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Developmental Level as a Predictor of Counseling Skills

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Abstract

What is the relationship between the developmental characteristics of counseling interns and their counseling skills? Thirty master's-level counseling students in their fieldwork phase were rated by their supervisors on both a measure of developmental level and counseling skills. Results indicated that the construct of *Self/Other Awareness* was the strongest predictor of counseling skills level. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that counselor supervisees possessing this awareness appear better equipped to deal with the complex problem-solving and social interactions required for successfully counseling clients.

Keywords

Cognitive Development, Supervision, Counseling Skills, IDM

Counselor educators are charged with preparing new counselors in the field to ensure quality of care for future clients. Thus, training programs must offer counselors-in-training the most effective learning experiences possible (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003). One means of enhancing trainees' preparation is clinical supervision, during which actual work performance is analyzed and feedback provided. Supervision is a particularly intense learning environment for that reason. Therefore, it will be important to understand the factors in supervision that enhance the effectiveness of counselor supervisees. One promising line of inquiry resides in investigating the relationship between a counselor supervisee's cognitive developmental level and counseling skill competency (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2006; Lovell, 2002; McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). The focus of this study, therefore, was to explore specific developmental dimensions that might impact the counselor training process. Specifically, the relationship between Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) developmental levels and counseling competency skills was examined.

Development & Counseling Skills

Development is a broad concept that usually refers to the evolution of meaning-making from more simple to complex (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). Such development can be helpful in assessing and maximizing mental readiness for a task (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2006; Lovell, 2002; McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). That mental readiness can be described in terms of cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity was defined by Pervin (1984) as an individual's ability to use multiple constructs that have numerous relationships to one another (complexity) at one end of a continuum, and an individual's use of few constructs with limited relationships to one another (simplicity) at the other end. Cognitive complexity can be understood as a developmental characteristic, that is, an evolution toward greater complexity.

Cognitive complexity is important to the counseling field because the ability to take multiple perspectives and engage in critical thinking is integral to the dynamic dialogue that is the work of counseling (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). Understanding how cognitive development enhances counseling competence would offer educators a means of increasing such complexity, and with it, counseling skills. In particular, supervision during practicum or internships would be a key moment in the training process to promote cognitive complexity in counselors-in-training.

Supervision

There has been increasing attention to the role of supervision in counselors' professional growth (Lovell, 1999; 2002; Scott, Nolin, & Wilburn, 2006). A significant portion of this attention has been paid to developmental models of supervision. These models commonly describe the emergence of cognitive complexity in supervisees. The developmental models suggest that beginning supervisees require more direction and are more dualistic in their thinking than are supervisees later in the process (e.g., Blocher, 1983; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982; Lovell, 2002; Stoltenberg, 1981).

The Integrated Developmental Model

One developmental supervision model is the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) developed by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). Inherent in Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) IDM is the notion that cognitive complexity is related to counseling skills, and that such complexity advances as counselors move through career phases, from Level 1 trainee to Level 3 Master Therapist. Thus, as counselors become more expert, they are better able to engage in case conceptualization, integrate clinical information, and understand interpersonal communication than they were at initial stages of development. This recognition of the importance of developing cognitive complexity through

counselor education has been supported in the counseling literature (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Lovell, 1999, 2002; McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006).

There are three domains in the IDM (Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth 1998). The first is Self-Other Awareness, which is defined as a supervisee's stage of self-reflection and awareness of the client's world (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). The second domain is Motivation, the supervisee's interest, investment, and effort expended in the clinical training/practice process. The third domain is Dependency-Autonomy. Autonomy reflects the relative independence a supervisee is manifesting in relationship to his or her supervisor during the supervision process. Dependency is the reverse (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). Each domain has its own developmental level characteristics. Classification at Level 1, 2 or 3 within each domain depends on the degree to which the supervisee exhibits an awareness of self and clients, a stable motivation for being a counselor, and autonomous versus dependent functioning on the supervisor.

Determining the counselor's developmental level within each domain is the first step in choosing supervision strategies that might facilitate movement to the next developmental level and thus forms the foundation from which the other interventions follow (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). To assess these areas for the supervisees, the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-R (SLQ-R; McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Romans, 1992) was developed. McNeill and colleagues found that supervisees who had been in training longer had significantly higher scores on all three scales of the IDM compared to beginning and intermediate supervisees. Using a longitudinal design, Tryon (1996) studied the development of counseling students during their advanced practicum training. The SLQ-R was administered to the students after 5 weeks, 15 weeks, and 31 weeks of practicum. The students demonstrated significant increases on their Self/Other and Dependency/Autonomy scale scores. Few studies have actually tested the IDM as a model of

cognitive complexity utilizing the SLQ-R; the current study addresses this issue by utilizing the SLQ-R as a measure of cognitive complexity in relation to supervisor ratings of the supervisee's actual counseling skills. If the SLQ-R is a measure of cognitive complexity, then according to the IDM, it should be significantly correlated with counseling skills. To our knowledge, this relationship has not been previously tested.

