
The Process of Development Among Counsellor Interns: Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study examined qualitative and quantitative changes in counselling interns' skill development and perceptions of their own development over the internship year. Eighteen counselling interns completed a pre- and post- internship questionnaire, and of those interns, twelve submitted three videotaped counselling sessions, taped at the beginning, middle, and end of the internship. Videotapes were analyzed based upon Bloom's (1986) theory of automaticity. Responses to the questionnaires were subjected to a qualitative content analysis. The longitudinal data reflected aspects of the theoretical developmental model proposed by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987). Implications for counsellor internship training are discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude pilote a permis d'examiner les changements qualitatifs et quantitatifs survenus dans l'acquisition des habiletés de stagiaires en counseling, ainsi que leur perception de cette acquisition, au cours de leur année de stage. Dix-huit stagiaires en counseling ont rempli un questionnaire avant et après leur stage. Parmi ceux-ci, douze ont soumis des bandes vidéo de trois séances de counseling, enregistrées au début, au milieu et à la fin de leur stage. Une analyse des enregistrements a été effectuée à partir de la théorie d'automatisme de Bloom (1986). Les auteurs ont fait une analyse qualitative du contenu des réponses aux questionnaires. Les données longitudinales correspondaient à certains aspects du modèle développemental théorique proposé par Stoltenberg et Delworth (1982). On traite aussi des implications de cette étude pilote pour le programme de stage de formation en counseling.

The counselling literature offers a breadth of theoretical models that attempt to capture the process of counsellor development from neophyte to skilled practitioner. However, Hill (2001) noted that future researchers must rise to the challenge of finding new and better methods for studying the acquisition of helping skills. Although there exists a plethora of research on the supervisory relationship during counselling internship, few studies combine an examination of how interns acquire skills during the process along with a qualitative analysis of their self-reports about the learning process. This pilot study borrowed from the research of Patterson, Rak, Chermonte, and Roper (1992) which applied Bloom's (1986) principle of automaticity to acquisition of counselling skills during internship and added a pre- and post- self-report questionnaire completed by the

interns. The current research attempted to chronicle trainees' external observable behavioural changes while simultaneously tracking cognitive and affective developmental changes. Such an approach arose in part from the challenge issued by Stoltenberg, McNeil, and Delworth (1995) for future research to examine multiple indices of trainee performance to allow researchers to investigate various domains of counselling and supervisory activities to analyze this interactive process. Denzin (1978, 1989) proposed methodological triangulation, which uses multiple methods to study a single problem, an approach that seemed well suited to the Stoltenberg et al. (1995) challenge.

Furthermore, combining qualitative and quantitative components in the research afforded the opportunity to enrich our understanding of the developmental process of counselling skills among interns. Thus, the qualitative and quantitative data generated in this exploratory research created a foundation for future empirical analysis of the "multiple indices" of trainee development as suggested by Stoltenberg et al. (1995).

The construct of automaticity (Bloom, 1986) posited that extensive and repetitive practice is the essential ingredient in the acquisition of component skills in a variety of complex tasks. Bloom observed that when practice was continued until overlearning occurred, the basic components of complex tasks became automatic, that is, performed without conscious attention. Automaticity in information processing has been studied in reading (Samuels & LaBerge, 1983), organization in free recall in children (Bjorkland & Jacobs, 1985), mathematics (Wachsmuth, 1983), social decision making (Knight, Berining, Wilson, & Chao, 1987), and counselling (Patterson, 1988; Patterson, Rak, Chermonte, & Roper, 1992). In contrast to some commonly used behaviours that become automatic through practice, are controlled behaviours that still require conscious attention to perform. The learning of the counselling process encompasses recall, and social decision making. Learning counselling skills qualifies as an experience of extensive and repetitive practice to develop automatic processes. Patterson (1988) postulated that beginning counsellors are expected to avoid certain automatic responses acquired in social situations as well as learn new automatic behaviours appropriate to the counsellor's role. Patterson et al. (1992) supported the automaticity model when they found that beginning counsellors in internship learned less complex counselling skills (paraphrasing, summary, open-ended questioning, pacing, and responding to client nonverbal behaviours), and these skills become automatic. Given the results of the Patterson (1988; 1992) studies, we wondered if it was possible to develop a connection between a counselling intern's progress through automaticity-related counselling skill development and the developmental process of supervision as Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Crethar (1994) postulated.

