Student Changes, Program Influences, and Adult Development in One Program of Counselor Training: An Exploratory Inductive Inquiry

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This qualitative study explored how students in one program changed as a result of their professional preparation experience. We interviewed 15 counseling students via one-to-one interviews and a focus group. Students were asked how they had changed and what had influenced those changes in their educational experience. Responses were clustered with the assistance of a text analysis computer program. Three broad change themes were named: (1) increased reflexivity, (2) increased autonomy, and (3) capacity for dialogue. Four program influences were also identified. They are providing students with: (1) experiences in social construction of knowledge, (2) experiential learning, (3) opportunities for independent thinking, and (4) a supportive environment. Connections to adult-development themes and specific instructional strategies that are suggested by the data are named.

KEY WORDS: counseling; counselor education; adult development; epistemological development; constructivism; adult learning.

INTRODUCTION

By now it seems to be common wisdom that active, experiential learning is essential for learning a craft (Bandura, 1986; Kolb, 1984; Wales, Nardi, & Stager, 1993). However, research on college teaching continues to reveal that 80% of most instruction is lecture, across disciplines (Greenberg, 1991), and that 95% of talk-time in the classroom belongs to the teacher (Freiburg & Driscoll, 1996). Magnier (1999) reports in a national survey of college teachers that, out of 14 instructional methods, “extensive lecturing” and “classroom discussion” are the top two methods used, easily outpacing “experiential learning,” “demonstrations,” “student-developed activities,” and “group projects.” Is the same the case in counselor education? If so, what would be the effects of passive learning on the competency of future professionals? These concerns drove this inquiry.

One would think that educators of future counselors are especially poised to teach actively and experientially. All professional preparation programs, such as nursing, teacher preparation, and counselor education, tend to incorporate some experience (e.g., through required field work). In counseling practice, the interventions themselves are grounded in action and affect, whether they be through guided imagery, client role-playing, or behavioral tryouts.

However, counselor educators are likely not to be immune to the teacher-dominated, passive discourse of traditional college classrooms. Few counselor educators are trained in teaching. Instead, most are trained as mental health practitioners, not teachers. Pedagogy is not in their zone of expertise. Student reports suggest that the abstraction-dominated, deductively oriented lecture-with-some-discussion dominates the counseling classroom discourse.

Given such a situation, are counselor education programs producing professionals who have the requisite personal qualities and content skills to perform the intellectually and emotionally demanding tasks of frontline services? To address these
concerns, we asked two related questions in this research: (a) How do counseling students in one program change during their program of study? (b) What in the counseling program influences those changes?

Such questions do not arise in a vacuum. They are neatly nested in an educational debate that swirls around questions: What should students know? Whose knowledge is valued? What forms of teaching are effective in helping students to obtain skills and knowledge? How might teachers trigger experiences that empower (enhance? enable?) students as thinkers and, ultimately, as professionals? What is the role of affect in learning? Can students partially design their own educations and thereby develop leadership and critical knowing skills? And what are teachers to do about different readinesses among students? All of these questions have troubled college educators at various times. Luckily, in the past 20 years there has been an increased volume of discussion on methods to foster student empowerment and critical learning.

Current trends in teaching: At least four interrelated current trends in pedagogy provide a path toward learner-centered teaching. On the basis of this author’s literature reviews, they can be described as (1) experiential education, (2) connected teaching, (3) developmental instruction, and (4) behavioral instruction. Below is a summary of these sets of theories. After that summary, I offer the results of our research on student learning and instruction influences in counselor education.

Experiential Education

Experiential-teaching theories and practices share two assumptions (Freiberg & Driscoll, 1996; Smith & Kolb, 1980): (1) people learn from immediate, here-and-now experience, as well as from concepts and reading, and (2) reflection on such experience is a powerful ground for creating useful abstract concepts. Some of the seminal thinkers in this tradition are Dewey (1938), Rogers (1969), and Kolb (1984). Each suggested, in some form, that the learner be the center of the instructional act and that students’ points of view be valued. Experiential education also promotes learner involvement: input into course design and assessment and classroom and out-of-classroom experiences so that students might make inductions and inferences, rather than hearing only abstract generalizations from authorities.

Connected Teaching

“Connectedness” characterizes this set of pedagogical approaches in their insistence that learners link with each other, themselves, and the society at large through education. These themes are seen in the works of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), Friere (1971), hooks (1994), and of feminist pedagogy (e.g., Dunn, 1987). Three themes capture connected teaching: (1) community: treating the classroom as a net of relationships with people who care about each other’s learning; (2) empowerment: teaching to enhance student self-directedness, independence from formal instruction, and use of their own “voices”; and (3) social action: helping students to identify societal disparities and to engage in related ameliorative systemic actions.

