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Trainee Counsellors' Perceptions of their Experiences of Recording for Supervision

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Abstract

Recording and reviewing counselling sessions in supervision is commonly practised in New Zealand, particularly during counsellor training, yet little research has been conducted into trainee experiences of this process. This article reports on one aspect of an MEd research project which generally explored student counsellors' perceptions of recording during training. The focus of the article is counselling students' perceptions of the effects of recording counselling interviews for the purpose of supervision. Counselling students from five tertiary educational settings in New Zealand participated in individual or focus group interviews to discuss their experiences of recording counselling interviews. Emerging themes from the data included trainee anxiety affecting students' ability to be completely present in the counselling interview; ethical issues and the effects on their clients; ensuring safety in practice, and recording as a useful tool for development. Most participants considered the benefits of recording for supervision outweighed the drawbacks, but highlighted areas for consideration. Implications for ethical and effective use of recording and reviewing counselling sessions during supervision are considered.

Keywords: Counsellor education/supervision, professional development, ethics, recording client interviews

Supervision in counselling and psychotherapy is an essential component of ethical practice as well as an important process in continuing professional development (Wheeler & Richards, 2007), particularly, it may be suggested, during counsellor/psychotherapist training. Clause 5.9, "Maintaining Competent Practice," in the NZAC *Code of Ethics* (NZAC, 2002, p. 6) stipulates that "counsellors shall maintain their competence through regular supervision." Within the *Code*, the guidelines for practice

state that the purpose of professional supervision is "for counsellors to reflect on and develop effective and ethical practice. It also has a monitoring purpose with regard to counsellors' work…This may involve…use of videotapes and audiotapes" (p. 11). Indeed, the reviewing of video-recorded sessions by a counsellor's supervisor is stipulated as a requirement when seeking full membership of NZAC.

The benefits of using video or audio recordings to gauge the accuracy of student clinical work have been widely presented in the literature (Aveline, 1992; Goldberg, 1985; Haggerty & Hilsenroth, 2011; Kagan, 1980; Noelle, 2003; Pelling & Renard, 1999; Roth & Pilling, 2008). In fact some scholars have argued that reliance on trainee self-reporting of counselling practice alone has serious drawbacks, including the poor reliability of trainees' recollections (Noelle, 2003); limited memory (Haggerty & Hilsenroth, 2011), and the pressure trainees feel to present an overly positive impression of their work to supervisors (Noelle, 2003). However, much of this literature highlights advantages for the supervisor in his or her monitoring role rather than for the trainee therapist directly. Equally, a number of writers have reported potential disadvantages in the use of videotape in supervision (Aveline, 1992; 1997; Betcher & Zinberg, 1988; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). Aveline (1992) suggested that taping may be oppressive to trainee therapists, hampering their learning and creativity in addition to promoting stress. Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) expressed concerns that recording may restrict a trainee's natural style and therefore affect the authenticity of the recorded interview. In order to highlight the student perspective, this article presents trainee counsellors' reported experiences of recording for supervision. The following literature review discusses research from a variety of perspectives in relation to the topic.

The benefits of recording

The developmental role of supervision during counsellor training

Hawkins and Shohet (1989) identified three roles of supervision: supportive, management or monitoring, and education. The educational role within supervision aims to give counsellors the opportunity to receive feedback, develop new understandings, and receive information. Carroll (2004) affirmed the educational function of supervision, which may be particularly relevant for counsellors in training. From an educational perspective, Gosling (2003) reminds us of the importance of formative feedback for student learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 102) suggest that feedback consists of "information provided after instruction that seeks to provide knowledge and skills or to develop particular attitudes." Their approach proposes

three questions: "How am I going?", "Where am I going?" and "What to do next?" Clearly, recording and reviewing tapes during supervision presents unlimited opportunities for formative feedback to enhance trainee counsellor learning. Research by Kagan (1980) confirmed recording's potential for learning in supervision. He claimed that counsellors who re-experience a counselling session via videotape in supervision can be empowered to understand and act upon perceptions to which they would otherwise not attend. Indeed, his Interpersonal Process Recall as a supervision model has been used widely to help increase counsellor self-awareness regarding the therapeutic relationship.