Counseling Skills

A foundation of counselor training is the teaching of counseling skills. Such skills have been translated into specific elements that comprise effective counseling (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Ivey, 1971). It is important that such basic skills be measured so that counselor educators have a means of evaluating their training programs (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; 2006). In turn, effective evaluations require clearly delineated performance objectives that can be assessed in both quantitative and qualitative terms and that have been made explicit to the supervisee during initial supervision contacts (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003). However, there are few existing instruments measuring counseling skills that have been empirically validated.

In order to address this challenge, Eriksen and McAuliffe (2003) developed the Counseling Skills Scale (CSS), with five criteria deemed pertinent for the measurement of counseling skills. Eriksen and McAuliff declared that a measure of counseling skill should: "(a) be valid and reliable; (b) rely on observations of actual in-session performance of counseling skills; (c) be accessible, that is, have face validity, be easy to use, and be relevant for students and instructors as a feedback device; (d) rely on ratings by expert judges, rather than only ones by students, clients, or peers; and (e) require qualitative judgments as to the contextual appropriateness of the use of particular skills" (p.123). The CSS meets all of those criteria.

Currently, the bulk of the literature is replete with research on the models regarding developmental theories of supervision and theories about the development of counseling skills, but little research has examined the relationship between the two areas. The research in this area has shown the importance of the role of supervision in the counselor trainees' skills competencies (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Lovell, 2002). The purpose of the current study was to extend the previous research by investigating the predictive relationship between counselor's cognitive developmental levels and competency skills level. It was expected that higher levels of cognitive complexity would be related to the supervisee's counseling skills. Specifically, we hypothesized that counselor trainees who scored higher on the SLQ-R would score higher on the CSS, as rated by their supervisors. In addition, we examined the ability of the SLQ-R scores to predict the CSS scores.

Method

Participants

Participants were graduate students in a counseling program who were enrolled in practicum and internship in a CACREP-accredited graduate counseling program in a public university in southeast United States. The ages of the 30 participants ranged from 23 years to 40 years with a mean age of 27 years. There were 23 females (77%) and seven males (23%) in the sample. Of the 30 participants, 18 identified as Caucasian (60%), three were Asian (10%), three were Latino (10%), four were African-American (13.3%), and two identified as "other" (6.7%). Ten participants were in practicum (33%) and 20 were in internship (67%). The average amount of experience for the total sample of participants was 1.82 years.

Instruments

SLQ-R. Counselor IDM developmental levels were assessed using the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-Revised (SLQ-R; McNeill et al., 1992). The SLQ-R was an attempt to address the need for reliable, valid assessment procedures for identifying a supervisee's level of development. This instrument consists of a total of 30 items. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for the three subscales, resulting in reliability estimates of .83, .74, .64, and .88 for the Self and Other Awareness, Motivation, and Dependence-Autonomy subscales, and total scores respectively (McNeill et al., 1992). To evaluate the construct validity of the SLQ-R, McNeill et al. (1992) conducted a study whereby differences in subscale and total scores between beginning, intermediate, and advanced students were examined. The preliminary data from this study indicated the SLQ-R measured the constructs associated with the IDM with some degree of validity and reliability.

CSS. Counselor competency levels were rated by the supervisors using the Counseling Skills Scale (CSS; Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003). The CSS (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003) measures counseling skills performance and consists of 19 items and six subscales. Trained raters evaluate students on a Likert-type scale from -2 (major adjustment needed) to +2 (highly developed skills). Item scores are averaged into subscale scores that are then added to become the total counseling skills score. These items reflect those skills that are generally addressed in counseling textbooks (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003; Ivey & Ivey, 2009). Body language, minimal encouragers, vocal tone, and evoking and punctuating strengths are grouped into a subscale titled *Shows Interest*. Questioning, requesting concrete and specific examples, paraphrasing, and summarizing are grouped into a subscale called *Encourages Exploration*. Reflecting feelings, using immediacy, observing themes and patterns, challenging/pointing out discrepancies, and reflecting meaning and values are included in the subscale called *Deepens the Session*.

