivity to avoid micro-aggressions (Hook et al., 2016).

Bermudez et al. (2019) provide counselling practitioners concrete suggestions for disrupt-

ing oppressive taken-for-granted practices within therapy. Along with their insight on translation

methods, Bermudez et al. (2019) dissect the standard intake process and identify alternative mea-

sures that can be employed to better suit clients outside of the dominant culture. In particular,

they highlight the use of a "brief introductory video in the waiting area, on a computer, webpage,

or small computer tablet" that could potentially provide clients without previous counselling ex-

perience a warm introduction to the process and the issues around consent and confidentiality

(Bermudez et al., 2019, p. 317). Highlighting suggestions proposed by a community caucus they

consulted with, Bermudez et al. (2019) propose counsellors offer to read clinic intake materials

in order to "decrease embarrassment and shame for those who could not read them" (p. 317).

Conclusion

In the same way that individuals can actively resist the dominant culture by speaking

their mother tongue (in and out of the privacy of the home) — consequently challenging the

"colonizing practices embedded in the dominant culture" — counselling organizations can resist

the hegemonic nature of the dominant culture by centering non-dominant languages (Tomic,

2003, p. 17). Implementing institutional changes within counselling organizations requires com-

mitment and creativity to overcome barriers that have disproportionally impacted the most mar-

ginalized clients. This project intends to shed light on the risks and gains we can make as com-

munity level practitioners when we centre resistance in our practices. Ultimately, prioritizing

non-dominant languages in order to serve non-english speaking clients is one small avenue to-

ward resisting the dominant culture. A dedication to this goal, through organizational change and

more generally, shifts within the field of counselling, exemplifies the possibilities that arise

when we mechanize resistance to oppression, increasing access to wellness on both an individual

level and a broader community level.

Chapter Four - Resisting oppression and accessing wellness through activist engagement

[T]he more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side. (Freire, 1960, p. 39)

The critical pedagogy movement and Freirian perspective offers a foundation for this project. Freire's (1960) ideas of praxis and conscientizacao are central to this exploration on the relationship between resisting systemic oppression and mental wellness. Moments of conscientizacao — the process through which individuals learn to perceive social/political/economic contradictions and are driven to take action against systems of oppression — have shaped my understanding of social justice, ethics, and my role in both promoting justice and resisting oppression (Medina, Burks-Keeley, Costa-Guerra, & Ibrahim, 2016). These moments of 'conscientizacao' have helped formulate my sense of ethics and my desire to centre social justice. Lewis, Ratts, Paladino, and Toporek (2011) define the social justice perspective as grounded in the belief that every individual, regardless of their intersecting identity categories, has a right to the equal distribution of resources and opportunities. Kennedy and Arthur (2014) assert that social justice is also about the "elimination of any aspect of social structure or organizational practices that contributes to domination or oppression" (p. 188). It feels impossible for me to imagine a therapeutic practice that is not integrated with social justice principles. Ratts (2008) asserts that counsellors have an ethical obligation to address social injustices, suggesting that we advocate at various

levels. Moving beyond the professional obligation, Reynolds and polanco (2012) echo the insep-
arable nature of promoting justice and doing therapy, reminding us that "building a just society is
a collective responsibility that requires frontline workers to become activists for social change,
both in their work with clients and in their lives" (p. 19).

Modelling after Marom (2016), I look toward Indigenous scholar Susan Dion's (2007)
concept of 'critical reflexivity' — "critical reflection on self and self in relation to others situated
in a social-political-historical context" (p. 331-332). In situating myself, I can reflect on and ac-
knowledge the ways my intersecting identities interact with power structures, ultimately shifting
my relationship to privilege and marginalization. As a cisgendered queer woman of colour, I nav-
igate the world embodying Marom's (2016) assertion that "oppression works in multiple direc-
tions" (p. 34). As a settler in unceded Coast Salish territory I acknowledge my complicity in the
settler-colonial project, and my responsibility to disrupt the oppressive systems of the dominant
culture. As such, this project is informed by the desire and responsibility to highlight the voices
of folks whose intersecting identities place them at odds with the dominant culture. Specifically,
I seek to illustrate the ways people can affect positive change in their lives (and society at large)
outside of the counselling context, accessing justice, wellness, and healing in a way that can mir-
ror the desired outcomes of engaging in counselling. In this chapter I will explore the relation-
ship between activist work —which can look many different ways— and mental wellness. My
intention is to highlight the ways engaging in activism generates some of the psychological con-
ditions that are associated with wellness, as well as the generative nature of activism with regard
to positive social change and increased access to mental wellness. A brief introduction to com-
munity activism will be provided with the intention of exploring what this work can look like

and what existing literature says about who is likely to engage in this work. Environmental activism and the concept of ecological grief will be used to illustrate the role of activist work in processing grief and injustice (Cunsolo Willox, 2012). Similarly, the ongoing opioid crisis that has afflicted community members of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside will also be explored, elucidating the generativity and resiliency procured through peer-peer harm reduction activism.

