

Moir-Bussy, A. (2008). The Counselling Education and Supervision Process – Dialogue and Transformation, *Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Health*, 4(1), Counselling in the Asia Pacific Rim: A Coming Together of Neighbours Special Issue, 1-16.



The Counselling Education and Supervision Process – Dialogue and Transformation

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Abstract

This paper enlarges on recent research in Hong Kong (Moir-Bussy, 2006) that showed how the dialogic process between educators and trainees in counseling fuelled creative transformation of the self and of professional knowledge. Embodied cultural knowledge and values, spirituality and professional goals became more conscious as students weaved what they learned from a Western context and transformed it for practice in Hong Kong. Meanings that supervisors place on supervision and how they see their role in this process of transformation is also explored. Finally, some challenges for educators, supervisors and trainees are raised, as together they develop their ability to engage in dialogic encounters and continue the process of creative transformation.

Introduction

In Hong Kong there has been over the last few years a rapid increase in the number of counselling training programs. Many of these programs are offered by overseas universities and the training is based largely on Western concepts of counseling theory. Two Associations of Counselling have been formed – the first being the Hong Kong Professional Counsellors Association (HKPA) and the second, the Asian Professional Counsellors Association (APCA). Issues of quality and standards of training are important, as well as the need for counselling to become an accredited and registered profession in Hong Kong (Leung, 2003). Similar issues arose in Australia prior to the establishment of national counseling organizations to examine quality training and

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professionalism, such as the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). Worldwide, not only has each country begun to formulate criteria for its counseling bodies, but also there are global organizations addressing the issues of counselling training, such as the International Counselling Association (ICA) and the World Council of Psychotherapy (WCP). The latter, in 2007, has developed a World Certificate of Psychotherapy, with members of its accrediting board drawn from Europe, USA, Australia, Asia and Africa.

In 2006, the author (Moir-Bussy), completed a qualitative research with nineteen counsellors in Hong Kong who had trained and graduated from Masters of Counselling Awards taught by overseas institutions. These participants weaved what they learned from the Western context of counselling with their own embodied cultural knowledge and values. Through a dialogic process of reconceptualization and transformation, (Moir-Bussy, 2008) the participants became more conscious of this cultural knowledge and their own Chinese values, and they discovered that it was embedded in their spirituality and personal and professional goals. A central aspect of their training had been the dialogue that took place in supervision.

In this paper, I will summarize what these participants noted about their training process and in particular the supervision process. I will then discuss findings from a further study that ensued from this research with graduates. In this second study the author began a dialogue with the supervisors of the graduates to gain their perspectives on the importance of this supervision encounter in training, how they see their role and how the dialogue in supervision creates and continues a process of transformation.

Background to the Graduates' Stories

The narratives of graduates were gathered through in-depth-interviewing or conversations. I prefer the word conversation as it suggests a more equal relationship rather than that of direct questioning and provides more depth and informality (Minichiello et al., 2004, p. 413). In addition, this form of narrative inquiry is the “dialogical interplay of voices in which meaning itself is heard” (Shotter, 1994, p. 5). Conversation is in keeping with the notions of the dialogic self and the multitude of selves. The dialogic relationship is one in which “one’s own meanings and the meanings of others are engaged in conversation... transforming... resulting in a new creation” (Gergen, 1999, p. 144). The conversation is a collaborative venture, making “audible and visible the phenomenal depths of the individual subject” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003a, p. 29). Fontana (2003, pp. 55-56) citing Seidman (1991) explains:

That by the establishment of an ‘I-thou’ relationship or reciprocity of perspectives, the interviewee (I) and the interviewer (thou) form a personal relationship. The result is that the interviewee is no longer objectified but becomes a co-member of a communicative partnership.

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I will enlarge further on this notion, as it will be seen later in the discussions I had with supervisors, that this process of conversation with another in a dialogic manner is central to the supervision process.

Wu (1997, p. 132) speaks of the ‘hidden “I” in interpersonal relations’, and regards this hiddenness as one becoming ‘empty, self-nihilated, to room the other person’. This ‘rooming’ of the other of which he speaks is also, he adds, a ‘wombing forth of the other’. Wu (1997, p. 132) encapsulates the notion of the dialogic self in relationship: “self-identity and otherness, both of which come from the “I” as a person”. This requires of the interviewer a ‘wakefulness’ and reflexivity, a stance of not-knowing that is central to the social constructionist position in dialogue. Being with another in dialogue also implies that there are other ways of knowing and understanding that provide the possibility of shared meaning. “Body is capable of knowing and so is psyche” (Puhakka, 2000, p. 18). This way of being with the ‘other’ surpasses verbal language. Sullivan (1989, p. 81) suggests that it is a feminine approach that begins from the premise of ‘not-knowing, of experiencing, focused on Being rather than Doing’.

