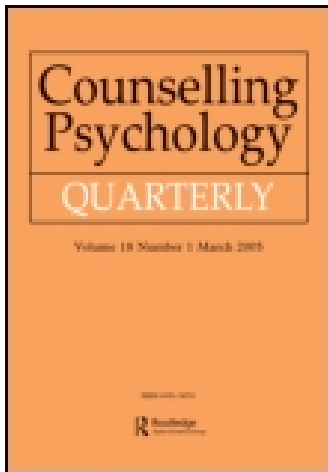


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## Counselling Psychology Quarterly

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccpq20>

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Published online: 28 May 2013.

To cite this article: Alex L. Pieterse, Minsun Lee, Arthur Ritmeester & Noah M. Collins (2013) Towards a model of self-awareness development for counselling and psychotherapy training, *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 26:2, 190-207, DOI: [10.1080/09515070.2013.793451](https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2013.793451)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2013.793451>

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## Towards a model of self-awareness development for counselling and psychotherapy training

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*(Received 30 October 2012; final version received 2 April 2013)*

Self-awareness has been considered to be a critical ingredient for effective counselling and psychotherapy. However, training models have failed to provide an integrated and explicit approach to self-awareness development. The authors therefore introduce and describe the integrated model of self-awareness development and discuss potential applications for counselling and psychotherapy training.

**Keywords:** self-awareness; integrated model; self-awareness training counselling; psychotherapy training

The person of the therapist has been widely acknowledged as a critical tool in the provision of effective counselling and psychotherapy and has commonly been referred to as “self as instrument” (Baldwin, 2000; McWilliams, 2004). As such, the therapist’s use of self is predicated on the need for the therapist to have a sufficient level of self-awareness. Here self-awareness is understood to be the therapist’s knowledge and understanding of himself or herself in relation to values, beliefs, life experiences and worldview (McGoldrick, 1998). While the construct of awareness has been emphasized in the multicultural, psychotherapy and supervision literature (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; McWilliams, 2004; Stoltenberg, 2005), there appears to be a dearth of published scholarship focusing on the process of self-awareness development among counselling and psychotherapy trainees. Indeed, self-awareness development is often viewed as a by-product of the therapist’s training. Therefore, the focus on self-awareness tends to take place in rather distinct domains, as opposed to an integrated and systematic focus on self-awareness development throughout the counsellor’s training.

To promote discussion of self-awareness and counsellor training, this paper provides a review of current approaches to the facilitation of self-awareness in counsellor training. Additionally, a framework for self-awareness development that draws on well-known and widely accepted constructs within psychotherapy and counselling training including individual and group identities and developmental processes is provided. As such the model seeks to provide an integrated approach in which self-awareness development in counsellor training can be made to be more explicit. Note: the words counsellor and psychotherapist, and counselling and psychotherapy are used interchangeably.

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## Centrality of self-awareness

### *Self-awareness: a definition*

Although the concept of self-awareness in counselling and psychotherapy might appear to be intuitive and therefore widely understood, a specific definition of self-awareness has been elusive (Williams, Hurley, O'Brien, & DeGregorio, 2003). As described by Williams et al. self-awareness tends to be either viewed as global knowledge of one's perceptions and experiences (cognitive understanding) or a more temporary condition of focusing on the self (physiological and affective reactions). The former might include an understanding of one's values system and relationship processes, whereas the latter involves moment-to-moment awareness of feelings and bodily sensations. Given that both aspects of self-awareness are likely to be activated during training, the model presented in this discussion highlights the dynamic relationship between cognitive understanding and affective reactions. Hence, we define self-awareness as a state of being conscious of one's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes, and knowing how these factors are shaped by important aspects of one's developmental and social history (see Gergen, 1991). From this perspective, the objective of self-awareness training is for the counsellor to develop the ability to identify their personal reactions and to understand and possibly utilize these reactions within the counselling relationship. Thus, the focus on self-awareness development outlined in the current model builds on a large tradition of psychotherapy training that emphasizes the role and function of the therapist's self in the provision of effective counselling and psychotherapy (Aponte & Winter, 2000).