In several publications, Stoltenberg and others (Stoltenberg, 1981; Stoltenberg, & Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg et al., 1994; Stoltenberg et al., 1995) developed a comprehensive developmental model of clinical supervision, the integrated developmental model (IDM). IDM is an integrated reconceptualization of two very well known and long-standing developmental models, the Counsellor

Complexity Model (CCM; Stoltenberg, 1981) and a model of supervision forwarded by Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982). The IDM explicated the general professional development of trainees. It outlined a continuous process of trainee growth and development across three developmental stages (Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3), along three developmental structures: (a) autonomy - trainee's sense of independence from the supervision; (b) motivation - trainee's sense of consistency, goodness-of-fit, and identity in his or her professional duties; and (c) self and other awareness - trainee's sense of complex interaction among self, client, and environment. Level 1 trainees generally are self-focused, rather than focusing on the client or the process, because of training anxiety. Level 2 trainees experience a struggle between a growing sense of autonomy and a continued need for supervision. Level 3 interns have experienced counsellor identity struggles and function on a more autonomous level. This continuous process is then observed across eight professional domains (professional ethics, treatment plans and goals, theoretical orientation, individual differences, client conceptualization, interpersonal assessment, assessment techniques, and intervention skills competence). One critical assumption of the IDM is that counselor trainees will function at different levels across the various domains within each structure at different times.

In contrast, Holloway (1987) challenged developmental theory with alternatives that might describe and explain counsellor trainee change during internship and the supervisory process. The first alternative explanation she offered was that the supervisory relationship itself created a trainee's initial vulnerability and eventual final autonomy as a counsellor. The second alternative posited was that clinical growth resulted from the learning experience or instructional mission of supervision (Abbey, Hunt, & Weiser, 1985; Friedlander & Ward, 1984; Holloway & Wampold, 1983). Holloway (1995, 1997) sharpened her research on the supervisory process by developing the systems approach to supervision model (SAS) to implement a language for supervision based upon empirical, conceptual, and practical knowledge. Other theorists have studied the developmental theory of supervision with mixed outcomes including Borders, (1989), who indicated that researchers still need to conduct investigations of what actually happens during supervision.

Although the IDM has been widely referenced, and appears to dominate the thinking about the developmental supervisory process, most of the research on developmental models examines quantitative indices of internship development, but has neglected student self-reflection. Stoltenberg et al. (1994) along with Holloway (1987) called for further investigation of the supervisory process through qualitative inquiry or case studies. Although this pilot study was not a complete case study, we included videotaped skill presentations and developed a questionnaire that attempted to capture interns' reflections prior to and following the internship experience to ascertain certain influences on their growth and development. This questionnaire aimed at capturing fears and anticipation; discovery of one's style as a counsellor; expectations of internship and site supervision;

and methods of analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating one's work. Analysis of these pre- and post- internship self-reports was expected to yield an enriched understanding of the process of how an intern develops during internship. Additionally, it was postulated that responses might support either the developmental model of Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Crethar (1994) or the learning or relationship models of Holloway (1987).

Borders (1989) posed the questions — what factors contribute to and what factors prevent counsellor development during the supervisory process of internship? We also were puzzled by the change that many of our faculty noticed in observing interns over the duration of the internship. The change seemed to represent a movement from anxiety and attention to learning the skills of counselling (the how-to of counselling), and finally to a focus on understanding the complex dynamics and nuances of the process, i.e., establishing a sense of self-competence and professional identity.

