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TRAINEE REACTION TO VIDEOTAPE AS A FEEDBACK TECHNIQUE IN A COUNSELLING PRACTICUM

Over recent years a large literature devoted to the improvement of counsellor education programmes has accumulated. Committees within the American Personnel and Guidance Association (1963, 1964) have laid down statements of policy for counsellor preparation. These call in part for an understanding of the philosophical and theoretical issues in counselling, a wide range of practicum experiences, and "opportunities for self-evaluation and the development of deeper self understanding . . . for the counsellor candidates." (1963, p. 1063).

Influential writers in the field have also had much to say on the subject. Carkhuff (1969, p 151), for example, proposes that "the most effective programmes appear to be those that (1) focus upon primary facilitative and action orientated dimensions complemented by secondary dimensions involving potential preferred modes of treatment and (2) integrate the didactic, experiential and modeling aspects of learning". Common to most proposals for improved counsellor education is the need to integrate didactic theory with observable trainee practice in relating to a client. Considerable behavioural change is required of many neophyte counsellors because trainee-perceived, and trainer-observed counselling ability may be inconsistent with each other and with the quality of performance considered desirable by course objectives.

Festinger (1957) refers to the situation in which one's observable behaviour and one's subjective perception of that behaviour are discrepant as a state of dissonance. When a person is made aware of the discrepancy, the state of dissonance experienced will lead to behaviour change. Rokeach (1968) has induced dissonance to activate changes in attitudes and values. One means of invoking a state of dissonance is to provide objective feedback of relevant behaviour. Tuckman, Kendrick and Hyman (1969, p 616) demonstrated that "the behaviour and perception of experienced in-service teachers can be changed by invoking a discrepancy between a teacher's observed behaviour and his own self-perception of his behaviour, and then making him aware of this discrepancy via verbal feedback".

Drawing from such past research findings and authoritative position papers, the provision of accurate feedback was undertaken in a counsellor education programme in an attempt to integrate counselling theory with practice. Videotape was used as the preferred feedback medium.

Trainee reaction to the videotape feedback experience was evaluated in

an attempt firstly, to obtain a measure of acceptance of this medium in a counsellor training programme and secondly, to note whether trainee perceptions of their counselling skills and of their clients changed as a result of the state of dissonance invoked by providing visual and auditory feedback.

Subjects

The *Ss* were 58 of 60 school teachers who enrolled in a counsellor training programme leading to provincial certification as School guidance counsellors. There were 31 males and 27 females, with an average age of 32 years. Mean teaching experience for the *Ss* was 8.83 years but experience in counselling positions was limited. Work as full-time counsellors averaged 0.15 years and as part-time counsellors, 1.4 years. The *Ss* were drawn from a variety of schools: ten from Junior Public, twelve from Junior-Senior Public, ten from Senior Public, two from Junior High Schools, 19 from Secondary Schools, and five from Specialist Schools.

Method

The programme consisted of a core lecture series on the philosophy, theory and practice of counselling, with regular weekly seminar sessions devoted to audio-tape analysis. As a course requirement, each *S* completed a 20-30 minute counselling interview with a client chosen by the trainee from his or her school. An experienced counsellor made notes on each interview. Four trainees, together with the experienced counsellor (who acted as catalyst and resource person) attended a playback session a week after the taping was completed. During playback, the tape was stopped at the request of the leader or a trainee to facilitate the analysis of the counselling process in the light of theoretical issues being raised in the parallel lecture series. Responses highly valued in counselling theory were rewarded, while alternatives were explored when a poor response was noted.

TABLE 1
EFFECT OF NERVOUSNESS ON A VIDEOTAPED
COUNSELLING INTERVIEW

	Level Indicated							X	N	
	(Low)	1	2	3	4	5	6			7 (High)
Nervousness Before Interview		7	16	8	11	9	4	3	3.4	58
Nervousness During Interview		11	20	13	4	5	5	0	2.7	58
Effect of Nervousness		11	19	13	5	4	4	2	2.9	58

For the purpose of this programme, a counselling office was fitted with a large rug, and with drapes on all walls, to enhance the sound quality for recording. It was comfortably furnished with an occasional table, two chairs and a lamp, in which was concealed a sensitive microphone. A floodlight was bounced off the ceiling to supplement normal fluorescent illumination. (see figure 1.)