### *Self-awareness and the therapeutic process*

The importance of self-awareness in the therapeutic process has been framed as a critical and indispensable ingredient. Edwards and Bess (1998) write:

The development of a therapist's self-awareness must carry at least as much weight in his or her professional education and training as the accumulation of knowledge about theories and methodologies. (p. 98)

A review of the counselling and psychotherapy literature quickly reveals the centrality of self-awareness to the therapeutic process, however, contradictory findings and varied points of emphasis have resulted in the notion of self-awareness being more implicit than explicit. Within counselling and psychotherapy, the personal processes and reactions of the therapist are often understood in terms of countertransference (see Gelso & Hayes, 2007). From this perspective, self-insight is essential for the counsellor to manage and utilize their countertransferential reactions in a manner that does not impede the therapeutic process (Gelso & Hayes, 2001). Interestingly, some scholars have discussed a type of self-awareness that can be potentially hindering to the therapeutic process. Williams (2003) examined therapists' momentary states of self-awareness, defined as "momentary attention to his or her own thoughts, feelings, physiological responses and behaviours (p. 178)", as a potential hindrance to counselling. Williams found that this type of momentary self-absorption was inversely related to clients' perceptions of therapist helpfulness. In a later study, Fauth and Williams (2005) demonstrated that therapists' in-session self-awareness did not hinder the counselling

process unless the intensity of self-awareness distracted the therapist from the client. These results led Williams (2008) to argue that self-focused attention is a different type of self-awareness than that associated with insight.

Another important influence in the area of self-awareness has been the family therapy literature. An understanding of the influence of family of origin on the therapist's development has also been considered to be an important component of self-awareness development (Getz & Protinsky, 1994). From this perspective, trainees' understanding of their family of origin dynamics in turn facilitates their understanding of the potential sources of their reactions to clients and how these reactions might influence the counselling relationship (Beck, 1997; Jorgensen et al., 2003).

Regardless of which school of counselling one adheres to, the growing appreciation of socio-cultural aspects of counselling and psychotherapy clearly emphasizes the need for self-awareness. The tripartite model of multicultural counselling competence – knowledge, awareness and skills – (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) is now widely accepted. In this model, awareness refers to the counsellors' need to both identify and understand how personal biases and individual worldview influence the counselling process. Thus awareness training is considered to be critical in the therapist's ability to work effectively with racial and cultural diversity in the therapeutic relationship (Collins & Pieterse, 2007).

To summarize, the literature on counsellor self-awareness suggests that awareness of personal processes, including unresolved conflicts, family of origin dynamics, cultural biases and worldview is important components in the provision of effective psychotherapy. Furthermore, the construct of self-insight summarized above should be differentiated from the momentary states of self-focus, which might distract counsellors from focusing on their clients. As such, we now provide a brief overview of the most salient aspects of training associated with self-awareness development and follow by introducing the integrated model of self-awareness development (IMSAD) for counselling and psychotherapy students.

### **Self-awareness training**

Self-awareness as a component of the counsellors training and ongoing development has been emphasized in various literature. Allen (1967) found that trainees high on *psychological openness*, defined as “a relatively high degree of self-communication” (p. 36), had a greater degree of overall competence, as reported by their supervisor, and responded more frequently to the feelings of their clients. Howard, Inman, and Altman (2006) qualitatively analysed trainees' journals for critical incidents in their development, citing self-awareness and insight as two critical factors. Writing from a training perspective, Fauth, Gates, Vinca, Boles, and Hayes (2007) identified the development of meta-cognitive skills, i.e. pattern recognition and mindfulness as one of the big ideas to guide counsellor training. These authors note that mindfulness training is meant to increase awareness and acceptance of moment-by-moment experiences of self and the client in session.