The focus on experiencing and learning about the dynamics of the therapeutic process is rooted in the psychoanalytic perspective (Adler & Meyerson, 1991; Alonso & Ruton, 1988; Giovacchini, 1989; Rak & Britton, 1997; and Yerushalmi, 1994). Embedded in this perspective is the study of the parallel process, a replication in the supervisory interaction of the tone, mood, tempo, and unconscious struggles the trainees experienced with their clients (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998; Friedlander, Siegel, & Brenock, 1989; Goodyear & Guzzardo, 2000). In contrast, Nelson, Gray, Friedlander, Ledany, and Walker (2001) also addressed the issues resultant when a trainee experiences negative reactions in supervision. As supervisors attend to the interns' struggles with transference and counter transference issues, they help interns develop insight into the complex and rich struggle that occurs in the counselling hour. Through discussing these reactions and learning about the parallel process in supervision, the interns experience the unique process of the therapeutic relationship from a more objective and guided perspective (Getz & Protinsky, 1994; Rak & Britton, 1997). The cumulation of this research led us to hypothesize that interns, over time, altered the frame with which they perceived and understood their roles in the counselling process. Through the pre- and post- questionnaire this study attempted to more clearly highlight this cognitive shift from a focus on acquiring counselling skills to an intense curiosity about the counselling process.

The research questions were as follows:

- 1a. What evidences do novice counsellors show of the stages of development in the IDM model?
- 1b. Do novice counsellors demonstrate a shift in understanding the counselling process on a pre-post self-report questionnaire?
- 2a. What changes are demonstrated in the facilitation skills of novice counsellors over an eight-month period?
- 2b. What changes are demonstrated in helpful responses of novice counsellors over an eight-month period?

METHOD

Participants

Participants consisted of students in three Master's level internship classes in a CACREP approved Counsellor Education program at a mid-sized Midwestern university. Eighteen of the twenty-three enrolled interns agreed to participate in the study, which was conducted over an eight-month period. Six males and six females (12 Caucasian, with an age range of 24 to 47, mean age 34.5) completed the video component of this study and seven males and nine females participated in the pre- and post- qualitative survey component of the study. Among the qualitative survey respondents, there were 15 Caucasian and one African American students, ranging in age from 24 to 51, with a mean age of 37. All participants were in supervised field placements, either mental health agencies, or schools, where a portion of their internship responsibility was direct mental health counselling service to a clientele referred to the agency or school counselling service. All participants had completed all content courses in the Master's degree in the counselling program prior to internship.

There were two different types of data generated by each participant. One type of data consisted of three videotaped counselling sessions recorded at the beginning, mid-point, and conclusion of the internship. The other type of data consisted of questionnaires completed at the beginning and end of the internship. Among the 18 participants, six were unable to complete the three required videotapes in a timely manner. Thus, the automaticity analysis was conducted on 12 sets of videos. All 18 participants completed an open-ended questionnaire at the beginning and end of internship. Again, however, two participants' responses were excluded from the analysis because they did not respond to both pre- and post- questionnaires. Thus, the qualitative analysis of the pre- and post- questionnaire was conducted on 16 sets of questionnaires.

The three internship classes were taught by three of the authors. All are experienced counsellor educators who incorporated a supervision process of working first with relationship issues and then proceeding to planned interventions based on diagnostic hypotheses. Supervision was linked to the principle that counsellors acquire a set of generic counselling skills during the initial supervised experiences and then practice a variety of techniques and interventions that seem to be universal to learning the counselling process (e.g., Carkhuff, 1987; Egan, 1990; Elliott, Hill, Styles, Friedlander, Mahrer, & Margison, 2001; Meier, 2001; Patterson & Welfel, 2000; Pipes & Davenport, 1990). This set of skills is described in more detail in the following section on measures.

Although this study did not address the relationship of theoretical orientation of supervision to skill acquisition, all three supervisors operated from an integrative framework that built from person-centered principles of relationship building to cognitive behavioural, gestalt, psychodynamic, and brief solution-focused components as promoted by the case material. The concepts of automaticity, developmental supervision, and critical incidents were not presented nor were they used as an underlying supervisory strategy.

Quantitative Method

Each participant submitted to his or her internship instructor three videotapes of three counselling sessions with clients. The early video was taped during month one of internship, the “middle” video was taped during months four or five, and the “end” video was taped during the ninth month of internship. For each video, a twenty-minute segment of counselling, five minutes into the session, was rated. A twenty-minute segment was selected to provide a substantial work sample while keeping observation and rating time to reasonable proportions. The first five minutes were deleted because we endeavoured to observe counselling segments free of the distraction of getting started.