Within this kind of relationship, the graduates in the first study explored with the researcher their journey through wanting to become a counsellor, their training, their practicum and finally practicing as a counselor in Hong Kong. The interviews began with the participants putting broad brushstrokes to their background, telling of the cultural context in which they were raised, schooled and began their early adult life. From these conversations about their background, it became obvious that the process of reconceptualizing and transforming their ideas was a natural one, but a process of which they were not aware until they engaged more fully in the dialogue with the researcher. In other words, the actual process of dialogue created the space for reflection and for developing their ideas to the point that it became a ‘transformative experience’ – one which enabled them “to approach their world in a different and more positive way” (Lee, 2007, P. 334) and which changed or transformed them as a result. Within the dialogic encounter, ideas were teased out and shared for new understandings and ideas to emerge. During the conversations they realized how much their own cultural experiences affected the way in which they had reconceptualized and transformed their learning of Western theories for their own context. We will now look at some of these findings.

Graduates Narratives of their Counsellor Training Process

In her book *Chinese Themes in Psychology*, Sun (2008, p.2) notes that “it is most likely not an exaggeration to say that all persons of Chinese heritage have been influenced by Confucianism to a certain extent, and many in fact pay homage to Confucian values and beliefs”. The other great traditions behind Chinese culture and thinking are Taoism and Buddhism (Sun, 2008; Needham, 1956; Bishop, 1985). The philosophy of a people evolves, yet continues to inform the way each generation thinks. To a certain extent, philosophy is the ‘self-reflection of a culture’ (Allinson, 1991, p. 1). In the evolution of a culture, as in the case of Hong Kong, many linguistic and cultural boundaries are crossed,

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not only within individuals but within groups that comprise the culture. Allinson (1991, p.2) continues, that the task of crossing boundaries is something that each of us does all the time, and then we have to “perform the task of interpretation... interpretation is an integral part of crossing boundaries”. The graduates in the research who lived in Hong Kong were exposed to a variety of traditions, including the rich philosophical heritage of the Great Chinese traditions, the local traditions of their parents and the influences of modernization, globalization, Western education, Christianity and so on. Many of these themes emerged in their narratives and in particular major philosophical tenets of the three Great traditions emerged as themes (Moir-Bussy, 2008). These themes influenced their thinking and had an impact on their counseling training and practice. The major themes that emerged were those of hierarchy, relationships, filial piety, and the balancing of the opposites (yin and yang). I will highlight only two of these as they relate to the focus later in this paper, which will be on their supervision experience during their placements.

Regarding the notion of hierarchy, one participant commented on her counseling practice:

Chinese tend to think more hierarchical in relationships. It's common in church and family and society.

Another noted

When the counseling relationship is built up some of the directive approach is very important because the Chinese need to rely on authority. You have to be authoritative sometimes.

A third comment was:

I'm working in a Christian context and most of my clients are Christian... to them I am a more authoritative figure so they tend in general to look to me more... and because of the Chinese culture they tend to listen to me more... they want to resolve the problem and then of course they generally look for advice.

Relationships and harmony in relationships is another key value of Chinese people. Self, in Confucianism is a relational Self (Ho, 1995, p. 117). Later, Ho reformulates this as ‘*self-in-relation*’. Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) describe how, in Chinese culture, the self can attain its completeness only through integration with others and the surrounding context. Relationship with others implies communication and ways of behaving that are essential to maintain this harmony. A key concept in relationship communication is *guanxi*. It is a concept that is ‘rich, complex and dynamic’ and means ‘connection’ (Chen & Chen, 2004). Yang (1997) divided Chinese relationships into three groups: “*jiajen* (family members), *shoujen* (relatives outside the family, friends, neighbours, classmates and colleagues) and *shengjen* (strangers)”. While these three aspects of relationship are still an essential aspect of Chinese thinking, at the same time there is a creative interpretation of expression because of the influences of modernization. Traditionally the essence of Chinese communication within relationships is structured around the concept

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of *gou tong*: the process s of understanding others and endeavouring to be understood by them, of connecting (Gao, Ting-Toomey and Gudykunst, 1996).