Video recording therapy sessions is often recommended to increase accuracy within supervision processes, which in turn will enhance professional development (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). Pelling and Renard (1999) also suggested that it enables high levels of accuracy in observation of counsellor/client interactions, which can be then be evaluated with a view to further developing a counsellor's skills. A recording of a counselling interview may facilitate a supervisor's ability to identify incongruities between verbal and non-verbal behaviours that may then form the basis of discussion with the counsellor. In addition, any biases that may be negatively affecting the counsellor's practice may be noted, enabling specific feedback to be provided by the supervisor. This direct observation of the counsellor's work by the supervisor encourages a higher level of feedback (related to self-regulation and self-assessment) and, by association, benefits the counsellor's professional development (Pelling & Renard, 1999).

In accord, Aveline (1992) earlier claimed that as a supervisor, viewing a recording "brings the patient alive and increases my involvement" (p. 350). Viewing recordings during supervision demonstrates how a therapist deals with transference and emotionally charged issues, which can then be discussed with the supervisor. Similarly, Schön (1983) explored the potential of recording as an effective tool to facilitate counsellor reflection on counselling processes. These ideas have more recently led to the development of video-stimulated recall (VSR) in educational research, a reflective process that facilitates revelation about practitioners' thinking and feeling when they are engaged in specific behaviours (Powell, 2004). Successful practitioners learn from experience (Schön, 1983); therefore, the value of reflection "on action," or in this case, on their counselling, with other practitioners (supervisors), alongside the monitoring of their practice in process (or "in action"), is deemed a crucial factor in learning, keeping practitioners alive to the uniqueness and uncertainty of practice situations (Woolfe, Dryden, & Strawbridge, 2003).

The monitoring role of supervision in counsellor education

According to the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (2011), one purpose of supervision is to maintain adequate standards of counselling to protect and ensure the best interests of clients. Huhra, Yamokoski-Maynhart, and Prieto (2008) advocated for the use of video recordings in supervision to ensure proper client care, as they suggest that trainee reports of clinical events are unreliable due to trainees' "anxiety, inexperience and need to engage in impression management" (p. 414). Indeed, Webb and Wheeler (1998) suggested that supervision can evoke a fear of being found inadequate, both as a therapist and as a person. Findings from their research indicated that trainee counsellors were significantly less able to disclose sensitive issues in supervision (Webb & Wheeler, 1998). Therefore, trainees may present themselves in a positive light, perhaps even withholding information in the attempt to gain an element of control in the supervision relationship (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996).

Recent research by Haggerty and Hilsenroth (2011) stated that recording is in fact necessary for use in supervision, as a trainee's memory has limitations. They have asserted that transience, absent-mindedness, misattribution, and bias collude to hamper effective supervision and therefore the process is aided by the use of video so that the trainee and supervisor can better evaluate what is happening. In addition, video can aid the supervisor's recognition of particular non-verbal behaviour that occurs within a trainee's counselling session. This is important for the supervisor's monitoring role, as non-verbal behaviour is indicative of the trainee's attunement and the therapeutic alliance (Haggerty & Hilsenroth, 2011).

Supervision and positive effects for clients

Pelling and Renard (1999) suggested that recording counselling sessions for the purpose of supervision benefits clients as well as counsellors, as it enhances the quality of the therapy the client will receive in future sessions. A video recording of a counselling session allows a third party to oversee the process and comment on the dynamics as they are enacted, which may facilitate future therapeutic good practice. The supervisor may also provide expert insight into the client's interactions, thus facilitating effective interventions by the counsellor and consequently leading to a desired outcome for the client (Pelling & Renard, 1999). However, will the therapeutic skills of the counsellor in training improve sufficiently swiftly to benefit the client who has been subject to the recording?

Drawbacks of recording

Student anxiety

A number of the researchers cited earlier, while noting the benefits of recording for supervision, also suggested that the process may be intrusive and anxiety-promoting for both trainees and clients. For example, Aveline (1997) proposed that resistance to taping stems from trainee anxiety, vulnerability, the risk of negative self-image, and the evaluation function of reviewing and playing back recordings. Haggerty and Hilsenroth (2011) concurred, suggesting that recording can often make therapists anxious because of the knowledge that "someone will be viewing the good, the bad and the ugly of their sessions" (p. 201). However, Schnarch (1981) suggested that this resistance may not be due to recording, but instead arises from a more generalised anxiety related to their trainee status. Ellis, Krengel, and Beck (2002) found that such negative effects are transitory and diminish with even a limited exposure to recording.