For each participant, the internship instructor of that student was *excluded* from the panel of three raters. Viewing was done by three raters simultaneously, so that after each session the ratings could be compared and consensus achieved. The Gestalt technique of “dialogue process to reach consensus” was used to bring all raters within one rating point on each item. Then, the three raters’ scores were averaged to arrive at the automaticity score for that participant at that stage of internship (early, middle, or late). All sessions were viewed in random order after the internship ended so that raters had no information about the order of the tape, i.e., whether the tape was an early, middle, or late tape for the intern. The raters had no prior exposure to the counselling practice of the individual participants. In the case of six participants, the early, middle, and late videos all featured the same client, therefore reflecting early, middle, and late stages of the counselling process. However, this was not a variable that was specifically controlled and in the case of the other five participants, different clients on different tapes made it impossible to know what stage of counselling was being represented on videotape. In the case of the five participants, the clients ceased attending counselling and so continuing all three videotapes with the same client was not an option.

To analyze the videotapes, the rating checklist from the Patterson et al. (1992) study was used. These items were selected from a 73-item list of counselling skills created through a process of reviewing several introductory counselling texts (Carkhuff, 1987; Egan, 1990; Hutchins & Cole, 1997; Okun, 2002; Patterson & Welfel, 2000). That review enabled synthesis of the skills most commonly assessed by counsellor educators. Items from the synthesis were then arranged into the five categories first identified by Patterson et al. (1992): (a) Attending Behaviours — counsellor posture, eye contact, being relaxed, and attending to client nonverbal behaviour; (b) Relationship Building — expressing and caring, sensitivity, concreteness, immediacy, and developing crisis intervention; (c) Facilitating Disclosure — counsellor brevity, paraphrasing, open-ended questions, silence, and summaries to more fully explore client issues; (d) Diagnostic and Action Planning Skills — identifying themes, advanced empathy, and action planning for changes in clients’ lives; and (e) Behaviours to Avoid — advice giving, premature problem solving, closed questions, sermonizing.

These categories represent a comprehensive range of skills focused on and developed during internship. Items were rated on a five-point scale from one to

five, where one represented little or no skill, three represented a minimal facilitative level of functioning and five represented exceptionally high performance of the skill rating. It is evident that the items did not evaluate all the potential skills and skill sets covered in an internship but rather those most easily assessed by automaticity.

Qualitative Method and the Self-Referent Questionnaire

At the beginning of the internship, students were asked to complete a self-referent questionnaire reflecting their attitudes and anticipation about several dimensions of the internship experience. This 12-item questionnaire included items that attempted to capture expectations for the internship, style of learning the counselling process, moments of insight and growth and several other counselling categories. The questions were developed and selected through a focused discussion among several senior and junior Counsellor Education faculty. The questionnaire items covered topics such as trainees' expectations from the practicum/internship experience, how they best learn, how they anticipated that they will learn and grow as counsellors in practicum/internship, their expectations about supervision from their site supervisors, how they anticipated analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating their own work, and their fears about the counselling internship. At the completion of the internship, students were asked to complete the same questionnaire with the benefit and perspective of their nine months of experience in the internship.

RESULTS

Questionnaire Results

The pre- and post- internship questionnaires were content analyzed and coded using altered techniques from Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) modified analytic induction method and Miles and Huberman's (1984) data display in the analysis of qualitative data. These combined methods allowed for an organized assembly of the information in order to discover convergent themes, critical insights or moments in the counsellor's development, and changes in the interns' self-reported perceptions and/or beliefs as the internship progressed. Themes were identified by the frequency and strength of responses around a specific topic.