This project also aims to shed light on some of the central challenges activists and community organizers face, particular with regard to their own sense of mental wellness. While some research illustrates the merits of engaging in activism, the field of counselling also benefits from explorations of what risks may emerge as people engage in praxis. Some suggestions for mitigating these risks are offered.

Activism can entail a wide array of behaviours and actions. Following the Klar and Kasser (2009) definition of activism, this project defines activism as behaviours that advocate a political cause via means that range from "institutionalized acts such as starting a petition to unconventional acts such as civil disobedience" (p. 757). Gilster (2012) notes that social movement scholarship has shifted to increasingly include activism that is neighbourhood-based and mundane, in contrast to high risk direct action activism. This alludes to the many diverse ways people can engage in activism and praxis, including acts of civil disobedience, supporting frontline activists through court support, solidarity marches/sit-ins, cooking and cleaning at activist camps, hosting discussions and meetings, operating childcare for activists, education-based initiatives, and organizing through new media platforms. While the definition of activism used in this project includes low-risk and high-risk behaviours, it is important to acknowledge the very real differences between the ways this work is experienced depending on risk level. These differ-

ences, and their implications, will be addressed in a discussion on the challenges and risks associated with activism.

<div align="center">Processing pain and grief through political activism</div>

In their ethnographic study of Spanish environmentalists engaged in activism across their lifespan, Ruiz-Junco (2011) assert that "activism transforms old ways of interpreting reality and old self-understandings into new ones—in some cases, through painful personal experiences." (p. 729).Cunsolo Willox (2012) also highlight the transformative nature of activism and the importance of language in determining who and what we grieve. Using concepts originally developed by Judith Butler, Cunsolo Willox (2012) suggests that historically, there has been a distinction between bodies that matter in the public sphere and bodies that have been "disproportionately derealized from ethical and political consideration in global discourse" (p. 139). Some bodies are legitimized as 'grievable' while others — "women, racial minorities, sexual minorities, peoples of different religions, certain ethnic groups, economically and politically marginalized groups, Indigenous peoples" and those living with disease/addiction — are deemed 'ungrievable' (Cunsolo Willox, 2012, p.139). Moreover, grief over the destruction and deaths of non-sentient beings, animals, and ecologies, have also been neglected in the broader public and academic discourses concerning climate change (Cunsolo Willox, 2012). That said, these experiences of ecological grief — "the mental, emotional, and corporeal felt responses to environmental degradation and destruction"— frequently serve as a catalyst for political and social engagement (Cunsolo Willox, 2012, p. 138). Cunsolo Willox (2012) uses a Derridian framework to highlight the connection between ecological grief and political engagement, noting that according to Derrida, grief work is "about encountering and engaging with the responsibility posed by death and the

foregrounding of vulnerability, and of responding through our ethical and political choices, actions, and framings" (p. 145). "Mourning is, from a Derridian perspective, both a necessity of life and a call to responsibility to engage with what was lost, and carries a requirement of response through our own lives and actions" (Cunsolo Willox, 2012, p. 145). This mirrors the Freirian conscientizacao, where experiences (felt personally or witnessed) lead to an awakening of sorts, generating political and social engagement that can be transformative both on individual and social levels (Freire, 1960). Praxical engagement becomes a tool for processing grief and pain. These tools for processing pain are especially important considering the assertions made by Gray and Coates (2012), that climate change and the consequences of environmental devastation disproportionately impact already disadvantaged/marginalized communities. Local activists like Kanahus Manuel of the Secwépemc and Ktunaxa Nations are resisting the expansion of pipelines across unceded Indigenous territory and the man camps associated with pipeline construction (Cantieri, 2018). Through projects like Tiny House Warriors and the Burnaby watch house, local activists are acting in response to anticipatory grief over the violence enacted on indigenous land and indigenous women (Cantieri, 2018; Cunsolo Willox, 2012). Future scholarly literature on social movements, activists, and their wellbeing, may want to explore the work being done by Indigenous folks on Turtle Island.