Without being asked directly about relationships almost all participants in the first study expressed strong cultural values about relationships:

- *The only way people get meaning in life is through relationships. When people are alone, they cannot find that meaning.*
- *When I am counselling I really focus a lot on the relationships, no matter what the relationship – with his family or with his friends.*
- *Counselling is not just a work, it is also a relationship with people and I guess the engagement with people is very important. Also probably that is the value of my life – engaging people or engaging myself inside as a person.*
- *I really treasure meeting in-depth with people, an interaction between souls – in-depth. It's hard to describe, not easy to verbalise.*

Graduates also spoke of the many relationships that supported their decision to go into counselling training. However, the key relationship from which they learnt so much was that of the supervision relationship. Supervision provides the space for two people to reflect together on the work of the one who is less experienced (Knight, 2003, p.34). It is a process, in which both supervisor and supervisee learn together, about the clients, about one another and about themselves. Haynes, Corey and Moulton (2003, p. 64-65) note that in order to ensure a positive experience for the supervisee, the supervisor would possess the following characteristics:

- Have good clinical skills and knowledge
- Be able to provide an accepting supervisory climate
- Want to train or invest time in supervision
- Be aware of the level of development of the supervisees
- Provide constructive feedback
- Be empathetic and caring for the supervisees
- Be flexible and available
- Possess good relationship skills
- Be an experienced clinician.

Further comments were:

- *My supervisor was a very good local counsellor and from her I learnt a lot about putting theory into local context.*
- *I had a good supervisor. She was really experienced in counselling as well as in personal development; therefore she helped me not just grow in skills and knowledge. She also helped me overcome some blind spots in my person... I really appreciate the Internship because it really integrates what I have learnt and tells me what I have to learn.*

- *My supervisor is very strong in conceptual abilities... I am a feeling type person, rather sensitive to the inner world of other people... I used to have difficulties in putting my ideas and observations into concrete and orderly thinking. I'm happy to say my supervisor's strength complemented my weakness. One of my biggest gains in m supervisory training is the improvement of my cognitive and conceptualization skills.*
- *My supervisor helped me a lot...how to make myself become more congruent... and to be more congruent in counselling, she asked me to prepare myself by analyzing myself first. No one had asked me to analyse myself first, but she did... that was very interesting.*
- *I think it's not enough to learn counselling by pen and paper. I have to learn it with a supervisor and learn it with people. What I learnt form my supervisor is how she **relates** with me... I think the most important thing I learnt from her is about **relationship**, then the conceptualization of the case and the last is the most practical one – what I say and what I do.*
- *You know, you have someone alongside you that is kind of guiding you and sharing their own process and growth with you... that's really helpful. **It's the relationship that develops**... not to denigrate the theory because that's useful, but the supervision relationship is so good.*

All these supervisors invested time and energy into the supervision process but, more importantly, cared about their trainees and supported them both personally and professionally. Within a dialogic encounter ideas were teased out, trainees engaged in both personal and professional development and found enough trust in the relationship to question the theoretical approaches they were using and to reconceptualize and transform their ideas and themselves. Alongside and at times within this supervision process, self-growth and personal development took place. Hermans (2004, p. 307) notes that any new situation in a person's life may lead to a new positioning for that person. The internship process places the supervisees into a position where they must engage in external dialogue (dialogue with the socio-cultural context in which they find themselves) and internal dialogue (between the 'many selves' they have developed throughout their life). Mezirow (1997, in Gunnlaugson, 2007) says that 'transformative learning is rooted in the way human beings communicate' and that it is characterized by a shift in a person's frame of reference. A 'frame of reference' for Mezirow includes habits of mind and points of view and at its root is 'a way of knowing' (Kegan, 2000 in Gunnlaugson, 2007)). Kegan adds that this means moving from a 'socialized mind' to a 'self authoring mind' and finally to a 'self-transforming mind'. One participant's experience sums this up:

My transformation is that of a worm in a cocoon developing into a butterfly... and through learning and self-understanding... developing strength to break free of the cocoon... I'm learning to use my wings, and I'm now exposed to a whole world of flowers... counseling approaches and practices... and I look forward to flying with ease and brightening up the world with my colourful self.

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While all participants agree that this happened for them in one way or another, we realized it was important also to hear what supervisors themselves had to say about the supervision process and what the experience was like for them.