Determining goals/outcomes, creating change, considering alternatives, and planning action/anticipating obstacles constitute the subscale *Encourages Change*. The two final subscales are *Develops Therapeutic Relationship* and *Manages the Session* (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003). Cronbach's alpha conducted on the CSS was .91, indicating a relatively high level of internal consistency (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003). Counseling experts have confirmed the face validity of this instrument, but other forms of validity have yet to be tested. In a review of the available self-report and observer rating measures used to assess the clinical skills of supervisees, Perosa and Perosa (2010) found the CSS demonstrated "acceptable levels of reliability and validity for research purposes" (p. 132).

Procedure

The Institutional Review Board approved this study, including all precautions that were incorporated to protect the welfare and anonymity of the participants per the American Counseling Association's *Ethical Code* (ACA, 2005). In addition, the study adhered to the *Best Practices in Clinical Supervision* from the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 2011). Participants were recruited by email by the first author to all doctoral supervisors and their supervisees who were enrolled in practicum or internship. The email contained a brief summary of the study, a description of each instrument, and a request for their participation during one of their supervision sessions. After permission was granted, the first author contacted the supervisors to schedule a meeting to distribute the informed consent and study instruments (described below). The informed consent emphasized that participation was strictly voluntary, and that individuals could remove themselves from the study at any time. In addition, students were informed that the video recorded sessions and transcripts would be returned and their names would be substituted on the measures with numerical codes.   Participants interested in

obtaining results of the study could complete their request on a separate postcard when they submitted their informed consents. Results from the study were sent to those who made requests after the study was completed.

The first author was responsible for collecting the data and none of the authors were involved directly with supervisee training. The test packets given to the supervisors included (a) demographic sheets for supervisor and supervisee, (b) SLQ-R forms to be completed by both supervisor and supervisee during their first or second meeting, and (c) a CSS form to be completed by the supervisor about the supervisee once a video-taped session was completed. The first author instructed each supervisor on how to score the CSS and offered to answer any questions during the course of completing the form. The supervisee was required to submit a video recording of one of the counseling sessions during the semester along with a typed transcript of the session. The video was used by the supervisor to complete the CSS form and then was returned to the supervisee.

Analysis

The data analysis was conducted in SPSS in two separate sequences. First, a correlational analysis examined the relationship between the three scales of the SLQ-R and the scales of the CSS. Second, a set of hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in order to determine the ability of the IDM developmental levels of a counselor supervisee to predict counseling competency skill level. For this analysis, seven regression analyses were conducted in order to determine which of the SLQ-R scale scores significantly predicted each of the scale scores and the overall total score of the CSS. Each regression was conducted in the same manner, using the individual CSS scale or the total score as the criterion variable. Step one consisted of entering age, practicum or internship, and years of experience to control for any shared variance between

these variables and the CSS scales. Because previous research has found age, nature of fieldwork, and experience levels to be related to clinical competency, it was important to control for their effects on counseling skills. Step two consisted of entering all the SLQ-R scales rated by both the supervisors and counselor supervisees.

Results

The hypothesis of the current study was that higher levels of cognitive development as measured by the SLQ-R would be related to higher levels of counseling skills as measured by the CSS. In addition, the researchers examined which scale scores from the SLQ-R predicted individual CSS scale and total scores. The means and standard deviations for the SLQ-R and CSS for practicum and intern students are listed in Table 1.

Results of the correlation suggested that the experience variables generally were not related to scores on the CSS scales (see Table 2). The exception was a significant positive relationship between years of experience and Manages the Session, suggesting that trainees with more experience were able to more effectively manage the counseling session. In relation to developmental level, higher supervisor's ratings of the counselor supervisees on the three SLQ-R scales were related to higher scores on all six of the CSS scores of the supervisees. Higher scores on the Dependency/Autonomy scale were related to higher scores on five of the CSS scales with the exception of Deepens the Session. By contrast, the supervisees' ratings of themselves on the SLQ-R were not significantly related to their CSS scores. Therefore, overall greater cognitive development as rated by the supervisors on the SLQ-R was related to enhanced counseling skills as measured by the CSS for the counselor supervisees.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Main Variables for Practicum and Intern Graduate Counseling Students