An adjacent office was used as the recording and observation room. A clear glass window between the offices allowed sufficient light for the cameras to record a sharp picture, while sealing the interview room off from equipment noise. Located in the equipment room were two cameras mounted on tripods, placed diagonally opposite counsellor and client. Adjustment of camera angles, zoom lenses, and special effects generator, permitted a variety of viewing combinations. Three control monitors (one for each camera and

FIGURE 1
PLAN OF PHYSICAL LAYOUT FOR VIDEO-TAPE RECORDING AND PLAYBACK

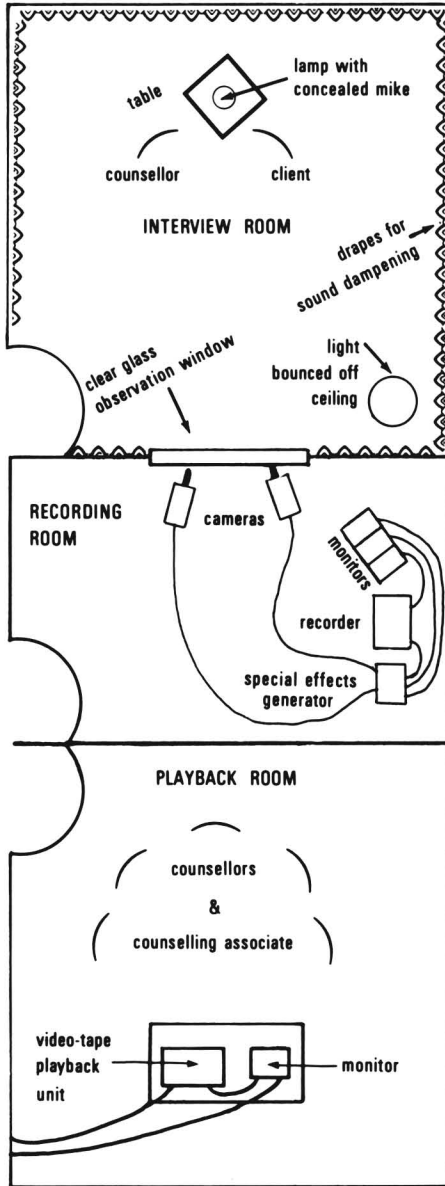


FIGURE 1
PLAN OF PHYSICAL LAYOUT FOR VIDEO-TAPE RECORDING AND PLAYBACK

one for the picture being recorded), a special effects generator (permitting split screen image), one videotape recorder and a quantity of reusable 1" videotapes completed the inventory.

A third office was used as a play-back room in which was placed a videotape play-back unit and monitor. A technician was hired to prepare equipment, organize tapes and to act as cameraman.

Six weeks following the conclusion of the course, a questionnaire was mailed to candidates to investigate the issues cited earlier. Fifty eight of the 60 trainees returned the questionnaire.

Results

A concern often raised in videotaping trainee counsellors is that the anxiety of both counsellor and client in the interview may be raised sufficiently to produce an abnormal relationship. To investigate this contention, trainees were asked to estimate on a seven point scale 1) the degree of nervousness experienced before the interview, 2) the degree of nervousness experienced during the interview, and 3) the debilitating effect of nervousness on the counselling process.

The responses (summarized in Table 1) indicate that trainees were moderately nervous before the interview, but that the level of nervousness significantly decreased (.05 level) as the interview progressed. Trainees felt that nervousness did not affect their performance in the interview to any great extent (mean of 2.9 on a seven point scale ranging from "no effect" to "very great effect").