Mirroring the grief responses enacted by environmental activists, along the US-Mexico border, people are turning their grief over the death of asylum-seeking migrants into direct-action activism, canvasing the desert with food, water, and first-aid for at risk migrants (Sundberg, 2013). Mourning transforms from inward experience to political mobilization and "through these activities, an inherent strength emerges as [people] realize that in order to cope they must not

only survive themselves but fight for others to do the same" (Al'Uqdah &Adomako, 2018, p.

95). Al'Uqdah and Adomako (2018) illustrate the transformative nature of grief and loss through

their exploration of how black mothers who have lost their children to various forms of systemic

violence (police, racism, gang/crime) are turning to social justice activism. The concept of 'polit-

ical mourning' which "involves mobilizing and utilizing the grief of ordinary citizens as a politi-

cal tool of social change" can be observed in the activism of these grieving mothers (Al'Uqdah

& Adomako, 2018).

Structuring 'safe-enough' spaces through activism

Reynolds (2012) posits that safety is structured through the practice of "negotiating or co-

constructing conditions, structures, and agreements that will make space for "safe-enough"

work" (p. 28). This concept has been applied directly to counselling work but is highly relevant

when discussing anti-oppression activism. Discourse centred on the peer led activism in the Van-

couver Downtown Eastside (DTES) illustrates this practice of structuring safe-enough spaces.

Throughout the 1990s, substantial pockets of activism began to centre on drug policy reform in

the midst of the 'war on drugs' and in the wake of an overdose crisis (Boyd et al., 2017). De-

mands from activists in the mid 1990s included an "end to drug prohibition, the creation of a

federally sanctioned supervised injection facility in the DTES, and expanded harm reduction ini-

tiatives, including HAT [heroin assisted treatment]" (Boyd et al., 2017, p. 3). Determined ac-

tivism and advocacy for harm-reduction strategies throughout the 90s resulted in the eventual

approval of Insite in 2003, Canada's first safe injection site (Boyd et al., 2017). In response to the

instability, chaos, and death that characterized the 'war on drugs' in the late 90s, peer/users and

community support workers formed the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU)

(Boyd & Boyd, 2014). Advocating for drug policy reform, decriminalization and with the over-arching goal of advancing the human rights for criminalized drug users, VANDU has operated since 1998 as a peer-centred drug-user union (Boyd & Boyd, 2014).

Like the activists motivated by ecological grief, and the black mothers-turned-activists, narratives from people who use drugs in the DTES illustrate the generativity of engaging in peer-led activism (Jozaghi et al., 2018). Aside from helping keep people who use drugs safe from overdose/death, disease, and violence, peer-led outreach has countered dislocation by promoting community, solidarity, and action. Boyd and Boyd (2014) illustrate, through the interviewing of female peers from the DTES, how VANDU has become a space "where you can be yourself" — characterized by acceptance and safety (p. 322). Further, Boyd and Boyd (2014) suggest that fe-male peers involved with VANDU were able to disrupt conventional notions of addiction/crimi-nalization through their politicized community work and their ongoing resistance to systemic op-pression. While female peers struggled with a "prevailing culture of disinterest", through which the dangers and violence they faced had been largely overlooked by the general public, certain community roles and spaces allowed them to advocate for themselves, enriching their own lived experience and working to create meaningful shifts in their neighbourhoods (Boyd & Boyd, 2014). Al'Uqdah and Adomako (2012) highlight the significance of empowerment and agency in healing, noting previous research that links a sense of empowerment to reduced depressive symptoms. Dutt and Grabe (2014) also note that the increased sense of empowerment that can occur when engaging in activism further encourages people to continue in their activism.

Activism facilitating community and a sense of purpose

Jozaghi et al. (2018) note that the community aspect of peer work has been critical not only in nurturing community between people who use drugs, but also critical in creating an intersectional community of peers/users, varied allies, and government and health officials, all grounded in solidarity. Attempts to resist dislocation and pursue community have influenced the formation of groups like the SALOME/NAOMI Association of Patients (SNAP) which has served as a community support group for people who use heroin, which has been critical in advocating for heroin assisted treatment (HAT) in Vancouver (Boyd et al., 2017). Community building is a critical component of anti-oppression activism, allowing people to stand together in solidarity and generate meaningful and creative alternatives for resisting systemic oppression. Dutt and Grabe's (2014) narrative study of three female lifetime activists illustrates the merits of building supportive and encouraging communities based on shared ideology, communities "united by a shared commitment to change, and a sense of shared fate connected to the status of their [activism]" (p. 119). Gilster (2012) notes that based on empowerment theory, participation in neighbourhood activism is likely to increase the psychological and social well-being of individuals and communities. As such, Gilster's study (2012) sets out to explore the relationship between activism and wellness — reporting that the engagement of community members in neighbourhood activism was identified as an "important component of safe and healthy communities" (p. 769). Along with facilitating a sense of community, Gilster (2012) asserts that activist engagement is strongly related to developing a sense of empowerment.