Developmental Instruction

Developmental instruction is characterized by attention to individual learners’ mental readiness and their age-related needs. The works of Chickering and Reisser (1993), Knefelkamp (1984), and Kohlberg and Meyer (1972) are infused with the notion of “matching” and “mismatching” individual student characteristics with appropriate instruction. Two sequential “steps” characterize these models: (1) assessing learner characteristics, perhaps according to a developmental scheme (e.g., Perry, 1984) and (2) providing an optimal level of challenge and support in the classroom and beyond. Developmentally minded instructors vary the levels and amount of “structure,” “diversity,” “experience,” and “personalism” in their teaching (Knefelkamp, 1984).

Behavior Instruction

Behavior instruction is characterized by attention to individual learners’ rate of performance on each level of sequences in tasks. The work of Lindsley (1972) and other behavioral approaches is summarized by Maloney (1998). The measure of success is the fluency with which students perform academic tasks. Empirical rules replace teacher judgments as to where to teach in a sequence of tasks. The student performs at increasingly high rates unfettered by the rate at which the teacher presents material. Students go through curriculum at the rate at which they master material. This is usually about twice as fast
Student Changes

as with normal instruction. Behavior instructors have
students chart their own performance. The chart em-
phases not only how much has been mastered, but
what have been the recent gains. Effectiveness is the
measure that selects the specific details of instruction.
In the future, many of these behavior-instructional
materials will run on computers.

METHOD

In this induction-oriented study, we asked the
open-ended question “How do students change dur-
ing their program?” Previous studies of graduate
counseling students had shown little developmen-
tal change (e.g., Borders & Fong, 1989), and no
such studies of undergraduate counseling students
were found. In this study, we used the students’ own
words to create a rich picture of such change and
to delineate specific instructional practices in coun-
selor education that might guide teachers and future
researchers.

A qualitative research approach was used in this
pilot study. Emphasis was placed on an inductive “dis-
cover” orientation to the data, although prior re-
search on counselor education and teaching in general
was also considered in the coding of the data and in
the discussion. The research has been accomplished
in four phases up to this point.

In Phase 1, 15 senior students in an under-
graduate counseling program were interviewed in a
semistructured fashion. Fourteen were women. There
was 1 White male and 3 Black females. The remain-
ing participants were White females (N = 10). These
percentages are consistent with national data on gen-
der and race in counselor preparation programs. They
were interviewed in two different formats: (1) a focus
group that consisted of all 12 students in a group-
techniques course and (2) intensive one-to-one inter-
views with 3 students from the senior internship semi-
nar. Two central research questions were asked, “How
have you changed during your period of study?”
and “What in the program influenced your change?”
These questions were left intentionally open-ended
in order that all possible dimensions of change and
influence might be probed. All students were seniors;
3 had completed their internship, and others were in
the course that precedes internship. They ranged in
age from 20 to 43.

In Phase 2 the interview data were transcribed
from audiotapes and entered into the NUD*IST
(“Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing,
Searching, and Theorizing”) software program.
Phase 3 consisted of data analysis using an open cod-
ing procedure based on Strauss and Corbin (1990).
The researchers first created initial conceptual labels,
which were then used to build second-order and first-order categories, which are here (where? Do
you mean “here in this paper/chapter”?) displayed
in a hierarchical representation. The conceptualizing
of first-order categories was done in four subphases:
(1) private analyses by four individuals; the author,
an engineering management colleague, and two
doctoral students; (2) group presentation of those
initial codings and consensus by the four analyzers;
(3) a reanalysis and recoding to reduce categories
by the two authors, together, using the data analysis
software; and (4) triangulation by having a coun-
selor educator from another university review the
analysis.

In Phase 4, the categorizations from the data
analysis are here described and discussed. Initial con-
clusions are drawn, and implications for further re-
search are considered. Two of the participants, both
females who had been individually interviewed, read
the manuscript and either affirmed or recommended
modification of the results and conclusions.

RESULTS

The researchers identified three categories
of changes in students: (1) increased reflectivity,
(2) increased autonomy, and (3) valuing dialogue.
Additionally, four program influences were named:
(1) social construction of knowledge, (2) experiential
learning, (3) independent thinking, and (4) a suppor-
tive environment.

Definitions were generated by the author from an
analysis of the participants’ words and were reviewed
by two other analyzers (the engineering management
colleague and the outside counselor educator).