The pretest responses demonstrated a general desire to learn from an expert or instructor ("I expect feedback on my progress as a counsellor . . . guidance directly about what I overlooked"). The supervisees wanted a comfortable learning environment expecting professional guidance, support and group learning (e.g. "I will get expert "how to" advice by asking questions, reading references, talking to "experts" in the field . . ."). They expected to engage in self-critique, and expressed discomfort, anxiety and dependency on the instructor and the structured learning environment (e.g. "I want someone to look at my tendencies and weakness to learn good counselling skills"). They also expressed a need for a safe environment, feedback and desire to develop counselling skills (e.g. "I expect general

guidance"; "I hope to learn basic skills and practical counselling tools"). They feared inadequacy and related to counselling as an academic subject; referring to the targeted skills as definitive and measurable (e.g. "I expect to be able to make mistakes and learn from them"). In general, the statements from the pre-test responses reflect Stoltenberg's IDM Level 1, the trainees are generally self-focused.

The post-test responses were clearly more insightful than the pretest responses and reflected awareness and sensitivity about the ever-evolving personal and individual process of counsellor development, and the connection to the counsellor's self-awareness and personal development (e.g. "My continued work in counselling is more influenced by the process. Although the outcomes, short-term goals being met are satisfying, it is the process that dominates each session"). The supervisees were reflective of their ability to process and learn from both negative and positive counselling experiences through review of their own work (e.g. "It was in the supervisory process from which I learned the most"; "The supervision provided a "special closeness" that was supportive"). Some respondents reflected about their own experiences as clients in their own counselling. They expressed an increase in self-awareness and an intangible feeling of "awe" with regard to the complicated and interrelated process of counselling development and supervision (e.g. "I am amazed at the nuances of the relationship (therapeutic) and how the process miraculously changes people through time. I am still rather awed at the positive outcomes in counselling."). Many expressed a personal awareness of countertransference issues. This appeared to be related to a general difference in their reflections of how they viewed and interacted with their clients. There was less "othering," a capacity by persons with power to distance themselves from their clients and treat them abstractly (Fine, 1994). Although this aided in awareness, connection, and development, it also complicated their understanding of boundaries and subjectivity. It appeared that as the client became an individual versus a subject, the interns struggled more with some counselling domains (e.g. diagnosis, behaviours to avoid and relationship building. The responses in the post-test were reflective of Stoltenberg's (1981) IDM Levels 2, struggling between a growing sense of autonomy and a continuing need for supervision, and IDM Level 3, experiencing counsellor identity struggles and experiencing more autonomy.

In summary, the pre-test responses reflected wants, expectations, needs and miscellaneous thoughts related to the supervisee's expectations of their counsellor supervision experience; it was a self-focused venture. They also emphasized counsellor anxiety and dependency on supervision. The post-test reflected a paradigm shift. Beginning interns seemed to conceptualize counsellor development as being about self, and they tended to need specific interventions and defined goals for client growth. They also seemed to think in terms of acquisition of specific counselling skills as defining self-growth. In contrast, advanced interns seemed to conceptualize counsellor development as an ongoing process, including continued growth in self-awareness, development of one's relationship with

self and others and ever-evolving skill development and growth. The most powerful qualitative change was their overall view of the power relationship between counsellor and client. An unstated but affective conveyance on pretests responses was that the supervisee was expected to be the expert and to help the client solve or work through their problems. The posttest reflected an equal and shared responsibility for growth and development, between client and counsellor. The supervisees appeared to be more self-reflective, another paradigm shift. They moved from wanting to be the expert, or to learn from the expert, to appreciating their role as *guiding* the client through the process of growth and development, as the supervisees themselves continued to work through professional development, personal growth and inherent struggles. Interns were more sensitive to the impact that their counter transference reaction had upon their perception of the counselling dynamic.

Behavioural Ratings

The mean behaviour rating scores for each subscale of the video rating checklist were calculated along with their corresponding standard deviations. This offered a visual comparison of changes over two time intervals. Table 1 presents mean ratings, standard deviations, and F values of the ANOVA and MANOVA of students' five response categories over the three times measured. None of the MANOVAs were statistically significant. Figure 1 provides a graph of the behavioural rating changes in each of the five categories over time.