Authenticity

When evaluating the advantages of recording a counselling session in terms of objectivity, the question of authenticity or the "naturalness" of the situation arises (Speer & Hutchby, 2003). If the recording of the session has an effect on the participants, then perhaps the recording produced is not an accurate representation. If authenticity is in question, and the recording process has affected the counsellor's practice, this may mean that the accuracy suggested for supervision by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) is questionable. Accordingly, Betcher and Zinberg (1988) noted that "What may appear to be objectivity may in fact be a more far reaching restrictiveness because the therapist feels more inclined to 'follow orders' at the cost of his or her natural style" (p. 800). Further, it is believed by some researchers that there are potential problems in the evaluation of videotaped interviews as opposed to direct observation. Waltrip et al. (1988) purported that:

> *While a taped interview may provide a standard situation…it does not provide the experience of "being in the room" with the patient. The clinician's phenomenological experience in the interview provides important information for clinical judgement, which is absent while viewing a videotape.* (p. 200)

Ethical considerations

Grant (2006) suggested that during the process of recording, the client loses the unconditional regard of the counsellor because he or she must also have some regard

for the views of the audience—who may be the supervisor—as well as for the recording device. This opinion supports earlier research conducted by Roberts and Renzaglia (1965), who found that student counsellors trained in the Person Centred approach to counselling were less client-centred when they believed an interview was being recorded. Furthermore, because the counsellor and client are making a recording for an unknown audience, Grant (2006) claimed that they were therefore involved in another project that could compromise "the naīve authenticity of the counselling engagement" (p. 30). This view is worthy of consideration although it is not based on empirical research.

Counsellors who request permission to record sessions with clients may be placing them in a "double bind" situation which may create difficulty for a client who would want to please the counsellor and so may deny her own fears about the process (Grant, 2006). This concern reflects Aveline's (1992) warning that recording may be abusive to clients. Aveline suggested that a client is in a weaker position and may be subject to an abuse of power by the therapist. Confidentiality was also noted by Aveline (1992) as being vital in therapy, and he reminded readers that this may be compromised when recording. Consequently, as part of the therapist/client agreement, he advocated for the provision that the recorder be turned off at the request of the client, at any time.

When considering the ways in which the participants in counselling processes view the use of recording in counselling sessions, questions arise about the ways in which counsellors in training are affected. This research therefore investigated trainees' perceptions of their experiences of recording their counselling practice and reviewing the tapes during supervision.

Method

This original research used social constructionism as its theoretical foundation, where knowledge is defined as the co-negotiated meaning that emerges from people's social interactions within the world. Therefore people's lived reality is constructed by them and based on their interpretation (Sarantakos, 2005). The focus of the original research was trainee counsellor perceptions of audio/video recording of their counselling interviews for use during supervision. As perceptions involve co-constructed meanings rather than "objective reality," a qualitative, interpretive design was utilised. An effective method for capturing people's constructed meanings is a face-to-face interview or "a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 18). Data

for this research project were therefore collected using individual and group semi-structured interviews.

Participants

The participants were a volunteer group of 13 student counsellors, aged between 30 and 60 years, six males and seven females, at various stages in their counsellor training and recruited from five tertiary institutions in New Zealand. In the presentation of the research findings, the participants, for the purpose of differentiation, are described as either experienced or novice trainees and/or recorders. This relates to the number of counselling hours accumulated to date as well as the number of sessions recorded (for further participant details and information about their experience see Gossman & Miller, 2011).

Procedure

Ten participants were interviewed individually for 40 to 75 minutes, and three participants were interviewed in a group for two hours and 30 minutes. All interviews were recorded by an audio digital recorder and later transcribed. Participants were sent copies of their interview transcripts to ensure appropriate representation of their perceptions and opinions.

Ethics

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Canterbury and the researcher adhered to the NZAC Ethical Guidelines for Research. Participants were provided with information about the nature of the research, how it was to be conducted, and their right to withdraw from the process at any time. Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to the recording of interviews. Confidentiality was addressed by using pseudonyms and removing any specific identifiable characteristics from the final report (Gossman & Miller, 2011). Participant assessment was not affected by their decision to take part in this research.

Findings and discussion

Data were analysed first by coding the interview transcripts by hand and then using Boeije's (2002) Constant Comparison method. Further information about this process is detailed in Gossman and Miller (2011). Emerging themes associated with recording practice for review in supervision are now presented. The interviewees are represented

by allocated initials for the purposes of distinction, but these are not associated with their real names.