Increased Reflectivity

Increased reflectiveness was defined, on the ba-
sis of the data, as “an inclination to consider mul-
tiple perspectives within oneself before act ing.” Be-
ing reflective connotes actively seeking and naming
the personal, family, and other cultural influences on
one’s own perceptions. The change to increased reflec-
tiveness was deduced from a series of interviewee
statements about pausing before acting.
Students reported increased reflexivity in these forms:

- Increased awareness of one’s own defensiveness (e.g., “I used to blame others, including fellow students, now I look for my part in things.”).
- A tendency to notice one’s own thoughts and feelings (e.g., “The fact that I just commented on my own tendency to judge is growth.”).
- Reducing (un)clear usage, even from exemplar statement) projections onto others (e.g., “I can only see in others what I can see in myself.”).
- Awareness of family and cultural influences on one’s own tendencies (e.g., “I can see different patterns that were in my family ...”).
- More measured, thoughtful behavior, based on willingness to reflect before acting (e.g., “Now, with my clients. I find out what the other counselors had done one, two, three days even before my sessions.”).

Increased Autonomy

*Increased autonomy and interdependence* was defined, from the data, as “the capacity to distinguish one’s own from others’ perspectives and to act accordingly, as opposed to unquestioningly adhering to social expectations and norms.” We labeled three related subthemes for autonomy: (a) creating boundaries between self and other, (b) reducing the need for control in counseling situations, and (c) learning to cooperate.

**Creating boundaries** was defined as “the ability to separate one’s own perceptions from others’ and to set limits on relationships,” (e.g., “I know what is their [the client’s] own crap, and not mine.”)

**Reduced need for control in counseling situations** was defined as “letting others present themselves and not imposing directives on their behavior.” It took the form of reduced directiveness in helping: “I don’t have to give advice. Which is what I used to do. I used to think I’d just solve their problems. Now it’s like, These are the resources. You do what you need to do. If you need help, call me.” and “Before the program I would always voice my opinion with ‘I think you need to do this or that.’ They called me bossy. After the program, instead of answering questions, it’s just listening. Clients have to work out their own solutions, find the answers to their own questions.” and “Now I realize the purpose of counseling is to ask the right questions, help them solve their own problems.” followed by another student, “The same thing she’s saying, I notice I give less advice, and people now say, ‘Thanks so much, I see something differently now. I appreciate the fact that you listened.’”

*Learning to cooperate* was defined as “recognition of the importance of mutuality in creating effective work environments.” This cooperative inclination seems to add the dimension of “interdependence” to autonomy. T. reported this change that resulted from the program, “Learning to co-operate is huge. To be in the helping professions I need to be a co-operative individual. And if I cannot get along with my co-workers, how can I expect to help my client? [I learned to co-operate] by doing those damn group projects.”

Valuing Dialogue

*Valuing dialogue* was defined, on the basis of the data, as “interest in others’ perspectives, actively listening to others, and the ability to engage in verbal interaction with others so that a synthesis of perspectives is possible.” This category of change included four subthemes: appreciating uncertainty, recognizing others’ contributions, reducing one’s directiveness and judgmentalness, and deliberating dialogically.

**Appreciating uncertainty** was defined as “appreciation for emerging information and willingness to delay closure.” It was described by T student as “I now feel that it’s ok to not always have the answer” and “I was ready to hear that uncertainty was okay. That questioning is okay.” Another added, “I do not know about absolute truths anymore.” A third added, “I believe that there is this gray area.”

**Recognizing others’ contributions** was defined as “openness to peers’ ideas.” It is expressed in these quotes from different students. “Now I think of learning as more of a give-and-take, so I am looking for students to really talk a lot in class. I am looking for professors to ask for people to give their opinions.” “I realized that there were a lot of people in my class that knew more than I did, had different experiences from me, had a lot to offer me.” “As my self-awareness and self-confidence grew, I was able to say, ‘Well, she [a fellow student] has knowledge.’ And to learn to respect my fellow students.” “This program has taught me to really listen a lot more.” and “I am much more open to listening to what my wife has to say.”

The third subtheme, that of *reducing judgmentalness*, was defined as “recognition of an inclination toward prejudice and the tendency to criticize others.”
Student Changes

It is illustrated by 1 student's experience of listening. "It's changed like black and white for me. I listened to his point of view and was trying to understand and I didn't just say, 'You're wrong'" and another student's discovery that "I guess I am aware of how judgmental I can be." Another concluded that "What counseling is, in my opinion, is helping a person change by honoring where they are. And thereby allowing that person room to grow instead of confining them into some judgmental corner." One student expressed such a change in "I'm not compartmentalizing people anymore, I'm just taking each one for their own. That was a big part of my change."