Furthermore, interviews conducted by Faulkner-Gurstein (2017) with peer/drug users indicate "being trained as a peer offers a sense of purpose that is otherwise socially denied" (p. 21). Dutt and Grabe (2014) also found that a commitment to praxical activism facilitated a sense

of purpose in the lives of the three lifetime activists featured in their study. When discussing their findings in a qualitative study of activist engagement and psychological well-being, Klar and Kasser (2009) note the possibility that participants who engaged in low-risk activism displayed increased mental wellness because they "experience greater consistency between their deeply held (political) beliefs and values and their actions, thereby reducing unpleasant cognitive dissonance" (p. 773).

<div align="center">Activism and reclaiming narrative</div>

"So here we are amazingly alive, against long odds and left for dead" (Bud Osborn, 1999, p. 9); various examples of peer community engagement illustrate that anti-dislocation practices (using the dislocation theory of addiction explored by Alexander (2008) where addition is understood as the adaptive response to a sustained lack of psychosocial integration) create opportunities for people who use drugs to be 'amazingly alive' — leading meaningful and connective lives in spite of addiction (Boyd & Boyd, 2014). Being 'amazingly alive' is also facilitated when peers resist dislocation by redefining themselves and reclaiming their narratives. Peer led work gives voice to the traditionally voiceless marginalized populations of people who use drugs and who often live in poverty. (Jozaghi et al., 2016). Boyd and Boyd (2014) highlight the intersectional complexities faced by people who use drugs, who may be discriminated against for using drugs but who face further marginalization depending on their gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. One example of this is Indigenous women on the DTES, who "oscillate between invisibility and hypervisibility: invisible as victims of violence and hypervisible as deviant bodies" (Boyd & Boyd, 2014, p. 315). Spaces like VANDU, and the work peers are doing in their communities become opportunities for peers to re-contextaulize themselves from an 'at-risk'

population to empowered self advocating leaders in their community (Boyd & Boyd, 2014). Further, the peer role offers people who use drugs the "possibility of authority and respect in a world that often denies it to them" (Faulkner-Gurstein, 2017, p. 23).

Reclaiming narratives can have both a personal and sociocultural impact. On the personal level, reclaiming narratives through peer-led work is empowering for peers themselves. More broadly, the highlighting of voices and stories of traditionally marginalized populations may alter how they are perceived and treated in society. Jozaghi et al. (2018) illustrate the significance of centring the voices of peers in research, with peers both guiding the research and informing it. They posit that peers in the DTES should be included in data not only as subjects of research but also as researchers themselves, noting that the effects of scholarly work may have a direct impact on their lived experience as residents of the DTES (Jozaghi et al., 2018). Part of the advocacy/ activist work being done by allies and peers relating to harm-reduction on the DTES centres on legitimizing and valuing the contributions and expertise of people who use drugs (Joghazi et al., 2018). Examples of this can be seen in the work of VANDU and SNAP, as well as activist Bud Osborn, who greatly transcended his once limiting 'addict' identity to be highly revered as a social justice activist, poet, author, and contributor to academic research (Small et al., 2006).

Challenges and risks of engaging in activism

While current literature on the correlation between activism and mental wellness suggests engaging in activism is connected to an increased sense of empowerment, agency, community, purpose, and may even combat cognitive dissonance, activists face many risks and challenges as they engage in anti-oppression work (Boyd & Boyd, 2014; Dutt & Grabe, 2014; Gilster, 2012; Klar & Kasser, 2009). Vaccaro and Mena (2012) highlight some of these risks in their double in-

terview-style study of ten queer college activists of colour. They illustrate some of the less gen-

erative realities of identifying as an activist as participants, overwhelmed by their many com-

mitments, reported feeling a level of exhaustion that was described as more than burnout (Vac-

caro & Mena, 2012, p.). Vaccaro and Mena (2012) found that as participants attempted to bal-

ance their various identities, interests, and obligations, their sense of burnout was compounded

by a self-reported lack of "awareness to personal limitations" and "self-sacrificing

behaviours" (p. 329). Further, the majority of participants in this study of intersecting vulnerable

identities reported experiencing a lack of social support and self care, to the extent that two par-

ticipants attempted suicide in the time between their first and second interviews over one year

(Vacarro & Mena, 2012). That said, Vacarro and Mena (2012) also found that high engagement

in activism also served as a protective factor against suicidal ideation for other participants who

noted that their commitment as queer activists made it "impossible" for them to act on suicidal

ideation (p.352).