Supervision

The term supervision is quite complex and often poorly understood (Hawkins & Shoheit, 2000) and it draws together multiple concepts and skills. Bernard & Goodyear (1992) found the terms most often used for the supervisor in the literature were those of ‘counselor’, ‘teacher’, ‘consultant’, ‘monitor’ and ‘evaluator’ (Hart & Nance, 2003). Sweitzer and King (1999) add ‘sponsor’. Haynes, Corey and Moulton (2003) use supporter, mentor, adviser. Sweitzer and King (1999) cite three different definitions. The first is of Gordon & McBride (1996) who say it is ‘a process where two people... meet for the primary purpose of enhancing the personal and professional development of the student’. Collins (1993) says that supervision is ‘a dynamic relationship of unequal power, which is characterized by intermittent closeness and distance’. Moses & Hardin (1978) speak of ‘ongoing instruction and developing skills and knowledge to promote self actualization. Supervision should provide an extending experience that blends personal knowledge and personal qualities’ (Sweitzer & King, 1999, p. 88). Haynes et al (2003) speak of the ‘promotion of supervisee growth and development as a competent clinician and professional’ (p. 6), and cite Yontef (1997) taking the position ‘that supervision has the dual purposes of personal and professional development of the supervisee and protection of the clients’ (p. 7).

In the social work literature from which counselling supervision originated (Smith, 1996), supervision is seen as hierarchical and managerial including administrative supervision and educational supervision. Smith also argues that it is not possible to eliminate power differences in supervision. The term ‘gatekeeper’ is often used. The above shows that there are different styles of supervision and that the functions of supervision appear to be different depending on the context. Increasingly it seems as though supervisors see themselves as responsible for the development of the supervisee and the safety of the client and the profession. This seems to be a result of increasing regulation and litigation (Falvey, 2002). To me, this goes against the notion of a dialogic encounter. Before exploring this further, I will now look at what the supervisors interviewed say about supervision.

Supervisor Perceptions

In this more recent study, the author invited twelve supervisors who had worked with the above graduates, to complete an email survey about their supervision style and what they saw as the essence of supervision. Some of these supervisors also met with the author and shared their ideas. Of these, six had no formal training in supervision; four had trained in the Satir model of supervision; and, two had trained under the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy supervision. One had also trained in psychological supervision, and had completed a Narrative Supervision workshop. Six of them had been

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supervising trainees for more than ten years, three, from four to eight years and three for only one year.

\As most of them had no formal training in supervision, they developed their own models of supervision based either on their counselling training or on what they had observed from their own supervisors.

At the beginning I regarded my style of supervision as counselor-centred, based on a person-centred approach in the building of relationships with the supervisees and using psychodynamic approaches in helping the supervisees to understand implicit dynamics in counselling. Recently I have paid more attention to multicultural issues in doing supervision. The multicultural identities of the supervisees and their clients cultural identities, the Chinese collective cultural context in the working relationship; high context and symbolic communications and the hierarchical sensitivity in the Chinese are issues that I am interested in and aware of. I am now working on a multicultural supervision model.

Another commented:

I try to model my supervision on the way I was taught by my professor who was psychodynamic. I teach skills and work on personal development, both impacting on the other. I trust the supervisees. It's a facilitator growth-oriented approach.

A psychologist counsellor reported:

My only training is from workshops and what I learnt as a supervisee. Once you become a registered psychologist you can then register to become a supervisor which I did, which is ironic. You don't train to be a supervisor; you train to be a psychologist and once you've got clinical practice you can become a supervisor.

Traditionally in counselling, this used also to be the case. When you became an experienced counsellor you then took on the role of supporting new counsellors or trainees and helping them to develop their skills. This is quite a contrast to the hierarchical role where the supervisor takes on legal responsibility for clients. Another psychologist/counselor spoke of her model embodying two ideas:

One is the researcher/practitioner model, which is part of the psychology tradition; and the other model I use would be a narrative one. I think what the research approach does is encourage the supervisees to go back to the literature and find what evidence there is for best practice. It encourages students to think back, and to also research the individual's presenting problem that they are looking at and to come up with their own working model. The narrative approach I guess is an approach which I believe helps students to find some balance to the researcher/practitioner model. It lets supervisees tell their own story and allows me to... I guess, to be a bit more nurturing and I guess to be a

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bit more therapeutic in supervision I provide them, rather than just straight advice giving or literature handing out or direction giving.

These comments seem to embody a dialogic approach to working with the supervisees, rather than a hierarchical approach where there is unequal power in the relationship. Guilar (2006) notes that dialogic conversations take place between equals (fellow subjects)'. However, another supervisor commented:

My role is a mixture – a mentor, a model, a gatekeeper – it's about duty of care; a sounding board.