Deliberating dialogically is the fourth subtheme under "valuing dialogue." It was defined as "actively listening to and incorporating others' perspectives in discussions and problem solving." For example, "[Now] 1 kind of sit back and listen but try and be part of things and gain support and bounce ideas off and argue with people philosophically about things, instead of trying to convince everyone of the rightness of my ideas." Another applies it to her home life, "I believe that I am handling a roommate conflict differently than I would have five years ago. I wouldn't tell her to kiss off. I would have reverted. I am trying to see this as, 'We are having a problem communicating.'"

Influences

Social Construction of Knowledge

Social construction was defined as "the notion that human knowledge is created in and by human communities, rather than being the discovery of an objective essence or being a product of autonomous individual creations" (based on the data and the work of Gergen, 1991; Mead, 1934; Rorty, 1989). We named three social-constructionist instructional methods, on the basis of the data: (1) involving students in knowledge creation, (2) maximizing peer interaction, and (3) introducing multiple perspectives.

The first subtheme involving students in knowledge creation was defined as "teaching in an experiential, student-centered way." One said, "These two instructors had a way of listening, giving suggestions but not telling you what to do. By them [sic] asking questions, it brought out different ideas from me—they didn't give me the ideas—they just stimulated the thought process." Another told of one instructor's dialogical manner, "He always wanted to hear our experiences, and he had a story to match that, and you had a story to match that, and it works really well." And another, "They allowed anyone to speak and argue their ideas and things like that." Informants linked this involvement in knowledge creation with their changes, especially with their recognition that all individuals, including themselves, construct knowledge: "The instructors communicated that 'This is a give-and-take and I do not know everything.' It contributed to my confidence that I had ideas to offer."

In addition to instructors' engaging in dialogue with students, they also could maximize peer interaction, according to our informants, as a way of demonstrating social construction of knowledge. This subtheme was defined as "creating conditions for students to interact around ideas and activities." Informants repeatedly specified the doing of group projects as linked to both their increased autonomy and dialogical ability, and as a key to learning to appreciate others' contributions and to consult with others.

Introducing multiple perspectives was the final program influence under social construction of knowledge. It was defined as "intentionally posing alternate explanations for conclusions and asking for different views." Instructors who suggested alternative ideas modeled intellectual relativism. One informant paralleled such an approach with her family experience, "[With my family] there's never one answer for anything, there's always a million other opportunities or avenues, and some of the professors have done that with me."

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning was defined from the data, as "grounding concepts in personal life experience, illustrations, and experiments." We named four subcategories of instructor actions that encouraged experiential learning: (1) encouraging activity, (2) modeling and presenting case illustrations, (3) grounding knowledge in personal experience, and (4) linking experience to abstract conceptualizations.

Encouraging activity was defined as "setting up learning experiences that encouraged students to produce actions or ideas." It took the form of student involvement in discussions, role playing, field experiences, and designing training programs. Some illustrative quotes from informants are as follows: "We would read the material and then put it into play in the classroom." "All those exercises for counseling helped. I mean, let me do it more so I can be..."
Another activity-oriented instructional method was having students do design and simulation projects. For example, "We had to design an assertiveness training class and we each had to lead it for a week. [It was good because I could see the differing results in action]."

"Modeling and presenting case illustrations" was defined as "regularly complementing abstract concepts with anecdotes or concrete demonstrations." It included "doing little situations and scenarios," "modeling in class, little role-plays. And he was the client . . . ." and "sharing cases, using different names" including "sharing her own feelings about the clients."

"Grounding knowledge in personal experience" was the third subcategory under Experiential Learning. It was defined as linking generalizations to instructors' own and students' life experiences. Informants specified such personal linkage-creating teaching methods:

- Writing about personal experience (e.g., "Our first paper . . . made me examine myself about my blind side and to see the difference between the self I show others and the self that is really true.").
- Making personal connections in class (e.g., "I can remember many times in class, going, 'That's me.' (laughing) and thinking, 'Ok, and I know that that's something that I can recognize in myself. I need to decide whether this is a closed issue for me or not because I want to be an effective counselor.'").
- Seeing one's own family patterns in the concepts (e.g., "I could see different patterns that were in my family that I actually, in taking information from the classes, had broken out of doing.") and linking personal development with theory (e.g., "[The instructor asked.] 'At what time in your life did your own development stop, or change, what caused that?', and it's usually a pretty significant trauma. (She then gives an example of her development-triggering experience). So this program makes you learn about yourself.".
- Journaling about personal connections (e.g., "She made us write constantly. She worked you to death. But you did a lot of self-growing because she did [??] a lot of papers that were about our inner workings. They were self-exploratory kinds of things. We were writing all the time about personal experiences. For example, 'Describe your greatest crisis and how it taught you to grow'.")