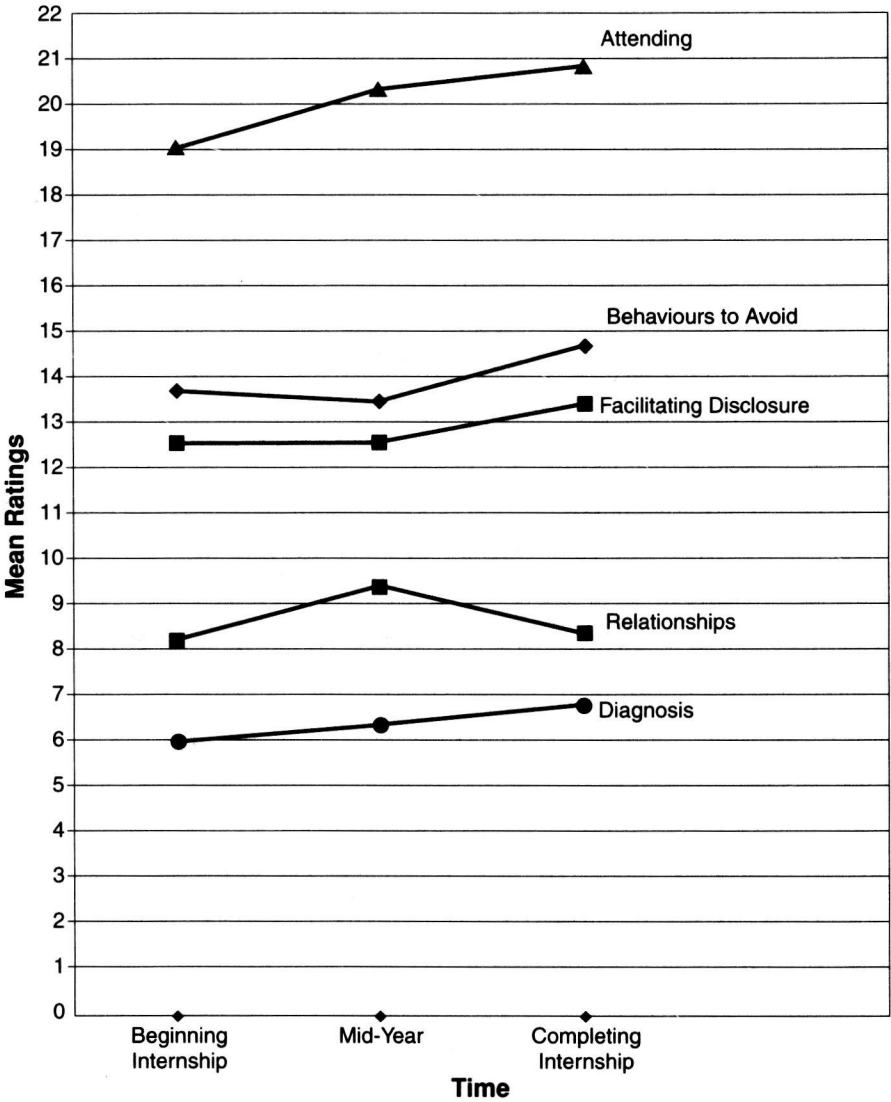
This represents a similar pattern and finding to the Patterson et al. (1992) study. However, because this is an exploratory, pilot study, the question remains as to how these patterns would manifest in a larger pool of participants.

TABLE 1

Counselling Intern Automaticity Means, Standard Deviation, and Multivariate Fs Observed Across Time (n=12)

Counselling Skill	Time of Measurement						F	P
	Beginning of Internship Year		Middle of Internship Year		End of Internship Year			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Attending Behaviours	19.06	2.58	20.36	3.88	20.86	3.71	0.17	0.69
Relationship Building	8.17	3.54	9.36	2.86	8.36	2.95	1.04	0.33
Facilitating Disclosure	12.50	3.18	12.53	3.47	13.39	3.60	0.15	0.71
Diagnosis	5.92	1.93	6.31	2.29	6.75	1.87	0.01	0.97
Behaviours to Avoid	13.66	4.32	13.44	3.70	14.67	3.42	0.85	0.38

