

Using Photovoice to Teach Stigma in College Psychology

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1. San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
2. Skyline College – San Mateo County Community College District



Learning Objectives

- Understand the value of media-focused instruction, facilitated discussion and story sharing to increasing mental health awareness and in changing stigma.
- Describe how Photovoice can be used to increase student understanding of labeling and stigma.
- Identify potential opportunities for partnerships in incorporating stigma education into college psychology courses.

SMC Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS)

- Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) initiatives funded by MHSA
 - **Stigma and Discrimination Reduction**
 - Suicide Prevention
 - **Student Mental Health**
- PEI Programs housed in Office of Diversity and Equity (Ethnic Services Manager)
 - Focus on promoting health equity.
 - Emphasis on community outreach, engagement and “non-traditional” partnerships.
 - Strength in mental health education and prevention.

BHRS and Skyline Partnership

- BHRS has a history of partnership with Skyline through staff development and student trainings (ASIST, Mental Health First Aid)
- In 2013, BHRS approached Professor Merrill from Skyline College with possibility of conducting a one-class seminar on stigma during *Abnormal Psychology* class.
- Idea evolved into a 4-part series to more effectively address stigma.
 - Emphasis on **facilitated** discussions, group assignments, and story sharing.
- First attempt to integrate stigma reduction efforts with student mental health.

Skyline College Stigma Series

4-session series (approx 50 minutes each)

- **Session 1** – Introduction to Mental Health and Stigma
 - Video interviews of Brandon Marshall and Demi Lovato
 - Video of Stigma Among College Students (Catholic University)
 - Labeling exercise
 - Introduction of Photovoice assignment
- **Session 2** - Photovoice Group Work
 - Clarify assignment and provide feedback and suggestions
 - Continued discussion about stigma
- **Session 3** – Photovoice Exhibits Displayed on Campus
- **Session 4** – Debrief and County Resources/Opportunities
 - Sign the Stigma Free Pledge
- **(Optional)** – Stigma Speakers Panel between Session 2 and 3

Approach & Rationale

Based on successful strategies for changing stigma*:

1. Education programs that explore myths vs facts

- Stigma and Mental Illness lecture & facilitated discussion
- *Stigma Among College Students* video

2. Interactions between the public and people with mental illness

- Video interviews with Brandon Marshall and Demi Lovato
- Speakers panel

3. Education and values self-confrontation

- Labeling exercise
- Photovoice assignment & debrief discussion

4. Protest discriminatory practices

- Stigma Free San Mateo County pledge signing

*Corrigan, Roe & Tsang (2011). *Challenging the Stigma of Mental Illness: Lessons for Therapists and Advocates*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Photovoice

- Participatory research model developed by Wang and Burris in 1992.
- Uses pictures of existing environmental conditions and narratives to answer research questions.
- Has been successful in groups not typically represented in traditional research:
 - Language (limited English proficient)
 - Socioeconomic status (poor, impoverished)
 - Age (adolescents, young people)
- Meant to stimulate action, advocacy and social change.



The Classroom Perspective

Photovoice Assignment

1. Each student takes 3-5 pictures that answers the question:
“Where have you experienced stigma or discrimination?”
2. In small groups, students vote for their favorite picture from each person in the group.
3. Each student then writes narrative that includes:
 - A description of the picture
 - How they experienced stigma or discrimination
 - How stigma may affect a person with a mental illness