An attempt was made to reduce anxiety by making the videotaped interview a course requirement independent of course gradings. Roulx (1969) had reported that the expected reaction of a supervisor engendered more physiological distress than did the actual ordeal of completing an audio-taped interview. In the present study, *Ss* indicated that nervousness would be increased by pressures of grading (mean 3.9 on a 7 point scale) and 34 of 58 indicated a preference for the experience to remain non-evaluative.

The second major area of investigation was the discrepancy between trainee-expected counselling effectiveness before the videotaped interview and trainee-perceived effectiveness following feedback. *Ss* were asked to rate their expected level of performance before the videotaped session on a seven point effectiveness dimension. *Ss* reported a mean expected effectiveness level of 3.7. The reported effectiveness level following feedback was 3.8, a marginal, but insignificant increase.

TABLE 2
EXPECTED EFFECTIVENESS BEFORE VIDEOTAPING AND
PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS AFTER FEEDBACK

	(Low)	Level Indicated							X	S ²	N
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (High)			
Expected Effectiveness Before Videotaping		3	7	15	20	9	3	1	3.7	1.63	58
Perceived Effectiveness After Feedback		5	9	10	12	10	11	0	3.8	2.76	57

A marked increase in the scatter of the scores was noted, however, after feedback. (see Table 2) Pre interview rating variance was 1.63. Post feedback rating variance was 2.76, a difference significant at the 0.5 level using

an F test of significance between variances. It is apparent that a state of dissonance was invoked by the feedback experience, causing trainees to rate their counselling ability further away from the mean in either a positive or negative direction. One third (20), of the trainees found their effectiveness as perceived during playback greater than expected, one third (18) found no change, and one third (19) found their effectiveness to be less than expected.

The third area of investigation showed that trainees perceived improvement in their counselling effectiveness following the videotaping experience. Fifty-two respondents rated their improvement between "two" and "seven" on a seven point scale. The mean level reported was 4.4. Three Ss did not respond to the question, and three reported minimal improvement. (see Table 3) One S indicated that his counselling had worsened as a result of the experience (a rating of "four") while 57 others indicated that their counselling was "no worse."

TABLE 3
CHANGES IN COUNSELLING SKILLS FOLLOWING PLAYBACK

	Level Indicated							S ²	N		
	(Low)	1	2	3	4	5	6			7	(Much
Level of Improvement in Counselling as a result of videotape experience	(No improvement)	3	4	7	13	12	13	3	(Much improvement)	4.3	55
	(No Worse)	57	0	0	1	0	0	0	(Much Worse)	1.0	58

The didactic, theoretical section of the course placed heavy emphasis on improving trainee awareness of client verbal and non-verbal responses. To further assess the usefulness of feedback for integrating counselling theory with practice, Ss were asked to rate any change in their perception of clients that had occurred as a result of the videotape feedback. Eleven reported that no change had taken place but 46 noted some positive change. A mean change level of 3.7 on a seven point scale was reported. A rating of the general usefulness of the videotaped interview and the feedback provided indicated a mean satisfaction level of 5.6 on a seven point scale. Only one trainee rated the experience as not at all useful.

Discussion

Trainee counsellors are an important source of programme evaluation and their reactions to experimental innovations should be considered an integral part of developing new approaches to counsellor education. Despite the methodological weaknesses of this post evaluative study, the data yielded provide some suggestions for counsellor educators.

It is apparent that the videotaping of at least one interview during training was considered very useful by the Ss. Many indicated that more than one interview should be videotaped and some recommended as many as five or six. A preference was shown for the interview to be an ungraded requirement of a course. It was apparent that anxiety, which otherwise was not

debilitating, would be raised considerably by using the videotape for evaluative purposes.

By providing accurate audio and visual feedback, a state of dissonance was invoked. *Ss* rated their counselling ability significantly higher or lower after feedback than they had expected. In the present study, *Ss* reported increased counselling effectiveness in their schools following playback and also noted an increased accuracy in their perception of clients.

It may be concluded therefore, that the trainee counsellors in this study perceived a great deal of value in the use of videotape as a feedback technique for integrating counselling theory with practice.

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