FIGURE 1
Mean automaticity subscale scores over three observations



DISCUSSION

The first research question focused on interns' growth as evidenced in responses on the pre- and post- questionnaire, and relationship between questionnaire responses with IDM. The qualitative pre- and post- questionnaire revealed some congruence with the IDM model on the pretest. Interns reported fears and

anxieties about making mistakes, relied heavily both on site and internship supervision, focused on themselves and their role as counsellors, and conveyed a simplistic understanding of the counselling process. These descriptions accurately reflected Level 1 of Stoltenberg's IDM (1981) model. Participants' responses also supported the cognitive model posited by Holloway (1987) in how they reflected upon what was learned. Interns discussed a reliance on supervision and a need for feedback that corrected their counselling errors. Only one participant pondered the relationship between experience and counselling skill level and the complexity of the presenting problem of the client. Ten of the participants stated that they planned to analyze their work by listening to or viewing tapes of the counselling sessions prior to supervision. Fourteen participants believed that their style and approach as a counsellor would emerge as a result of direct experience with clients coupled with direct feedback from their supervisors supported by the internship seminar.

The most remarkable qualitative finding was the shift in the participant's view of counsellor training from a perspective that focused on skill development to a perspective that acknowledged and valued the complexity and mystery of the counselling relationship as it unfolds. Concurrently, among the participants there was developing awareness of their personhood and the value of their self-development as instruments in the counselling process. These principles demand further examination and research as we continue to study the acquisition of skills during internship.

In reference to the second research question, this pilot study did not yield evidence that novice counsellors increase in their use of facilitative skills and decrease in their use of nonhelpful skills. These results are intriguing in that they do not make intuitive sense, nor do they support any of the counsellor development models. Despite design replication of the Patterson et al. (1992) study and the attempt to measure the automaticity of the acquisition of counsellor intern skills over time, we obtained discrepant results. Given the nonsignificant nature of these results, it appears that counselling skill development across these five categories and, in general, is an intriguing process that may not be easy to define. There are numerous possible explanations for the current results. It is possible that the automaticity construct is not adequately comprehensive to capture the complexity of counselling skill acquisition. Another hypothesis could be that although automaticity does occur, it happens over a longer period of time than the nine-month academic year used in the current pilot study. Additionally, our sample of participants may have been too small for the construct to clearly emerge statistically. Finally, the possibility exists that as novice counsellors become more comfortable in their roles, they become less conscious of performing basic skills; perhaps these basic skills have not yet become fully automatic in the brief counselling experience of the interns.

Several characteristics of the research design also may have contributed to the lack of significant findings. First, in asking participants to submit videotapes, there was no control for the stage of counselling the participant had reached with

the client; the counselling stage varied randomly. As previously mentioned, six of the participants did submit all three videos counselling the same client; the other participants did not because their clients had terminated. Related to this potential confound, the raters began their observation 5 minutes into the counselling session, and then rated the subsequent 20 minutes. Depending on the stage of counselling on a given tape, 20 minutes may or may not have been an adequate length of time to observe the counsellors' skills.

Next, within each of the five categories on the automaticity rating instrument, desirable behaviours were included that represented all three stages of counselling. So, while a student might have been exhibiting a preponderance of behaviours appropriate for the first stage of counselling, the absence of other behaviours in the automaticity rating form might actually have been appropriate given the early stage of counselling. For example, Facilitating Skills, such as "responding with appropriate brevity" and "accurate paraphrasing" could be appropriate throughout all three stages of counselling, whereas "use of silence" seems more appropriate in the first stage. Despite the fact that Patterson et al. did find significance in a study using the same instrument, perhaps the validity and reliability of the instrument need to be further established.

Based upon the quantitative analyses, we can tentatively conclude that development in the five categories is not always linear and reflects complexity. Additionally, as the range subscale scores imply, individuals differ in rate and quality of skill development. This pilot study's statistics were dependent on group score comparisons and did not control for individual differences. Automaticity implies multiple skills developing simultaneously, which generates hypotheses for future research. Research efforts could focus on the complex interrelationship of developing skills in the various domains of counselling or studying more specifically how skill development unfolds. For example, an intern who feels very comfortable with counselling behaviours to avoid may regress in that area when developing skills in the domain of diagnostic hypotheses. This suggests that learning counselling skills may be a fluid process, not static or linear, as some models seem to imply. Analyzing the cognitive construct of automaticity has the potential to provide instructors, supervisors, and interns with another paradigm from which to assess counsellor skill development during training.