Despite the apparent value placed on self-awareness development in counsellor training (e.g. Schwebel & Coster, 1998), the published literature suggests that an integrated model for such training is lacking. However, a diverse array of tools has been proposed as being potentially beneficial in increasing the self-awareness of counsellors

in training. One approach is personal development groups (Lennie, 2007; O'Leary, 1994), however, the research on personal development groups is mixed. In one study, O'Leary (1994) suggested that the personal development groups increase trainees' self-awareness while Lennie (2007) suggested that the complex role requirements of group membership (with members having to be both client and counsellor) at times served to complicate the self-awareness enhancement process.

Another approach to the facilitation of self-awareness in trainees has been the encouragement of individual therapy as a vehicle for personal and professional insight (Norcross, 2005). To illustrate, Kremen (1970) posited the need for self-awareness training in Duke University's clinical psychology programme, suggesting that trainees receive 20 h of individual therapy. Furthermore, a number of studies have outlined the influence of personal therapy on counsellors' awareness of self and clients. MacDevitt (1987) found that personal therapy was significantly related to an increase of counter-transference awareness. Macran, Stiles, and Smith (1999) highlighted various themes related to self-awareness in examining the impact of personal therapy for psychotherapists, such as knowing one's boundaries and limitations, and separating one's own feelings from clients' feelings. Hill, Sullivan, Knox, and Scholler (2007) examined the development of counsellor trainees and found that trainees' experience of professional growth included increased awareness of one's reactions to clients. Finally, McConaughy (1987) emphasized the person of the therapist as the most important factor in his or her therapeutic style and recommended that the training of counsellors includes increasing awareness of their strengths, conflicts, vulnerabilities and potential. In sum, training and ongoing education of counsellors have emphasized the need for greater self-understanding and awareness. Thus, suggestions for enhancing self-awareness include individual therapy and personal development groups, however, no single approach has been identified as more or less efficacious.

### *Self-awareness in supervision*

One area of training where self-awareness tends to receive a more explicit focus is that of supervision. Researchers and educators have endeavoured to identify the role of self-awareness in both the clinical and supervisory relationship. For example, McNeill, Stoltenberg and Pierce (1985) found that trainees who were at a higher level in their professional development displayed a greater degree of self-awareness. Vallance's (2004) qualitative analysis of trainees' experiences of the impact of supervision revealed that discussions of counselling dynamics in supervision led to increased awareness of their own feelings and responses, and this increased awareness positively influenced their work with clients. Various models of supervision that explicitly include self-awareness have been posited. Stoltenberg (2005) articulated an integrated developmental model of supervision, in which trainees move through various stages in their development. At a more developed stage (Level 3), trainees are postulated to be able to focus on the client while increasing their awareness of their own feelings, thoughts and behaviours regarding the client. Morran, Kurpius, Brack, and Brack (1995) described a cognitive-skills model for counsellor trainees, with awareness and assessment of one's own cognitions as a key aspect of the model. The supervision literature therefore clearly places a heavy emphasis on supervisee/counsellor self-awareness both as it relates to the practice of counselling and the process of supervision.

### ***Self-awareness in multicultural counselling***

Over the past three decades, the multicultural counselling literature has had a significant influence on the training of counsellors and psychotherapists with instruction in multiculturalism and diversity now considered to be standard practice (American Psychological Association [APA], 2003). Sue and colleagues (1982) delineated cross-cultural counselling competence as involving cultural awareness, knowledge and skills. This tripartite model has spurred much scholarship on self-awareness in regards to one's racial and cultural background (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Flowers & Davidov, 2006). To illustrate, Richardson and Molinaro (1996) discussed the importance of counsellors' awareness of their worldview and their cultural value system. Bruss, Brack, Brack, Glickauf-Hughes, and O'Leary (1997) posited a developmental model for supervising counsellor trainees working with gay, lesbian and bisexual clients. These authors suggested that trainees move through stages in awareness of their heterosexist biases until they are able to have a greater understanding of their own reactions, with lower defences and greater self-disclosure. Building on subsequent expansions (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992) of the multicultural counselling competencies, Roysircar (2004) presented a cultural self-awareness assessment curriculum (C-SAA). The C-SAA curriculum recommended the use of various learning activities, such as process notes, self-disclosure activities, self-assessment instruments and case conceptualizations, to help counsellor trainees develop a greater awareness of their values and biases, awareness of other worldviews and increase their ability to manage interpersonal relationships with individuals from a different cultural background. Finally, Carter's (2003, 2005) Racial-Cultural Counseling Laboratory has been utilized to highlight the presence and role of group-affiliated identity. In this model, students participate in a semester-long experiential activity in which they learn from each student how the student understands his or her reference group identities (e.g. racial group, ethnic group, religious affiliation, etc.). This model facilitates self-awareness by providing students with a structured and focused approach to expanding their awareness by means of interviews conducted by fellow students within a group setting. Students are provided the opportunity to confront their own attitudes, assumptions and worldviews in a genuine and authentic manner (Carter, 2005).