One student linked personal knowledge to effective counseling, "I believe that as I personally grow, and become self-aware, I become more non-judgmental and able to hear others. If I am able to hear myself then I can hear you, but if there are parts of me that are still closed off and I am in denial, then I can also react that way when you present. Especially if it is a similar problem. If it pushes one of my buttons."

"Linking experience to abstract conceptualizations" was the last subcategory in this group. It was defined as "elucidating or declaring possible generalizations that might be evoked across concrete situations." Students emphasized that instructors should help them draw parallels between concrete instances and abstract concepts. One informant suggested, "Put ideas into play in the classroom. Not just, 'What are the stages of Erikson?' I think that anyone can memorize that, but understanding it and being able to apply it to the client you may have is important."

Independent Thinking

"Independent thinking," from the data, in terms of instructor actions was defined as "requiring students to generate evidence for ideas by inquiring deliberately, separate from the instructor's and others' influence." Students mentioned instructors requiring students to actively produce ideas ("production tasks"), in contrast to "reactive" ("recognition tasks") methods of testing. "What were most helpful were writing, descriptive kind of things, and arguments. Objective tests don't help you explore ideas." Another described project-doing as one route toward her becoming a more independent thinker: "It has to be having to do projects at home, being independent, their projects they make us do, the hours and hours and hours of research." Another ascribed her increased independence to inquiry methods of teaching, including instructors challenging students to give evidence for their ideas: "I do not need to be spoon fed as much facts and figures. Dr. always asks us to give reasons for our answers, he asked us 'Why?' he posed more questions rather than only delivering information."

Supportive Environment

"Supportive environment" was defined, on the basis of the data, as "creating affirming conditions which contribute to students' confidence and their inclination to engage in further learning activity."

"..."
Student Changes

final category of program influence was broken down into four subcategories: (a) a positive, accepting, and enthusiastic manner; (b) faculty availability; (c) peer support; and (d) specific feedback on student performance.

A positive, accepting, and enthusiastic manner was defined as "instructors demonstrating affirming statements and body language." It was captured in one informant's statement: "I got a lot of praise from all of my instructors. I can think of two examples specifically. One instructor made a comment to me, 'You are going to be good at this.' And then he said that to me one or two times outside of class. And then, in her career development class, another instructor made some comments about what she felt my abilities were." Another informant expressed this positive manner. "[This instructor] is the embodiment of empathy because she read without judgment and she taught us by role-modeling, being non-judgmental." Acceptance was also expressed by an informant as instructors' interest in students' ideas, "I do not think that there was ever a time when I felt like, 'They are being way too pushy and trying to get me to buy into their way of thinking or not allowing me a voice.' Every, every professor I had allowed anyone to speak and argue their ideas and things like that.

Another dimension of positivity had to do with enthusiasm. "She is so focussed, so intelligent, but she has so much fun. She laughs in class. And there are many professors like that. So we can be completely relaxed. Dr. ______ is another [enthusiastic instructor]. I love his sense of humor. Research is a dry class, just like Statistics or Testing. They're both very dry classes and both of them I was really dreading. But they were probably the most energetic classes I've taken. ______ has taught me that I can really enjoy research."

Faculty availability was defined as "announcing and making time and space for students to engage with instructors outside of class time." It was also noted as part of a supportive environment. One informant remarked, "Many instructors in other disciplines are just not available. You can't reach them. They don't even offer. I mean you guys offer your home phone, your work phone, your e-mail. I mean we have every way to get a hold of somebody. Every single professor gives us more than two ways to get a hold of them."

Peer support was defined as "creating a collegial, non-competitive environment among learners." One student reported, "I enjoyed the peer interaction because I felt we were all in the same boat. I needed to hear that somebody else was having a tough day. I wanted to hear that." iterated the power of peers, "A lot of the professors had us do many of the projects together, which got us to know each other better. I could probably list most of the classes, where we had to do things that got us to know each other, and from there we developed something else. I didn't realize until after the summer how much I missed the fellow students. The learning experience is partly due to conversations and socializing with them."