Further, Klar and Kasser (2009) explore the increased challenges tied to high-risk ac-

tivism compared to lower-risk activism, suggesting that perhaps high-risk activists feel a "greater

sense of injustice and hopelessness, which not only makes them less happy but impels them to

more extreme activist behaviours, including illegal ones" (p. 773). This is an important distinc-

tion that requires significant unpacking that is beyond the scope of this paper. Particularly when

we consider the ways certain bodies are deemed illegal and threatening to the dominant culture

simply for existing. Further complicated by the ways law enforcement criminalizes and violently

responds to BIPOC individuals who assert themselves and their intention to dismantle oppressive

systems. Future research may want to further explore the ways intersecting identities impact the

way activism is experienced by individuals, as well as explore the ways counselling practitioners can mitigate some of the risks associated with activist engagement.

<div align="center">Suggestions for supporting both counsellors and activists</div>

Vaccaro and Mena (2011) highlight the importance of self-care in sustaining activist behaviours for individuals with multiple marginalized identities. Self-care is understood by participants of Vacarro and Mena's (2011) study as knowing when to set limits and boundaries, moreover, knowing which battles to engage in and when to walk away was identified as a large component of activist self-preservation. In terms of participation and workload, knowing when to scale back was also identified by research participants as critical to avoiding activist burnout (Vacarro and Mena, 2011).

While Vacarro and Mena (2011) explore how QTPOC (queer, trans, people of colour) activists are impacted by feelings of emotional responsibility to others — often compounded by a lack of support—, Reynolds (2009) addresses burnout in an alternate way. They suggest "activism and therapy recursively inform each other, and a spirit of solidarity is required to stay amazingly alive in both" (Reynolds & Hammoud-Beckett, 2012, p. 59). Reynold's framework for understanding counsellor 'burnout' may also be useful for understanding activist burnout, as Reynold's (2009) highlights the spiritual pain that can arise when an individual is unable to work in line with their ethics or unable to "change social contexts of injustice" (p. 6). Reynold's (2009) suggests "building relationships based on solidarity, pre-existing points of unity and heartfelt commitments to an ethics of resistance, an ethic of justice-doing, is our path out of despair, hopelessness and what gets called burnout (p. 7).

Further, to ease the fears associated with counselling and activist burnout, Reynolds (2013) suggests we lean in to identify the collective ethics that bring people together to do justice; "when collective ethics are hard to trust, I always remind myself that no one is in this movement by accident, and that no one came to community work to hurt people." (p. 66). Reynolds (2010), quoting Leonard Peltier, suggests "we are not supposed to be perfect. We're supposed to be useful" (p. 16). That said, Reynold's (2012) is quick to highlight the ways counselling practitioners and activists must centre co-creating safe enough spaces as a core objective in both therapy and activist/ally work. For a more complete discussion on the nuances relating to activist/ally work we can turn to Reynolds work on 'fluid and imperfect allies' (Reynolds, 2010; Reynolds & polanco, 2012, p. 23).

A full exploration of practical approaches for supporting activists and counsellors enacting anti-oppressive principles in their work is beyond the scope of this project. That said, counsellors and supervisors working with activists should be aware that burnout and compassion fatigue will likely not occur because of a single stressor, but rather as a result of complex intersecting factors that increase activists risk (Vacarro & Mena, 2011). Another consideration is the importance of having adequate information on the signs and symptoms of burnout, regardless of how we are choosing to define it. By acknowledging the possibility of burnout, counselling practitioners and activists are able to structure safety, working through organizations that are collectivist and interdependent, where practitioners (and activists) themselves feel supported in their work and in their multiple intersecting identities. If we can structure safety for practitioners in the agencies and organizations that aim to further support surrounding communities, we will be

better equipped to support clients who are existing and resisting in the face of their own multiple

marginalized identifies.

Further, prioritizing the creation of solidarity groups and structuring opportunities for

community and connection in spaces where people can exist without having to resist is a part of

making anti-oppressive work sustainable. Particularly for individuals who have multiple op-

pressed identities, such as queer people of colour who, as current research has illustrated, are at

higher risk for structural violence, including suicidality (Vacarro & Mena, 2011). Finally, return-

ing to some of the teachings of the Just therapy group, counselling practitioners and activists

must find creative ways to ensure institutions and organizations take the necessary steps to struc-

ture safety, "speaking out against injustices and establishing that oppressive behaviours will not

be tolerated" (Vacarro & Mena, 2011, p. 361; Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993).