### ***Limitations of current approaches to self-awareness and its development***

Even though there is a long history of interest in self-awareness development in counselling and psychotherapy, there are several limitations associated with current approaches to self-awareness training and research. First, there is a lack of consensus on the definition of self-awareness. The emphasis in the countertransference literature on awareness of one's reactions to the client that stems from unresolved conflict seems closely aligned with Allen's (1967) definition of psychological openness as 'self-communication'. Hansen's (2009) conceptualization of self-awareness as self-storying underscores the multiplicity of potential self-narratives as well as the pragmatism of fluid storylines for the counselling process. Williams's (2003) programme of study has been centred on self-focused attention, which she distinguishes from self-insight. Yet, it is possible that understanding the nature of one's self-focused attention could be a component of understanding oneself. Momentary states of self-awareness could be micro-states

that form a part of the macro-construct of self-awareness. These questions suggest that the field is far from a clear definition of the concept of counsellor self-awareness and how this self-awareness can be facilitated during training.

The second major limitation in the extant literature is the paucity of models for self-awareness training. Given the focus on clinician self-awareness in counselling and psychotherapy training (Hill et al., 2007; Strozier & Stacy, 2001; Williams et al., 2003), we argue that self-awareness training needs to be explicitly integrated into training programmes as well as continuing education. To this end, the following model is presented to provide an approach towards self-awareness development in trainees that is both integrated and explicit.

### The integrated model of self-awareness development

Self-awareness has been identified in the literature as being a critical component of effective counselling and psychotherapy (Edwards & Bess, 1998). Furthermore, the literature reveals that an emphasis on self-awareness is most likely to occur in supervision, and in such content areas as multiculturalism and family therapy. During training, novice counsellors often experience a range of emotional reactions to their clients and the therapy process, they find their previously held values and worldviews to be challenged, are encouraged to develop greater cognitive flexibility and are required to understand how their own identities might influence the therapeutic process (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Hill et al., 2007). Thus, it might be useful, early in a trainees' development, to provide a framework in which they can understand and make sense of their personal experiences and reactions. Furthermore, when considering such a