Variable	Graduate Students	
	Practicum (N=10)	Internship (N=20)
Supervisor Ratings of the SLQ-R		
S/O	57.60 (13.53)	57.30 (9.98)
MO	39.40 (9.07)	39.95 (6.92)
D/A	46.90 (8.43)	45.75 (8.52)
Supervisee Ratings of the SLQ-R		
S/O	60.70 (5.92)	60.75 (8.86)
MO	43.20 (4.10)	41.10 (7.08)
D/A	46.80 (7.14)	45.60 (5.15)
CSS Scale Scores		
Interest	.97 (0.65)	1.50 (0.61)
E-Explore	.92 (0.91)	1.30 (0.81)
Deepens	.66 (1.00)	1.12 (1.53)
E-change	1.47 (2.45)	1.35 (1.28)
Thx-Rel	1.10 (0.73)	1.50 (0.60)
Manages	.80 (1.03)	1.25 (0.85)
Total	5.93 (5.57)	8.02 (4.56)

Note: Standard Deviations are in parenthesis.
S/O = Self/Other Awareness; MO = Motivation Level; D/A = Dependency/Autonomy Level; Interest = Shows Interest; E-Explore= Encourages Exploration; Deepens= Deepens the Session; E-Change= Encourages Change; Thx-Rel = Develops Therapeutic Relationship; Manages = Manages the Session.

Table 2

Bivariate Correlation Analysis of CSS Scales with the Demographic variables and the SLQ-R Scale Scores Rated by Supervisees and Supervisors

Variables	CSS Scales						
	Interest	Explore	Deepens	E-Change	Thx-Rel	Manages	Total
Age	.25	-.01	.07	.28	.00	.02	.00
Yrs - Ex	-.03	-.27	-.12	.02	-.10	.36*	-.21
Se-S/O	.15	.18	.20	.31	.13	.08	.11
Se- MO	.26	.15	.17	.34	.19	.22	.20
Se- D/A	.15	.31	.23	.11	.11	.07	.14
SR- S/O	.63**	.63**	.45*	.47**	.59**	.73**	.58**
SR- MO	.59**	.58**	.36*	.42*	.49**	.74**	.41*
SR-D/A	.39*	.43*	.35	.40*	.41*	.56**	.43*

Note: Yrs – Ex = Years of Experience; Se = Supervisee; SR = Supervisor; Explore= Encourages Exploration; Deepens = Deepens the Session; E-Change = Encourages Change; Thx-Rel = Develops Therapeutic Relationship; Manages = Manages the Session; * = $p< .05$; ** = $p< .01$

Because of the large number of variables involved with each of the regression equations, only significant results will be summarized (see Table 3). Of the seven scales, four models (i.e., Shows Interest, Encourages Exploration, Manages the Session, and CSS Total) were significant and one model (i.e., Develops Therapeutic Relationship) approached significance (i.e., $p < .10$). Contrary to expectations, the supervisee's ratings of his or her own cognitive developmental level were not a significant predictor in any of the models. The supervisor's ratings of the supervisee's self/other awareness predicted scores on four of the five significant models: Shows Interest, Encourages Exploration, Develops Therapeutic Relationship, and the CSS Total Score. In each case, higher ratings of self/other awareness predicted higher ratings of counselor competence. The supervisor's ratings of Dependency/Autonomy were a significant predictor in the Shows Interest model whereas the supervisor's ratings of Motivation were a significant predictor in the CSS Total model. Surprisingly, these predictors had an inverse relationship with the CSS scores once self/other awareness has been controlled statistically. That is, higher ratings of dependency/autonomy and motivation predicted lower levels of CSS scores for Shows Interest and CSS Total, respectively. These two scales were not significant in any of the other models. The proportion of variance accounted for in these four models ranged from .49 to .66. Thus, half of the variability found in the supervisee's counselor competence scores can be explained by the supervisee's level of self-other awareness.

The only model for which the experience variables reached predictive significance was the Manages the Session scale. In this case, fewer years of experience and being on an internship (versus the practicum) predicted higher supervisor ratings of competence in Manages the Session. Furthermore, this model accounted for the least amount of variance (i.e., .34) compared

to all of the other significant models. While the experience variables were expected to be predictive of the CSS Scale scores, in most cases, they were not.