Chapter Five - Praxical engagement in the digital landscape:

The future for accessing wellness while resisting oppression

This thesis project has served as a space to explore the relationship between anti-oppression activism and mental wellness; exploring the ways activism and counselling are similar as well as acknowledging the very real differences in these phenomena. Chapter One established some of the foundational frameworks which have informed this project, namely, feminist theory and the pedagogical approach espoused by Freire. Additionally, Chapter One was space for me to situate myself in this project, acknowledging the ways my intersecting identities colour my intentions in this project and as a future counselling practitioner.

Chapter Two read as a literature review that explored some of the current literature pertaining to anti-oppressive practices (both in and out of the context of the counselling field). Feminist theory, particularly Crenshaw's (1994) work on intersectionality was presented as foundational to this thesis project. Freire's (2018) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and their conceptualization of praxis and *conscientização* was also presented as critical in the struggle to dismantle oppressive systems. Further, this chapter includes a thorough review of existing research around bilingual counselling —the importance of creating space within counselling organizations for bilingual clients and the risks associated with bilingual counselling services. Finally, chapter Two concludes with a review of existing literature on the relationship between anti-oppression activism and mental wellness. This segment explored both the merits and risks of engaging in activism, with the intention of highlighting the ways activist work and counselling work can function symbiotically.

Chapter Three explored the ways prioritizing bilingual counselling practices is a praxical approach necessary for counselling practitioners to meet the needs of diaspora communities displaced by global migration patterns. Research from Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) was used to explore the impact that a bilingual identity has on emotional processing and memory retrieval. Additionally, the research of Perez Rojas et al. (2014) was included to explore the efficacy of language switching as a therapeutic tool. Other discussions included in Chapter Three centered around the importance of developing culturally competent models of supervision for adequately training bilingual counsellors. Finally, readers were presented with an analysis of the risks and barriers counselling practitioners may face when attempting to prioritize bilingual clients in their therapeutic practices; this includes limitations around competency as well as institutional barriers that may undermine efforts to radically create space for marginalized communities who require increased attention and care.

The following chapter examined the ways praxical engagement impacts activist communities. Informed by some of the valuable teachings from scholar-practitioners such as Tamasese and Waldegrave, as well as Reynolds, Chapter Four provided space to explore the way activists can use their work as a way of processing pain and grief. Moreover, a thorough exploration of activist work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside presented readers with some of the liberatory effects of engaging in self-advocacy work. Additionally, readers were presented with a discussion on the risks associated with burnout and engaging in high-risk activist behaviours. This chapter concluded by highlighting some of the ways burnout is being conceptualized and how we can collectively respond to burnout so as to make anti-oppressive work increasingly sustainable in and out of the counselling context.

In this final concluding chapter I will offer a brief discussion on some of the ways BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) are finding creative ways to disseminate knowledge and critical thought that is aiding in the work of resisting oppression. Special attention will be placed on the work of the Latinx organizers who are tackling multiple forms of oppression using new media. The intention behind this concluding chapter is to shed light on some of the topics future researchers may be interested to explore in greater depth. Particularly with regard to the expanding role of new media as a tool for resisting systemic oppression, and prioritizing mental wellness, and how we will manage and interact with the knowledge coming out of these platforms.

This project also aimed to highlight the work being done by marginalized folks who have traditionally been intentionally excluded from the dominant discourses. While we can see that many advocates and allies are labouring to centre these voices, we must continue to be critical of whose voices continue to be prioritized both in the realm of activism and academia. Fine (2011) remind us to be mindful of the voices and narratives that are excluded from academic research. Academia continues to prioritize sources and voices that are deemed credible, that neatly fit into the dominant culture, or that serve to disrupt, rather than dismantle, the often elitist academic standard that has traditionally been shaped and upheld by the dominant culture. Glover (2017) provides readers a critical exploration of the mechanisms of the 'ivory tower' that maintain "epistemologies of ignorance and structures of white supremacy and racial capitalism that make university spaces unconducive to Black lesbian and queer feminist politics of survival (p. 158). Despite the cultural shifts away from andro/euro-centrism — the constructs that traditionally excluded those who were not white and male — marginalized bodies (including bodies of land and other non-sentient bodies) continue to be neglected by academic discourse (Eagly and Riger,

2014). Glover (2017) posits a "pedagogy of accommodation" within predominantly white academic institutions "promotes multicultural civility and respectability versus a social justice perspective" (p. 158). Further, Glover (2017) calls attention to the "epistemological norms governing what can be validated as scholarly knowledge" which too often serves as a mechanism by which university spaces exclude the knowledge of those most impacted by oppressive systems (p. 160).