This role seems to place more responsibility on the supervisor and less on the supervisee. Even so, most of the supervisors interviewed spoke of the importance of developing a relationship with the trainees in supervision and of their personal development being an essential component of their professional development.

For me it's about for them to learn to be fully human and for me that's about... because I'm a firm believer in the relationship between the therapist and the client... that's so critical. You can teach people the practical kind of skill but ultimately if they haven't got that inherent or intrinsic essence I don't think they'll make it. So for me it's about bringing out the best in them as a human being and them being an authentic human being as well as being a counselor.

Another commented:

The personal transformation of the students then professionally lets them get their skills improved and I think that makes the difference and the greater sense of their identity and self-acceptance. Gaining that understanding and being more at home with themselves. That to me is far more important than watching a student do a technically perfect session. I'd rather see students struggling with the technical stuff but being truly human and connected and having their heart and soul in it and in relationship rather than seeing something technically perfect. Connection is important.

One of the counsellors who is also a psychologist noted that in clinical psychological supervision with trainees, it was more about a certificate of attainment that needed to be met. It is quite clear that supervision has nothing to do with counselling supervisees. Some of the counselling literature on supervision, also reiterates that counselling and supervision are totally separate. If the model of supervision is in the role of evaluator or gatekeeper or monitor, or duty of care, then it would indeed be difficult for a supervisee to bring in personal issues. However, the above psychologist counselor added that, there are times when the supervisee's personal issues impinge on their counselling work and then she is much more flexible about dealing with these issues:

My focus tends to be driven by what the intern is about and what is pressing for them... in the bigger picture of where they are at in themselves.

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Another supervisor added that the relationship with the supervisee needed to model the therapeutic relationship as it needed to be a relationship of trust and not one where the supervisor was judging the trainee. She added:

I don't think you need a degree in supervision to be a supervisor. There's a gap between what we are putting out there as specifications and the reality. Having the knowledge of a degree as opposed to not having it does not make a person a better supervisor or guarantee they can form a good relationship with the supervisee.

With the emphasis on the importance of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee, the supervisors were asked what they thought was the main thing the trainees needed to learn during supervision. The responses again focused more on the person of the supervisee than on skills development:

- *They need open-mindedness and the courage to face their own selves.*
- *Being is more important than doing.*
- *Joining and relationship is more important than looking for results.*
- *Learn not to judge themselves but to reflect on what they do.*
- *Personal congruence.*
- *Personal growth.*
- *Do not withdraw or avoid vulnerabilities.*

Skills were not ignored but almost all supervisors felt that if the relationship between themselves and the supervisee was a trusting one, then personal and professional development would take place.

Discussion

While the above study was quite small, there are some important points that emerge in terms of the challenges the counselling profession faces as it develops supervision training and models and as it moves towards regulation. Supervision with trainees is a learning time. Lee (2007) says that learning is 'a transformative experience... which enables the learner to approach their world in a different and more positive way and which changes (or transforms) the learner in its wake' (p. 334). She goes on to say that 'learning from practice is about questioning the governing variable rather than looking at the action itself'... implying that 'we will only internalize our learning when we are given the opportunity to reflect on experience' (p. 335). Mezirow (2003) notes that transformative learning 'transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations... to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change' (p. 58). This kind of transformative learning can only take place within a dialogic encounter.

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Guilar (2006) emphasizes that:

Respect is inherent in dialogic-enabling instruction, which invites dialogic listening. The work respect has Latin roots meaning to look again. Respect for another requires careful observation. Bill Isaacs in his book, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking together*, wrote, “To respect someone is to look for the springs that feed their pool of experience” (1999, p. 10 in Guilar, 2006)

This means the supervision relationship becomes one of equals sharing and reflecting together. The uniqueness of teacher and student (supervisor and supervisee) is a dominant feature. It means the supervisor who may still be an authority on some areas of the teaching, also has the courage to embrace dialogue and be open to learning from the student. Harlene Anderson (2002) sees supervision as a ‘collaborative learning community’. She says that:

Being collaborative does not mean that I deny or ignore my wealth of ideas and experiences, but that I too must be a learner, believing that I can learn as much as the participants. Importantly, collaborative teaching and learning challenge participants and me to reconstruct how we think about teaching and learning (p.2).