Theme one: A tool for development

All of the participants indicated that recording and reviewing interviews with their supervisor was helpful in monitoring their performance and enhancing professional development. A quote from S, an experienced counsellor and recorder, reveals why he believed video recording was beneficial to the development of his counselling practice:

> *I always feel that video recording is good because you can see a lot and hear a lot; it's easier to do analysis of the whole thing because you are able to see it. For example if someone is deep breathing or sighing, it's easier to see on video and so in terms of analysis it is easier to talk about it with my supervisor. For me personally, I have always found that a video session—when you sat down and analysed the session—it has really helped. I mean for me it's fantastic.*

Most participants acknowledged the potential of recording and reviewing practice as an opportunity for positive reinforcement from a supervisor. M, an experienced recorder and counsellor, explained:

> *I tend to hammer myself more than praise myself, I do tend to see more of the things I did wrong than the things I did right, but then when I have been able to take a couple of them [tape recordings of counselling sessions] to supervision, she [the supervisor] said: "Did you realise that you were doing this and you have done that all the way through?" and I'm, like, "Oh, have I?" And she says, "Yes and that's a good thing." And I am like "Is it?" I hadn't really noticed I was doing it. And you start to think that the training and the practice and the learning are starting to come naturally—some of it. And for her to hear that, and say that to me—I couldn't have picked it up for myself in that instance.*

Continuing with the developmental theme, V, a relatively experienced recorder and counsellor, described the recording process as "painful but very good."

> *Just in the way you see and hear how I respond in situations and interventions and how easy it is to follow the client in a particular way and not in others. How many options there are during a session, you know? That's one of the things that struck me: I did this, when I could have done that…and why didn't I ask about that? Yes and the parallel process that goes on. I mean without a good taped session I wouldn't be aware of it so much, unless it was really obvious and really stood out.*

> *But it is really good at picking out the more subtle parallel processing. I knew I would get into supervision and get feedback that would be constructive.*

The above quotes highlight the benefits of recording and reviewing in supervision, specifically its use in providing essential formative (higher level) feedback to the trainee, lending support to the claims of Pelling and Renard (1999), Kagan (1980), and Aveline (1992).

Some students were acutely uncomfortable with the recording process overall; however, even the most reluctant recorder, G, who only recorded when absolutely necessary, expressed a perception of its usefulness in supervision:

> *I suppose you need it to go off something—you know, how I'm doing? So, you know, they [supervisors] get to hear me talking with someone. And for me the best thing is the issues that come up—when they are heard in supervision, they can advise me and comment on that. I suppose it is the same thing if I bring it up verbally though.*

The tentative suggestion that perhaps self-reporting may be just as beneficial as reviewing recordings does not concur with the comments of Haggerty and Hilsenroth (2011), who argued that supervision that depends solely on self-reporting is limited. It may be more consistent, however, with Noelle's (2003) position, which highlights the advantages of this method, suggesting that there is a richness of information conveyed in self-report that may be absent in videotaped sessions.

Theme two: Safety in practice

Many of the trainees maintained that recording and reviewing counselling sessions with their supervisor provided a model for safety in practice. Participants noted that when this information was shared with clients, they may have been assured by the knowledge that their counsellor's practice was monitored by a clinical supervisor. For example, M explained:

> *I think it makes me more professional and much more aware of trying to follow the model. I think that the benefit for them [clients] is that it keeps me on my toes and it keeps me aware that I could be monitored and in that sense, I think there is a benefit [to the client]…there is a safety issue as well.*

Similarly, V commented:

> *I think that in a roundabout way it is [beneficial to clients]…it will give them an idea that my work with them is safe, it is being monitored.*

Huhra, Yamokoski-Maynhart, and Prieto (2008) advocated for the use of video recordings in supervision to ensure proper client care. The perceptions of many participants in the current study provided encouragement for its use in promoting safety in practice.

Theme three: Promoting anxiety

The research findings illustrate that all trainee counsellors initially found recording for supervision to be anxiety promoting for a number of reasons. Many participants reported an increase in self-consciousness, as demonstrated in a quote by S, an experienced recorder:

> *There is a little bit of human nature in trying to be perfect, so sometimes I can become self-conscious, like when there is something there that can be analysed by somebody else like my supervisor—I am going to try as hard as possible not to have a "boo boo" question in there!*

Some participants reported extreme anxiety around recording for supervision. One participant, W, a novice recorder with relatively little counselling experience, explained this in terms of her feelings of vulnerability as a trainee being assessed by someone more experienced and then falling short of expectations.