Table 3

Significant Predictors of the CSS Scale Scores Using the Experience Variables and SLQ-R Scores[a]

CSS Scale	Predictor variables	R^2	F	β
Shows		.66	4.44*	
Interest	SR-S/O			1.15*
	SR- D/A			-.75*
Encourages		.64	3.99**	
Exploration	SR-S/O			1.25**
Develops		.49	2.18[b]	
Therapeutic	SR-S/O			1.21*
Relationship				
Manages the		.34	4.46**	
Session	Years of experience			-.51**
	Practicum/Internship			.33*
CSS Total		.55	2.77*	
Score	SR-S/O			1.41**
	SR- MO			-1.01*

Note: [a]= The scales "Deepen the Session" and "Encourages Change" are excluded because the models were not significant. SR = Supervisor; S/O=Self/Other Awareness; D/A=Dependency/Autonomy; MO=Motivation; * = $p< .05$; ** = $p< .01$

Discussion

Results of the current study support the predictive relationship between counselor supervisees' developmental levels in Self-Other Awareness, Motivation, and Dependency/Autonomy and their counseling skills level, but only when assessed by the supervisor. These findings are consistent with the complexity of the work of counseling. Counseling skills are, in fact, a dynamic set of abilities that requires multi-tasking performance on the part of the counselor. The counselor must simultaneously balance listening intently to the client, listening to his or her own response, and responding based on that dynamic relationship.

These findings reveal that a higher level of mental complexity as measured by the IDM is required to perform the multiple tasks of counseling work.

Little research has examined the predictive relationship of the supervisee's developmental level with counseling skills. In our sample, higher supervisor ratings on the Self/Other Awareness scale significantly predicted higher CSS scores on three of the seven counseling skills factors, namely Shows Interest, Encourages Exploration, and Total CSS score. These results are generally consistent with Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) IDM theory. According to Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987), as supervisees move higher on Self-Other Awareness, they begin to move back and forth more easily between a focus on their own emotional and cognitive responses to the client and an awareness of what the client might be experiencing. Self-Other Awareness allows the counselor supervisee to integrate information from both perspectives, rather than focusing on their own performance anxieties and perceived competency. In the current study, supervisees rated higher in Self/Other Awareness by their supervisor were more efficient in utilizing (1) appropriate eye contact, (2) vocal tone, and (3) nonverbal cues or body language. It seems that these supervisees were especially attentive to the client, rather than being focused on themselves. More attunement to one's own internal world and empathic attention to the client's world (i.e., Self-Other Awareness) resulted in stronger attending behavior. Conversely, a predominance of self-focus at this level directly interferes with the counselor supervisee's ability to empathize with and understand the client.

In the case of the CSS Encourages Exploration scale, counselor supervisees who were rated higher on the Self/Other Awareness scale were more efficient at the specific skills of (1) utilizing open-ended questions, (2) paraphrasing, (3) summarizing, and (4) requesting concrete and specific examples from the client. Thus supervisees who could pay attention to the client's needs were

also better able to actively explore the client's world by use of such skills as paraphrases or open-ended questions. By contrast, those with low self/other awareness did not demonstrate these exploration-oriented skills. Thus self-other awareness was essential for encouraging client exploration.

Finally, the fact that supervisee's scores on Self-Other Awareness predicted the overall Total CSS Score is important. Higher self-other awareness was positively related to the overall competencies that indicate strong counseling ability. By contrast, supervisees who showed low self-other awareness were less able to flex during a session by weighing multiple factors in a session. This finding is similar to McAuliffe and Lovell's (2006) results that low cognitive development level in supervisees was related to their tendency to mix their own point of view with the client's and to lack insight into a client's situation. In the McAuliffe-Lovell study, parallel thinkers were fairly rigid and concrete in their responses. Each counseling behavior requires judgment during a session. At a lower level of development (high self-focus and high dependency), counselor supervisees are more likely to require the step-by-step instructions from their supervisors in performing counseling skills. They have not yet learned to exercise more autonomy in their thinking and decision making. Hence, these counselors at the lower developmental level may have focused their attention on performing skills, rather than on being in the moment with the client, and perhaps felt the need to present themselves favorably to their supervisors, rather than rely on their own intuition in a session. While such self/other balance and dependency are somewhat normative for beginning counselor supervisees (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993), they are not as common for advanced student. Thus IDM level seems to distinguish more effective supervisees from others.

Compared with the other SLQ-R scales, the Self/Other Awareness scale had the highest predictive value for counselor supervisees' counseling skills, generally accounting for the most variance in the regression models. This finding is supported in the literature (Lovell, 2002; McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006; Tryon, 1996). A counselor supervisee rated higher on his or her ability to focus mainly on the clients' needs is likely to be able to accurately reflect client content and feelings. Rather than mostly focusing on themselves, that is, projecting or arbitrarily offering advice or inaccurate interpretations, counselor supervisees higher on the Self/Other Awareness scale seem able to integrate multiple pieces of information during the session, while still staying "present" with the client.