Finally, we noted that specific feedback on student performance is an attribute of a supportive environment. It was defined as "instructor verbal and written reflections on student productions." One student named the internship seminar as a place for individual feedback, "It was very helpful because I got feedback on my work in the field work there, and from all the journaling that we did." Another remarked on the value of getting specific feedback on student writing. "The comments by professors on the journaling. I mean, that took a lot time—to read all the crap the students are spewing forth. I appreciate the time the teachers took to read it and make comments that show that they had read it. It sounds so trite but it is not trite. Because, if it is something that is a struggle in your life, and the teacher is saying, 'Good insight,' then you feel validated and encouraged." In the less personal domain of research papers, another informant described the instructor's ongoing input into her emerging writing. "I can't even tell you how many times I called him [the instructor]. Because research is one of those things I never wanted to do. I never wanted to write, never wanted to do any of those things. And I don't know, he was very patient. Every time I showed him the same sheet of paper he'd find different things to look at. So I'd change it again and change it again, you know and it's taught me to be critical of my own work."

Finally, another student brought up the receiving of in-person feedback in group class. "She [the instructor] pulled me aside many times and showed me not what I was doing wrong, but how to make what I was doing better."

DISCUSSION

Students seemed to "evolve" (in the Kegan sense; Kegan, 1982) in important ways during their program of study. These changes were consistent with cognitive developmental models of how adults can shift from more automatic, external ways of knowing toward acting deliberately, taking account of evidence and situational contexts (e.g., Belenky et al.,
Their increased capacities for dialogue, autonomy, and reflexivity also parallel Pascarella and Terenzini’s findings that a college education results in increased tolerance, independence, reflective judgment, an intellectual disposition, and nonauthoritarianism (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). These changes also echo Chickering and Reisser’s description of desirable changes in college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), namely increased autonomy/interdependence, greater tolerance, improved interpersonal relations, increased sense of purpose, and greater integrity. These traits seem to be critical attributes for effective professional work. All require development-enhancing environments (Knee & Kamp, 1984; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972), which a counseling program can provide.

**The Constructivist Counselor**

This developmental shift in our informants might be called “movement toward constructivism.” Human service workers who show the capacities for reflexivity, autonomy, and dialogue might, at minimum, be called “beginning constructivists” in the sense that they recognize that knowledge is created in human activity. My research colleagues and I (Lovell & McAuliffe, 1997; McAuliffe & Lovell, 1996; Neukrug & McAuliffe, 1993) have found similar trends in previous research of counseling student development. We have proposed that the nonconstructivist helper looks to experts to provide concrete direction and is externally located in conventional descriptions of phenomena. An example of the nonconstructivist helper might be the student who objectifies clients and labels them. Carroll and Furr (1998) found such to be the case. as some students tended to label addicted clients in simplistic, judgmental terms, as “weak-willed” and “irresponsible.” In contrast, a “constructivist” human service worker would be reflective (e.g., would consider situation and other explanations), autonomous (e.g., weigh current evidence before deciding independently of authorities), and dialogical (e.g., consult with others in framing explanations of a person with an addiction).

Lovell and McAuliffe (1997) have proposed that counselor education can be the making of the constructivist helper. That helper would be one who could think divergently (Dewey, 1938; Schon, 1983), stand outside of culture, take multiple perspectives, and hear others’ views, that is, recognize the ultimate of subjectivity in human meaning-making. They would exercise reflective judgment (Kitchener & King, 1994; Schon, 1983) rather than merely applying rules to problems.

**Toward Constructivist Counselor Education**

The overarching question that counselor educators would ask of this study is, of course, “How might we influence students toward such desirable characteristics?” This new section will explore the linkages between student changes and instruction in counselor education. Each subsection explores the potential benefits of and methods for instigating student change in the three named areas.

**Reflexivity**

**Reflexivity Benefits.** Good professional decisions require pausing, separating from the immediate surroundings, knowing one’s biases, considering alternatives, and weighing evidence for actions (Dewey, 1938; Wales et al., 1993). Thus, the reflective human service worker might say, when doing an initial interview with a juvenile offender who is blaming others for his difficulties, “I’m feeling annoyed and a bit intimidated by this lower class White adolescent male. What is it in me that is called up? I am reminded of some intimidation I’ve felt in high school with this type of guy. I’d better get closer to his experience rather than being plagued by my fears and stereotypes. Then I can hear his way of looking at the world and consider strategies for helping. And, given that this is a tough type of case for me, I’d better consult with colleagues on plans.” Whether we describe this phenomenon as “awareness of countertransference,” or a developmental shift toward “internalization,” it signals a centering of the helper from his or her own automatic, socially, and culturally derived perceptions and the beginning of multiperspectival deliberation, or “inner debate.” This is the thinking process that Dewey initially described as characteristic of how a professional should think (Dewey, 1938). He emphasized that such thinking represented not just accepting the dicta of authorities, but rather the reaching of decisions based on evidence that resulted from deliberative mental activity (Wales et al., 1993). And we as counselor educators can teach it; our informants told us.