> *It feels like the ultimate in tests, you know? I would rather take it to my tutor—by a long shot—and be marked on it than take it to my supervisor. Because she has been in the game for a long time and I haven't, so there is a whole inferiority thing happening—you know? She could kick me off my placement. I mean she is kind of judging me as a working counsellor and I don't really feel like I make the grade just yet.*

The quote reflects Aveline's (1997) recognition that trainee resistance to taping stems from anxiety, vulnerability, the risk of negative self-image, and the evaluation function of reviewing and playing back recordings. As W has very little experience of recording, Ellis, Krengel, and Beck's (2002) assertion may be pertinent—that such negative effects are transitory and may diminish with further exposure to recording.

The trainee perceptions highlight the complexities of supervisory relationships as well as the power imbalance that is widely recognised in the literature (e.g., Noelle, 2003; Rosenbaum & Ronen, 1998; Webb & Wheeler, 1998). As Rosenbaum and Ronen (1998, p. 224) suggested, "the question of trust may be more of a problem in the supervisory relationship than in therapy;" therefore, recording for supervision has implications for the supervisory alliance, and perhaps vice versa.

Theme four: Ethics/effects on the client

All interviewees discussed their concerns about how recording may have affected their clients, outlining ethical issues that might arise. A number of sub-themes emerged from the data, namely: power relationships and informed consent to record the counselling interview; confidentiality, and compliance and authenticity.

Power relationship and informed consent to record

A major concern highlighted by the trainees was associated with the power relationship between themselves and their client when asking for permission to record sessions. Nine out of the 13 participants commented on times when they were in doubt about the ethics surrounding seeking client permission to record sessions, voicing their concern that the client may not feel able to decline should they be uncomfortable about participating. An experienced recorder, E, stated:

> *I felt really nervous about asking people and also a bit embarrassed—just really cautious about putting too much onto someone. It sets off that protective feeling. But also it felt like a power dynamic was being set up and I was potentially in the position where I was going to be imposing—and I didn't really like it. Yeah, I struggled with that. I think that I find that clients are doing us a favour and I think that there is something going on there that could be a little dodgy ethically.*

L, a fellow focus-group interviewee and less experienced recorder, also expressed concerns about this issue:

> *And the other thing about that power dynamic is whether clients feel that they can actually refuse. That concerns me, it really concerns me. And the other concern is clients who agree and who go away and think about it…I think clients would actually agree in the moment, go away and have huge doubts during the week, but can't come back and say because of their lack of assertiveness perhaps—and their anxiety levels. I worry about the guilt and shame that that introduces for those clients.*

G, interviewed individually, felt particularly strongly about the ethics of recording interviews with clients from different cultural backgrounds. She highlighted her concern for client feelings and discussed her own experiences of being asked to participate in recorded counselling sessions:

> *I didn't feel good about asking them because I remember when I was asked to do it—and I didn't want to be taped but I didn't want to disappoint the person*

> *asking. And I know that as an Islander…you are probably going to get a "yes" from people. And people sense that it's not really a good thing to be asked—but if you ask them, they'll do it…because you asked them—but they don't feel happy that you asked them. Yeah, I was uncomfortable that I was asking anything from a client. It's just not worthy—they didn't come to help me with my counselling practice. They think that I am just there for them.*

The trainee perceptions lend voice to Grant's (2006) view that counsellors who request permission to record sessions with clients may be placing them in a "double bind" situation, as they would seek to please the counsellor. They also reflect Aveline's (1992) suggestion that the client is in a weak position and thus potentially subject to an abuse of power by the therapist. However, Haggerty and Hilsenroth (2011) assert that if clients are fully briefed about the process and the reasons for recording, then they are likely to agree. They also suggest that trainee objections to recording may "represent their own anxiety as their concern for, or anticipation of, their patients' reactions" (p. 205).

Confidentiality

All participants perceived confidentiality to be of paramount importance during the recording process and many discussed how they ensured clients were fully informed about what would happen to the recording once the session was over. Six of the 13 student counsellors interviewed believed that the issue of confidentiality promoted anxiety in clients when recording. One relatively inexperienced recorder, G, believed that recording prevented clients discussing some issues due to concerns about confidentiality:

> *The clients that I have counselled, they…were very conscious of the recording—and it's happened quite a few times—as we have gone to finish the session and I turned it off (the recorder) they would start talking about what I think they wanted to talk about…and it was something that they hadn't talked about the whole session we had been talking!*

Another, more experienced recorder, B, concurred:

> *I noticed that when I asked one lady a particularly deep question, she looked over at the video camera before answering and I actually offered to turn it off—so how did that reflect? It shut down an area of that person's life that needed to be looked at or talked about.*

A similar perception was noted by S, another experienced recorder:

> *I have also noticed that even when the clients get into it and it is okay when we are recording, when they want to say something really sensitive either they shy away from the recorder or they look at the recorder and talk. So you have created something there. So the process would not be quite so easy for him, you know?*

These findings align with Aveline's (1992) warning that client confidentiality may be compromised when recording. They also highlight the benefits of the provision in the therapist/client agreement that the tape be turned off at the request of a client. Alternatively, as Haggerty and Hilsenroth (2011) have argued, student concerns about client confidentiality may also be a reflection of their own anxieties around recording.