By critically analyzing the currently upheld epistemological norms — our culturally rooted beliefs on what constitutes as justified, valid knowledge — we are able to consider alternative ways knowledge is created and shared and the impact this has on people who occupy space outside (and within) the dominant culture. While quantitative research continues to be prioritized by academic institutions, students and scholar-practitioners can engage in resistance by finding subversive ways to highlight knowledge informed by lived experience. While grief, pain, joy, and resistance cannot be easily quantified, researchers seeking to explore humanistic topics must continue to create space for research subjects to guide and inform research (Jozaghi et al., 2018). As Jozaghi et al. (2018) note, traditionally marginalized communities should not only serve as research subjects but should be supported to conduct or contribute directly to research in their own communities, particularly when published scholarly work often directly impacts the lived experiences of these research subjects. Much of the research presented in this thesis project was phenomenological, often better structured to capture nuance and complexity as well as shifts in experience and behaviour over longer periods of time (Dutt & Grabe, 2014).

Further, in exploring academia's penchant for prioritizing scientific empirical quantitative research, Eagly and Riger (2014) highlight the significant shifts in paradigm that feminist theo-

rists have moved forward. They note that the shift from positivism and logical positivism to post-positivism has enabled those in and out of the academic community to be critical of the methods and epistemologies of branches of knowledge such as psychotherapy. The development of feminist methodologies, created as a response to the shortcomings of traditional research in order to showcase and legitimize women's stories as knowledge, has served as a model for other marginalized communities seeking to legitimize what they live and know (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 788).

Podcasts as radical activism

"Welcome to Cerebronas, I'm Yvette, and I'm Cynthia: Two Latinas from working class immigrant families, navigating law school and bringing ya'll raw critical analysis of the law, current events, and personal politics… Why? Because we want to break down barriers set up by elite institutions and democratize knowledge" (Amezcua & Borja, 2017).

New media has increasingly become a platform for different communities to engage in subversive politicized resistance work. O'Meara (2018) posits that digital communities have become a space for people to "participate in a feminist politics, drawing on opportunities that the Internet provides to embrace new understandings of community, activism, and even feminism itself" (p. 29). This movement is reflected in the work of many BIPOC individuals who are occupying space in the digital landscape through podcast content. Ferrer, Lorenzetti, and Shaw (2019) note the increased usage of mobile devices has "allowed for broader audiences to engage with diverse material", both as a way of gaining initial exposure to various issues and to engage more critically with existing language and discourse (p. 1). The excerpt featured above is one

example of podcast content that is fuelled by an anti-oppression agenda, as the creators of *Cerebronas* (a play on the Spanish word for brain) — two young Latina's enrolled in Stanford's Juris Doctorate program — present listeners with discussions on the American legal system and the ways this system interacts with various identity categories. Yvette and Cynthia also offer listeners access to academic resources in the form of Literature Review episodes where they break down academic work for their audiences intentionally disrupting the concept of the ivory tower.

Further, aside from structuring social justice based conversations, these content creators are also using their platform to support others in their efforts to access mental wellness. In particular, Cynthia and Yvette frequently note the impact that systemic oppression has on the mental health of black and brown communities, as well as the culturally rooted stigma that exists around seeking mental health support. They use their platform to encourage people of colour to seek mental health support and be agents in their own wellness, hosting conversations on the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and of the hyper visibility of people of colour in the prison-industrial complex and as the victims of ICE and police violence. Another quote that illustrates the motivation behind their content comes from Yvette:

> "I was shocked upon getting to Yale at how much knowledge is kept within these
> institutions and only shared with the people who work here as faculty and who come here
> as students. And I just think it's really tragic that you need to spend so much money in
> order to have that knowledge. Especially when a lot of times these things are analyzing
> poor black and brown communities or directly affecting them. It's democratic in the sense
> that through this podcast, which is free, anybody can have access to this information that
> otherwise would be kept in this institution that is very expensive and that is purposefully

set up to be difficult for people of colour to be able to break into […] Making this

knowledge more accessible." (Amezcua & Borja, 2018)

Resistance and healing work in the digital landscape

Mirroring the digital resistance labour of *Cerebronas*, Brown, Ray, Summers, and Fraistat