Photovoice Timeline

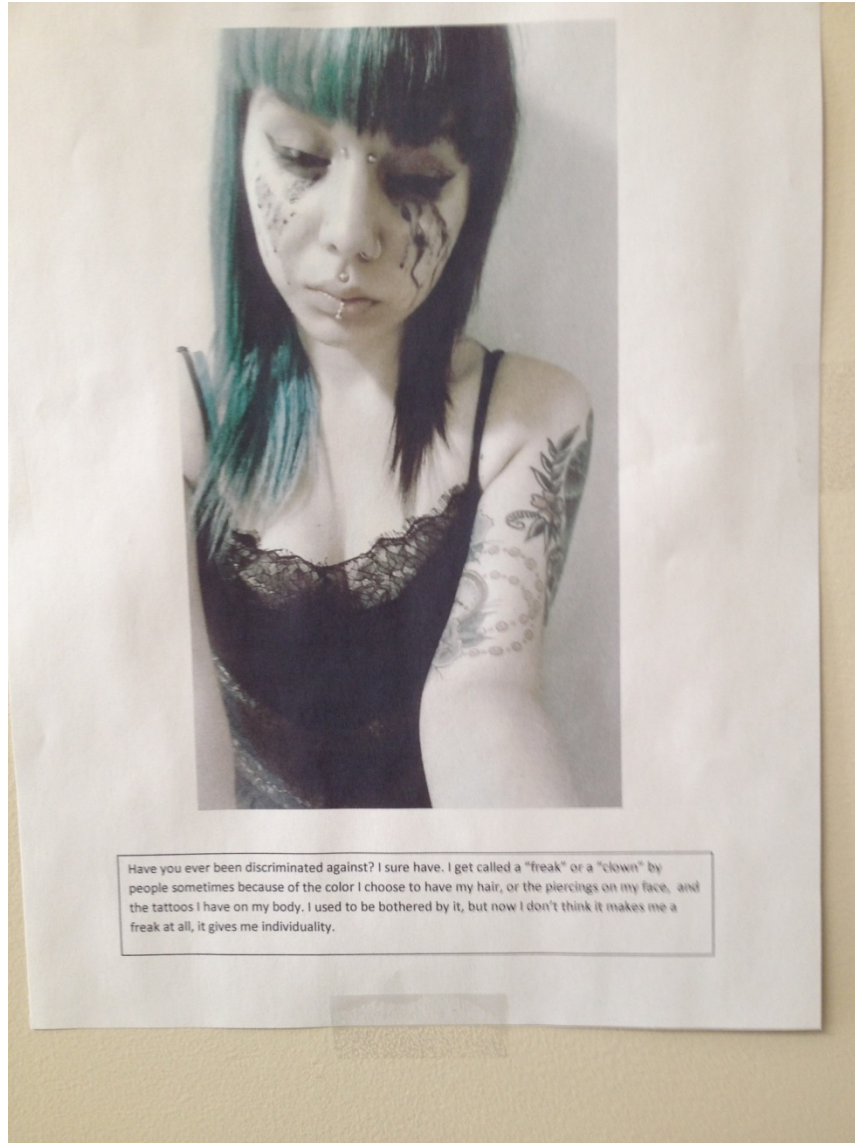
- **Week 1** - Students assigned to groups and given Photovoice assignment.
- **Week 2-3** - Students take pictures and meet in groups to share and select their favorites.
- **Week 4** – Photos and narratives due. Exhibits displayed on campus.
- **Week 5** – Facilitated discussions and debrief.

Example – Medical Illness



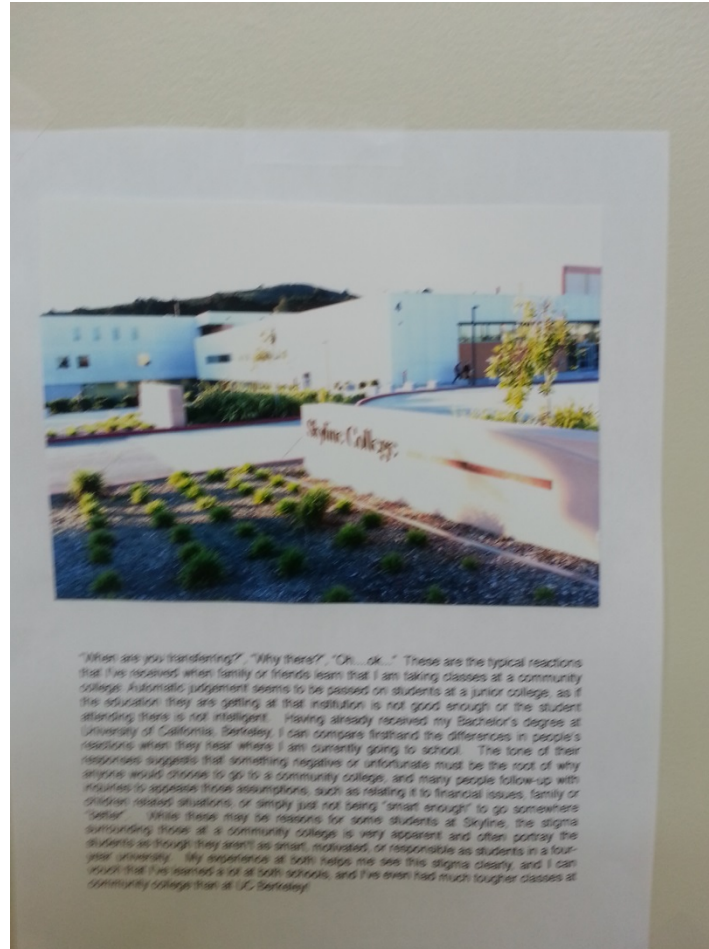
This is a blood Glucose monitoring system used for Diabetes. It is hidden in a bathroom cabinet and used secretly as if it is shameful to have Diabetes. My father is not aware that my family knows about his Diabetes and hides the fact because he feels it shows weakness. My father being part of Middle Eastern culture finds it difficult to accept his Diabetes, in part because of his pride and general role of what a man should be.