**Reflexivity-Enhancing Instruction.** Three ways in which counseling instructors might increase reflexivity, according to the informants, were to personalize...
knowledge, to model doubt, and to introduce multiple perspectives. The first, personalization, is a central element of developmental instructional models (e.g., Knefelkamp, 1984). It might be done in a number of ways. For example, a student's instructor asked her and her classmates to personalize developmental theory by applying it to their own life passages. Another had students explore their own family patterns in a family systems course. A specific technique that students mentioned as reflexivity-increasing was asking students to keep journals and for the instructor to provide individualized responses. The lesson for educators? Have students searched personal reference points for such abstract notions as family dynamics, developmental phases, ethnicity, empathy, social class, sexuality, and addiction. Thus the reflexive helper will separate her own feelings, beliefs, and culture from those of the client.

The second way, according to informants, that instructors might promote reflexivity was to model doubt in their teaching and encourage open-ended thinking. Informants said that their reflexivity was enhanced by seeing others ponder, consider evidence, and construct ideas in vivo. This type of teaching is especially adaptable to internship seminar case presentations. It contrasts with instruction that too often pronounces the "correct" or even "best" professional behavior and treatment choices. Let the group struggle to generate ideas, our informants told us, and they will become more reflective.

A third reflexivity-enhancing teaching strategy is for instructors to introduce multiple perspectives. For example, in the classic case of the abuser, the instructor might introduce the possibility of his having been abused previously. In this exploratory mode, instructors counter students' tendencies to unthinkingly rely on authority for solutions to problems. Instead, students are asked to suspend automatic responses in favor of engaging in an open-ended mental search for possibilities.

In sum, reflexivity is enhanced by instructors who help students to recognize the many "personal" sources of their knowledge, through their showing doubt and thinking "out loud," and through their instigating a search for many possibilities before students commit to an action.

Autonomy

Autonomy Benefits. The discovery of a complex inner life, through reflexivity, paves the way for students to achieve greater autonomy, that is, to find their own centers of authority for professional and personal decisions. Independent thinking is one foundation for effective professional work. According to the management literature, they are "to be self-initiating, self-correcting, [and] self-evaluating" (Kegan, 1994, p. 153). These conclusions parallel Chickering's descriptions of emotional autonomy (Chickering, 1972): "to be free from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval" (p. 58) and instrumental autonomy: "the ability to carry on activities and to cope with problems without seeking help" (p. 58). Autonomy also seems to be a precondition for the ability to be interdependent with colleagues and others.

Students reported that, before the program, they were more likely to unthinkingly adhere to others' advice and to social norms and were less likely to identify and present their own ideas on important matters. In counseling work such autonomy is needed to make decisions, to avoid "client-pleasing at all costs," to challenge the client even when it risks a negative client response.

When autonomy is achieved, the helper's perspective no longer gets confused with the client's. Thus, clients who call the human service worker at all hours and want to call her or him at home can be helped in new ways to handle their neediness—by being taught alternate behaviors, having limits set on such contacts, and being referred to other resources. All of this requires what we are calling "autonomy" on the part of the helper—the helper who can separate her need for approval and her enmeshment in relationships from the client's ultimate need to herself becomes more autonomous.

Autonomy-Enhancing Instruction. How is autonomy to be encouraged in counselor education? Informants emphasized active learning methods, as did Dewey (1938) and, more recently, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). Given the current findings, it behooves counselor educators to have students generate their own ideas and even course structures (e.g., content, activities). For example, in the subcategory that we called "Opportunities for Independent Learning," interviewees linked independent writing and other self-directed projects with their increased autonomy.

Informants named other specific instructional strategies that were autonomy-increasing. They suggested that instructors require group projects, no matter how discomfiting, in which all participants must take and evaluate their and others' roles. They also named using "inquiry" methods of teaching, in which questions are posed, à la Socrates, for consideration,
and in which students must struggle to give evidence for statements. Further, they mentioned having to do research tasks as an opportunity for them to generate understandings of issues, independent of text- and lecture-based information.

To encourage autonomy, instructors might require behavioral tryouts, case presentations, simulations, and field experiences, followed by student reflection on the experiences (as in videotape review or internship seminar discussion of a case situation) were mentioned as promoting autonomy. In these cases, the instructor does not immediately pronounce his or her formulation of a case, but asks the class members to offer their critiques. Another autonomy-enhancing teaching method that instructors mentioned was having students create simulations, as in 1 student’s description of having to design an assertiveness-training workshop for her group’s class. In all cases, students are challenged to seek information and to make judgments on the basis of weighing evidence, rather than relying on authorities for answers to their questions.