Such collaborative learning requires reflection and dialogue. Edwards and Chen (1999) developed a ‘strength-based wu-wei’ supervision practice, which support the notions of dialogic and collaborative learning. ‘Wu-wei’ is a Zen/Taoist concept for action/nonaction. “It relies on the naturalness of life, thus ‘arriving at a decision spontaneously, decisions which are effective to the degree that one knows how to let one’s mind alone, trusting it to work by itself” (p. 349). Edwards and Chen see that this strength-based model of supervision attempts to ‘side-step hierarchy in favour of co-constructing ideas with those supervised’ (p. 351). The same authors argue that supervision is an isomorphic process, implying that each person in the system has an influence on the other; hence the supervisor can use that principle to influence change. An example is that of the supervisor using their own counseling model but through reflection with the supervisee there is a co-creation of ideas and from this, new ideas emerge. Supervision moves to ‘*co*vision and *co*created vision where the *co*-visee is considered the expert and is expected to know more about what is happening in his or her sessions’ (p. 353).

Bromberg (2004) confirms that the essence of human nature includes the fact ‘that the human personality possesses the extraordinary capacity to negotiate continuity and change simultaneously, and will do so under the right relational conditions’ (p. 138). Are supervisors able to trust their supervisees so that they encourage this capacity and enable authentic growth to take place? In the research with graduates Moir-Bussy (2006) found that it is imperative for those involved in the counselling training process to model the dialogic approach, as it was within this encounter that the trainees developed further their reflective abilities and became more conscious of their own processes during the

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counselling. De Quincey (2005) says that development of consciousness is essential for human development and he states strongly that consciousness is about relationship and relationship is about consciousness. The Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (1987; 1996) refers to the mutual connectedness between people as ‘interbeing’; and he speaks also of *tiep hien* – two Vietnamese words of Chinese origin. *Tiep* means ‘to be in touch’ with what is going on in your body, your mind and your feelings; *hien* means ‘in the present time’ because the present is the moment in which we can be fully alive. *Tiep Hien* is *interbeing*.

If supervisors approached supervision from this relational perspective they would as Wu (1997) said, provide the space for the ‘wombing forth of the other’. Gunnlaugson (2007) cites Isaacs (1993) as

Interpret[ing] this holding space with the metaphor of a series of “containers” of conversation where participants learn how to develop a collective capacity to hold the creative tension between different ideas, conflicting emotions, and different ways of knowing. This creates an alchemical vessel where social learning processes can be contained, allowing tensions and paradoxes charged with energy to creatively unfold. In this way, generative dialogue offers a series of holding environments that accompany each stage of conversation (p. 141).

Such an approach to supervision in the learning context is no longer one that is governed by a power differential. The supervisee or co-see takes equal responsibility for his or her learning and the shift is towards an ‘interactive transparency’ (Edwards and Chen, 1999). Such a relationship would also dispel the anxiety that trainees experience if they are in an evaluative or hierarchical relationship and hence enable them to learn more. It is also important to encourage the co-seees to take responsibility for their own self-care. As one supervisor above noted, she has more time to nurture their development – reflective and dialogic conversations about this encourage the co-seee to assume this responsibility. In addition this personal and professional development, both supervisor and supervisee take responsibility for maintaining high standards in their counselling practice, and to the community of practice. By reflecting on their processes, researching the literature and supporting their work with evidence from the literature, both show a care and concern for the standard of the profession.

Some supervisors in this study had a metaphor for the supervision aspect of counsellor training. One said it is like ‘ripples of water as a pebble is directed into a pond’; another that it is ‘helping them to unfold like a flower’. A third saw it very much as a collaborative process:

I’m the navigator and the supervisee is the pilot. We want to fly high in the sky to see clear practice and I’m helping to find the direction but he/she is flying the plane. Maybe I’m the co-pilot. When necessary I take over the controls for a little while. They need to see the vista – the broad perspective.

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Conclusion

Transformative counsellor education can only take place with a dialogic or collaborative framework. As educators, supervisors and trainees face the challenge of becoming co-educators, co-visees; they work together to challenge their existing frames of reference and open themselves to be changed by each other and to grow more conscious and aware of their own processes. Together they take responsibility for the clients with whom they work. It is even possible at times to include the clients in the creative transformation process, for within the dialogic conversation, shared understanding becomes possible and new meanings emerge. Such a framework for supervision becomes evidence-based and ensures quality of standards because each is engaged in seeking deeper understanding and awareness of the processes in which counselling is taking place.

I would like to conclude by thanking all those who co-created these ideas with me through dialogue. This includes both the graduate counselors and the supervisors, as well as colleagues who became part of the conversation.

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