Example - Labels



Have you ever been discriminated against? I sure have. I get called a "freak" or a "clown" by people sometimes because of the color I choose to have my hair, or the piercings on my face, and the tattoos I have on my body. I used to be bothered by it, but now I don't think it makes me a freak at all, it gives me individuality.

Example – Community College







Outcomes

Increased Awareness

- “This assignment opened my eyes and reminded me of the saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” When doing this Photovoice assignment, I had no idea what I was going to take a picture of or write about. I then realized stigma was happening every day and it can occur to anyone or anything, mental health condition related or not.”
- “I never really thought of the stigma present in my life. With this assignment I started to see that there was a lot of stigma surrounding me on a daily basis, I was just unaware of it.”

Sparked Discussion

- “What made this project great was being able to speak to others about the stigmas being presented. Viewing each photo and reading each description one at a time, I was able to give my opinion to a friend, and the same friend was able to give their two-cents as well.”
- “While looking for inspiration and ideas for my project I was able to discuss the topic with my family, friends, co-workers, and peers. They were all able to talk about the stigma they see in their lives. Whether it was from their race, culture, gender, and diseases. I was amazed to see how stigma was presented in different environments.”

Increased Empathy and Understanding

- “Through the series of presentations by Joe and the posters on exhibit I feel like I became more understanding and more conscientious when thinking about people with these disorders. One thing I will always remember is how you remind us that they are not the disorder, but they are a PERSON with that disorder and we should remember that first.”

Other Outcomes

- Increased interest in mental health education (Mental Health First Aid class)
- Increased knowledge of on-campus and community mental health resources available to students.
- Stigma values self-confrontation.

Evaluation Process

- Up to instructor
- One grade for photo and caption
- One grade for writing paper. Prompts may include:
 - Explain photo.
 - Chose one other photo and explain how it affected you.
 - Discuss if awareness of stigma was increased or if thoughts about a particular population were revised.
 - Describe three specific things that could be done to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness, including implementation strategies.

Implementation Costs

Skyline College

- Prep time
 - Minimal
- Class time
 - Time in at least 4 class meetings
- Parking passes
- Equipment

San Mateo County BHRS

- Staff time (8 hrs)
- Travel (30 miles RT)
- Printing/supplies (\$50)
- Coffee/snacks for exhibit launch (\$50)
- Student incentives (\$50)

Overall time and costs to implement class was minimal.

Effectiveness

- Evidence anecdotal
 - Every student said assignment was a positive experience
- Possible formal assessments:
 - Pre-test/post test (possibly TurningPoint Technology)
- Assignment has not been formally included on course outline
- Currently viewed by presenters as a “promising practice”

Lessons Learned About Exhibiting Photos

- Best if displayed in hallway or classroom
- Leave up for at least one week
- Have an “opening”
- Address copyright issues
- College required signed releases by students whose photos included a face
- Had to get permission from college to display photos
- Post information about psychological services available on campus

Other Lessons Learned

1. Combination of video screenings and facilitated discussions effective in stigma education vs lecture only.
2. Photovoice group assignment increases awareness of stigma and values self-confrontation.
3. Partnership between college and local health department maximizes strengths of each and opens new opportunities
4. Use contacts in college Psych Services to introduce you to faculty who might be open to including assignment.

Next Steps

- Integrate evaluation of series with course feedback.
- Consider involvement of other Psychology courses (General Psychology, Social Psychology).
- Expand to other schools (College of San Mateo, Canada College).

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Questions

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