Limitations

Several limitations are notable in the current study. First, the volunteers used in this study were from one training program in the southeastern area of the country. These trainees may already possess higher levels of motivation, cognitive complexity, or counseling skills than trainees that did not volunteer. In addition, other psychological factors related to both the supervisors and the supervisees may have affected the results. For example, the theory of supervision held by the supervisors or their understanding of developmental supervision models were not measured; misunderstanding of this model may have resulted in inaccurate ratings. Also, the desire to "look good" in the eyes of the program, either as a trainee or a supervisor, may have caused a halo effect in rating the supervisee's performance. The presence of a halo effect may explain why the supervisee's rating of their own performance did not predict their counseling skills. Further research may address this issue. The cross-sectional nature of the study created other limitations. For example, cognitive complexity was measured at one point in time, so it is

unknown if changes on the SLQ-R will result in changes in counseling skills. Due to these limitations, the results may not be generalizable to all counseling programs in the country.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study provide some evidence that there is a link between counselor supervisees' developmental levels and how well they are able to demonstrate basic counseling skills. Most clearly, counselor supervisees who are less self-focused are better able to attend to the needs of the client in a session, as evidenced by their superior ability to demonstrate the micro-skills of counseling. Implications for practice might be drawn from these results.

A first practice implication relates to measuring supervisee's cognitive developmental levels early on in their training process. It seems essential to the effectiveness of a counselor education program to operate from a developmental foundation that encourages growth. Based on the current study, cognitive complexity is related to and predictive of counseling skills. Measurement of the supervisee's cognitive complexity allows the supervisor to shape the supervisee's training based on where he or she is at developmentally in training. Such early measurement allows for more individualized training for the supervisees. Effectiveness is enhanced because supervisees are provided more exact training in the specific areas where they need improvement.

The second practice implication focuses specifically on training supervisees in self/other awareness. Use of the SLQ-R would allow supervisors and counselor educators to identify those supervisees who are at lower levels of self/other awareness. Based on the current findings, a supervisor would need to explicitly encourage other-focus in these supervisees. Counselor educators could encourage this growth through the use of activities that promote disequilibrium, particularly in self-other awareness, in their students (McAuliffe, 2011a). For example, self/other awareness can be enhanced by emphasizing empathic responding and probing for case

conceptualization (i.e., other-awareness) as a primary task. These activities may stretch supervisees to cultivate their listening and attending skills to focus more intently on the client and less on themselves. A counselor educator might emphasize other-focus in role plays or case conceptualizations by asking, "What do you think the client might be feeling?" or "What do you think the experience might mean for the client?" These probes can be followed by, "What choices do you have for a response to the client?" The intent of using these activities is to encourage supervisees to embrace ambiguity and ponder the many possible responses.

In general, since this study lends support to the notion that IDM developmental level is related to counselor competency skills, it will be important for counselor educators to create environments in the classroom that promote counselor supervisee development, not merely to teach skills. Such implications include selecting development-enhancing methods of teaching the courses. Counselor educators might utilize more active learning methods, such as reflection papers, class discussions, and role-playing that emphasize autonomous thinking (McAuliffe, 2011b). In addition to building counseling skills, these activities may also be instrumental in nudging counselor supervisees toward the next higher developmental level.

Implications for Future Research

A number of studies have identified the importance of assessing counselor supervisees using a cognitive developmental lens (Ronnestad & Skovolt, 1993; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 1997; Lovell, 2002; Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2006, McAuliffe, 2011b). However, when counselor supervisees' cognitive development level has been discussed, the literature has tended to be more conceptual rather than empirical. This study attempted to address that gap in the literature by pairing IDM developmental cognitive level with actual performance of counseling skills.

There is a need for additional research that examines both the counselor supervisee's developmental level and his or her competency skills (Lovell, 2002; Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2006). In particular, the relationship between self/other awareness deserves further exploration. For example, it would be helpful to identify which development-enhancing activities promote supervisee growth in this area. In addition, the autonomy/dependency continuum showed some promise in predicting counseling skills and should be studied further, especially with larger samples. Further work in this area may deepen understanding of the unexpected relationship between autonomy and counseling skills found in the current study. Lastly, it is important to study the relationship between cognitive complexity and counseling skills longitudinally. Specifically, understanding the relationship would be enhanced if increased cognitive complexity, especially self/other awareness, resulted in improvements in counseling skills. Supervisees and counselor educators would therefore be able to tailor interventions in the direction of increasing the various components of cognitive complexity if that is warranted from the findings.

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