(2015) highlights the instrumental role of black women "in using digital media to create and

share content about victims of police violence" (p. 1838). In their study of intersectional social

media activism, Brown et al. (2015) explore the use of Twitter and #Sayhername as a conscious-

ness raising space where people could engage in social justice advocacy, access a sense of em-

powerment, access community, grieve, and affirm the value of black women's lives, including

black trans women. Further, Vivienne (2011) notes the value of the digital landscape as a space

traditionally oppressed people can practice visibility without the threat of direct physical vio-

lence. Vivienne (2011) also identifies digital storytelling as a useful platform for activists who

are vulnerable to, or recovering from, activist fatigue to still engage in resistance work. Digital

storytelling becomes narrative work, attuned to the nuance of human existence, including pain

and resiliency. Vivienne's (2011) research illustrates how trans digital storytelling supports

stroytellers' sense of agency and empowerment, as well as provides space for personal insights

into gender identity construction, critical for "expanding both popular and scholarly understand-

ing" (p. 45).

Singh's (2013) research on transgender youth of colour also highlighted the role of digital

community in increasing sense of resiliency. Resiliency was conceptualized as the ability to cope

with and manage various forms of systemic oppression and the emotional/mental impacts of

marginalization (Singh, 2013). Participants in this study identified trans visibility on Youtube as

a source of resiliency, with new perspectives empowering them to "feel good about their multiple identities" and providing them with "strategies for addressing racism and trans-prejudice in their lives" (Singh, 2013, p. 699). Additionally, participants noted that the digital landscape served as a platform to connect with other intersectional activists and allies, further increasing their own personal resources of resilience (Singh, 2013).

Using an intersectional framework, I view the resistance work being carried out in the digital landscape as a stand against cultural discontinuity. Cultural discontinuity was originally conceptualized in the context of education and pedagogy, as a way to explore the implications on students of a lack of cohesion between their multiple cultures (Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006). Lovelace and Wheeler (2006) assert that upon entry into school, "differences in the functional use of language among culturally and linguistically diverse children have been found to account for the discontinuity they experience." — discontinuity often manifesting as behavioural challenges and poor academic outcomes (p. 304). Cholewa and West-Olatunji (2008) posit "students from culturally dominated groups consistently receive and internalize negative messages regarding their culture, ethnic group, class, gender, or language" (p. 56). These experiences extend beyond school-aged individuals to include the experiences of anyone outside the dominant culture. When people have to engage in institutions and systems that fail to offer alternative language, pedagogy, or visibility, discontinuity and distress seem inevitable. That said, content creators with varying intersecting identities are using mediums like podcasts and internet memes — defined by Drakett et al. (2018) as "(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance which (b) were created with an awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users" — to subversively

critique various forms of systemic oppression, build community in the face of adversity and vio-

lence, ultimately decreasing the likelihood of experiencing cultural discontinuity (p. 113).

Drakett et al. (2018) provide readers an overview of the limited existing research on internet

memes and their political and cultural impact, asserting "memes can bridge the gap between the

personal and political, functioning to promote participation, activism and grassroots action" (p.

114). With the growing popularity of internet memes, and the increased awareness to their polit-

ical and cultural impact, it is necessary that more scholarly research explore this internet phe-

nomena that is both capable of boosting marginalized communities up and targeting them

(O'Meara, 2018).

<div align="center">Considerations for future research</div>

Certainly, more scholarly research is needed to examine the ways the digital landscape is

becoming a space for resisting oppression and accessing wellness. Questions that are particularly

relevant for counselling practitioners centre on how the digital landscape can provide a diverse

range of people space for community, resistance, resilience, and healing. What can we learn from

this as counsellors? What tools can we offer our clients based off of this expanding space? Fur-

ther, what are some of the potential risks of engaging in resistance work in the digital landscape?

O'Meara (2018) notes Chatfield's (2011) exploration of digital activism and what they identify

as potential "slacktivism", asking that we maintain an awareness to the reasons digital activism

must not be dismissed as ineffective while still acknowledging the existing limitations of doing

activism in the digital landscape (p. 38).

Additionally, Chandler and Lalonde (1998) noted over twenty years ago that much of the

existing research on cultural discontinuity pointed to the interconnectedness of poverty and dis-

continuity — pointing to the "tangle of pathology produced by bone grinding poverty" and the challenge of identifying what factors were most impacting youth (p. 235). Current scholarly research has evolved from attempting to identify which branch of oppression is most impacting people, alternatively adopting an intersectional framework that considers the way power differentials and identity interact along various axes. It is imperative that we continue to expand research that is intersectional and acknowledges the nuanced ways systemic oppression and resistance work are experienced. Counselling practitioners must also seek to continuously expand the intersectional framework within counselling modalities and within counselling spaces.

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