Dialogue

Dialogue Benefits. Dialogue builds on the foundation created by increased reflexivity and autonomy. Reflexivity is a precondition for dialogue, as, through it, the helper can acknowledge the “fuzzy” nature of many counseling problems and pause to reflect on possible possibilities that she or he then invites. With the addition of autonomy, the helper can then separate herself from her clients’ and others’ perspectives. But the ability to consistently engage in dialogue can be viewed as a progression beyond autonomy (Kegan, 1982). To engage in dialogue is to participate in the social construction of knowledge, as opposed to autonomous construction. It is to give up the “hyper-autonomy” that has been promoted by psychologists as the epitome of mature adulthood. To engage in dialogue is more than sharing views. It requires an active attempt to coconstruct meaning with others. In practice, dialogue consists of listening for and hearing others’ ideas and incorporating them into one’s changing understanding so that a synthesis results. A dialogical worldview acknowledges that all human meanings are constructed socially and are negotiated through lifelong interactions, whether those interactions be in family, ethnic, religious, or dyadic settings (Mead, 1934). The ability to engage in dialogue is considered essential in many models of supervision and of counseling (e.g., Fine & Turner, 1997). It is also central to effective collaboration in organizations (Gallup, 1998).

Dialogue-Enhancing Instruction. What are ways of encouraging students to become more oriented toward dialogue? In general, dialogue-enhancing counselor educators might emphasize “inductive inquiry approach,” one in which concrete instances and “fuzzy” situations are presented for group probing. Instructors might evoke student experiences and share their own. And, to hear those experiences, students would continue to be taught active listening as a foundation for dialogue.

Such an overall instructional emphasis on discovery and dialogue will be time-consuming and unpredictable. It will likely cost in “coverage of material.” But complete content coverage, if achieved largely through didactic teaching, seems to come with the price of reduced reflexivity, emotional and instrumental autonomy, and dialogical capacity. In a sense, this research raises the questions “What are we ‘covering’ in our courses?” and “We know what we are teaching, but what are they learning?” If we rely on top-down, didactic, teacher-centered instruction, we may be teaching future counselors to be unreflective, dependent, isolated professionals, instead of reflective, autonomous, dialogical helpers.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at producing rich locally based knowledge that might trigger further research on the outcomes and processes of counselor education. For the next stage of research it will be important to link student reports of perceived changes with behavior, especially with performance in the field. Such a research agenda is called for, given the disparities that have been found between “moral intentions” versus “moral actions” (cf. Rest, 1986). In that vein, Commons (personal communication, 1999) cites Kohlberg’s reminder that “unless something is stolen, there is no much use in a discussion about fairness.” Further research might further link such behavior with known measures of cognitive development. If relationships between the two are confirmed in this domain of counseling, instructors would have an assessment tool for guiding instruction. As it is, the students in this study were not assessed for development. They may have varied in such ways that limit our generalizations. It is possible that some were more ready than others to move toward increased reflexivity, autonomy, and dialogue. Future research might then
examine match and mismatch among students, curricula, and instructors. It is possible, for example, following Kegan’s logic (Kegan, 1994), that instruction that is aimed at increasing dialogic behavior in future counselors might be “over the heads” of preconventional or convention-reliant knowers who cannot hold a position that is separate from that of authorities.

Within the limits of this study, we can say, however, that some informants reported that they had changed radically as a result of counselor education, so that they had come to see themselves as more reflective, more autonomous, and able to engage in dialogue. They told us that educators could enhance those changes by encouraging group exchange of ideas, by creating opportunities for experience and independent inquiry, and by providing a supportive learning environment characterized by personalized feedback. These findings parallel much of the thinking in contemporary pedagogy, especially that which comes from the experiential, feminist, and developmental-instruction traditions.

Counselor educators might heed our students’ voices and make an effort to reduce more authority-centered, passivity-encouraging ways of teaching. Certainly this research challenges us to at least “mix” our methods of instruction rather than to rely on traditional college teaching methods in the reading-lecture-examination tradition. Such a shift will demand much of us. First, we will have to make efforts to account for the process rather than only the content of education. Second, we will have to give up some “control” over our class and our “content.” Third, we will have to insistently inquire about the learners’ experience, through dialogue with them. Ultimately, we will ourselves have to act in a social-constructionist way, and, therefore, a more democratic fashion, by inviting the learner into our community of knowledge creators.

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