Compliance and authenticity

Six participants suggested that the recording process facilitated compliance, as the client, in an effort to please the counsellor, acted out the role of "a good client" who had been "successfully treated" by them. If client compliance is an issue with recording, this surely will affect the authenticity of the session and perhaps therefore its use for professional development in supervision. The following quote from E, an experienced counsellor, provides a good example of this theme.

> *Yeah, I mean I had that word [compliance] going round in my head…what I think I have noticed with some of the clients—when they have done me this favour of agreeing to be recorded—the sessions in my mind often demonstrate a lot of compliance. Where they are very compliant clients for that session—where they hear my questions and they answer in kind of beautiful, you know, almost rote ways. I have known times when I thought "Oh, we have just had this great kind of formulaic session" because they [the client] have gone along with me and that is often different with how we would normally interact.*

These findings have implications for authenticity and accuracy during supervision where recordings are used (Pelling & Renard, 1999; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). It may be useful to discuss Betcher and Zinberg's (1988) question "What exactly is being reviewed?"

Implications for practice

The findings of this study may be useful to inform strategies for improving the use of recording for the purposes of supervision—for example, by providing themes for a

dialogue between supervisors and their supervisees about desired outcomes for professional development and the best way of achieving these using recording. In addition, the trainee reports advocate the use of a model of supervision that utilises opportunities to provide reinforcing, formative feedback to students that is beneficial to their development. This process may empower supervisees and therefore help to reduce anxiety about recording their practice.

The students' concern for their clients during the recording process was a recurrent theme from this research. The findings, therefore, emphasise the need for ethical recording practices with clients, particularly concerning client/counsellor agreements with provision to halt the recording when the client indicates its necessity.

Similarly highlighted is the need for selective and sensitive recruitment of clients, providing clear information and explanation, particularly concerning confidentiality and the safety and developmental benefits of recording. This may promote client empowerment and minimise their anxiety around recording. Trainee concerns for their clients signal the need for mindfulness of the power relationship between counsellors and clients when seeking consent to record sessions.

Finally, and not least importantly, evaluation of trainee perceptions of their experiences of recording their practice, alongside the existing literature, indicates that early introduction and frequent recording of practice may be beneficial in reducing trainee anxiety and may therefore increase the authenticity of reviewing the tapes in supervision.

Limitations and implications for future research

The present study contains a number of limitations. The first is that the study comprised only the subjective, self-reported, reflected perceptions of these particular participants. Given that a consistent predictor of counselling outcome is the therapeutic alliance (Wampold & Brown, 2005) which is affected by counsellor attitude, the perceptions of counsellors are important (Gossman & Miller, 2011). However, future research establishing the views of clients who have taken part in recorded interviews would also be worthwhile.

Trainee counsellors participating in this study provided a colourful picture of their perceptions of the effects of recording on their own experience and that of their clients. Selecting participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds may have yielded different findings, as recording therapeutic interviews may be perceived differently according to ethnic origin and cultural identification. This aspect is also suggested for future research. While a number of students raised concerns about requesting

permission to record counselling interviews and the implied power relationship between counsellors and clients in this situation, only one introduced the possible influence of cultural differences on perceptions of participating in counselling processes when recording is used (Gossman & Miller, 2011).

It may also be useful to explore the ways in which the relationships between supervisors and their supervisees may influence the effectiveness of recording for supervision. Another dimension warranting consideration concerns supervisors' perceptions and experiences of the recording and reviewing process during supervision and the effects on the supervisory alliance.

Conclusion

This article presents the findings from one aspect of an investigation into the perceptions of trainee counsellors about their experiences of recording and reviewing their counselling interviews for supervision. Results from a rich dataset have demonstrated that student counsellors perceive this process to be anxiety promoting, affecting their ability to be completely present in the counselling interview, although extremely beneficial to their professional development. Most participants considered the benefits of recording for supervision to outweigh the drawbacks, but highlighted a number of ethical areas for consideration. The findings provide themes for discussion that may have implications for the ethical and effective use of recording and for reviewing counselling sessions during supervision.

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