Limitations

There are several limitations that restrict the generalizations of the results. One category of limitations encompasses the participant pool; the other category involves instrumentation. In regard to the participant pool, first is the issue of the small number of participants, a common problem in clinical counselling research. Second, all the participants were from a single counsellor education program. Problems or trends could reflect idiosyncrasies in the program in which all participants were enrolled.

Shifting the focus to the instrumentation in this study, there may have been problems with the automaticity rating form. Beyond our previous comments

about potential concerns with construction of the automaticity rating form, reliability and validity data on the form were not generated, although it did present face validity. The qualitative self-report questionnaire might be considered "thin." Qualitative researchers often use larger, more in-depth, interview-based protocols. Although the instrument sampled a variety of intern perceptions, further exploration and analysis could provide a more complete snapshot of trainee's development and provide more formal trustworthiness and transferability of data to other learning situations. Nevertheless, from the relatively short pre- and post- reports of the interns, we were able to identify important themes, paradigm shifts, and some critical learning moments. Furthermore, the study would have been strengthened if the intern instructors had reported and reflected on their perceptions of the students' process of learning and developing during the nine-month internship experience. Another potential limitation was the fact that we did not follow-up with the completers through focus group or item-specific follow-up surveys.

Implications for training and supervising

First, developmental, cognitive, and reflective supervisory oriented approaches all offer valid vantage points for the understanding of how trainees acquire skills during internship. Integrating these three approaches in the clinical supervisory milieu may enhance counsellor development throughout the internship. One hypothesis is that different approaches may be more effective than others for the acquisition of varying sets of skills.

Internship supervisors could benefit from a perspective that recognizes that an intern may be demonstrating a highly developed skill in one moment and a rather novice skill in the next moment of the same session or tape reflecting clusters of skills at varying levels of development. This type of occurrence does not necessarily indicate an overall regression or a cause for concern. It also may be linked to the changes a client undergoes and expresses during a session.

It might be helpful to incorporate strategies during the internship that acknowledge and enhance the process by which students change from expecting themselves to be an "expert" in initial stages, to subsequently seeing themselves more as a partner or facilitator of growth or a confused counsellor dealing with a difficult client. One such strategy might be focused reflection perhaps through journaling, of their initial experiences of themselves as an emerging counsellor. Another strategy might be to have students be supervised by the same supervisors over a period of three to four years. This technique could increase the number of intern participants, yet reduce the variability among supervisors in their style of supervision.

Suggestions for Future Research

The most obvious suggestion for future research is the need for a larger scale study, exploring the possibility that counsellor skill development is not linear.

For maximum generalizability, the larger sample could enlist participants from multiple training programs to randomize aspects of the sample such as urban versus rural students, urban versus rural clients, philosophical emphases of the training programs, and emphases of the internship seminar, all of which could have influenced the current results. If one wished to replicate this study, it would be helpful to capture student reflections more frequently.

Historically, researchers have identified that a moderate level of anxiety enhances performance (Barlow & Durand, 1999). Counselling students express a need for structure and direction at the outset of internship. Does the model of optimal anxiety apply in the context of counsellor training, i.e., Is a certain amount of anxiety good? At what level of anxiety does acquisition of counselling skills begin to deteriorate? Perhaps internship supervisors need to provide significant structure to reduce anxiety, or to attune themselves to their interns when anxiety is disproportionate. The goal of either approach would be to manage the anxiety, thereby permitting other learning to occur. More qualitative research needs to be conducted to enhance understanding of the subtleties of this process. This study attempted to integrate two types of dependent variables to analyze intern skill acquisition, behavioural observation of automaticity and self-report. Although a large-scale study is clearly necessary, the value of using behavioural and self-report data appears to also be clear. The construct of automaticity remains a valuable cognitive window to study how novice counsellors develop. The pre- and post- self-report findings provided rich perspectives about the individual students' journeys through internship which can stimulate further, in-depth qualitative studies of the process to validate the shift in perspective suggested in this pilot study.

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