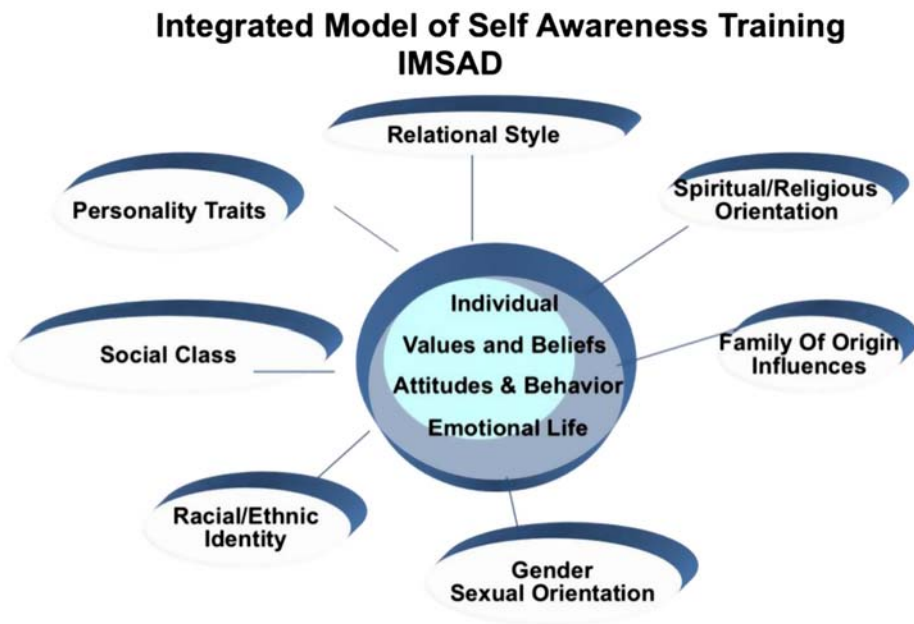


Figure 1. IMSAD.



framework, the need for an explicit and integrated approach is warranted to address the rather amorphous manner of current approaches to the development of self-awareness in counselling and psychotherapy training.

Thus, the goal of the integrated model is to explicitly outline the major components associated with self-awareness development at both a content and process level. If one conceives of the self as comprising aspects that are both subjective (e.g. thoughts, feelings, beliefs) and objective (e.g. behaviours) (Bach, 2001), the next step would be to consider and examine factors that inform and shape the individual's self. Therefore, reflecting on the counselling and psychotherapy training literature, we have identified the following areas as the most significant factors associated with self-awareness development: personality style, family of origin dynamics, gender and sexual orientation, racial/ethnic identity, relational style, social class and spiritual/religious orientation (Figure 1).

As is evident, these factors comprise both individual level traits and socially informed identities that together influence and shape the counsellor's reaction to, and perception of the client. Subsequently, these reactions can influence the case conceptualization as well as in session interactions, or "here-and-now" moments (Aponte & Winter, 2000; McGoldrick, 1998; Williams, 2008). We now take a closer look at each facet of the model and then describe the process by which a focus on these facets might facilitate self-awareness development for the psychotherapy trainee.

*Personality preference* – Personality preference refers to the manner in which individuals psychologically engage their environment and others. Although being a successful therapist is not dependent upon having a particular personality preference (Chapman, Talbot, Tatman, & Britton, 2009), the novice therapist should have a sense of his or her own personality, as well as its expression, as dictated by the trainee's developmental history and cultural norms. Therapists who are aware of their personality preferences are more able to utilize their personality in a therapeutic manner and adjust to avoid any deleterious effects it might have on their effectiveness (Black, Hardy, Turpin, & Parry, 2005). Furthermore, in the therapeutic dyad, interactions are informed by both the personalities of the client and therapist, their culturally accepted expression and the interaction between the two (Freeman, Hayes, Kuch, & Taub, 2007).

*Family of origin* – Family of origin refers to the relationships, structure and patterns of communication associated with the therapist's family or other central figures in the therapist's formative years (Maddock, Friel, & Friel, 2009). Based on various theories of family therapy, family of origin dynamics can be seen to comprise family member's level of differentiation, triangulation, coalitions among family members, boundaries among various subsystems and roles within the family. All of these components can contribute to the therapist's affective processes and subsequently to the manner in which the therapist in training might engage their clients and the therapeutic process (Lim, 2008).

*Relational style* – Relational style refers to the constellation of therapists' relational behaviours that contribute to the therapeutic relationship, including the degree to which the therapist is supportive, affirming, understanding, facilitates expression of affect and attends to client's experience (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003). The research suggests that therapists' relational style can be reflective of their patterns of attachment, with an insecure attachment style negatively impacting the therapeutic relationship (Dinger, Strack, Sachsse, & Schauenberg, 2009). As such, the therapist's attention to his or her typical relational style and emotional reactions in relationships could facilitate a more intentional utilization of therapeutic responses.

*Racial and ethnic identity* – Racial and Ethnic identity refers to the beliefs, attitudes and feelings individuals have associated with their racial and ethnic heritage, as well as the manner in which their racial group impacts their standing within society (Helms, 1995). Racial and ethnic identity is considered to be an aspect of personal identity that is influenced both by the individual's experiences of race and ethnicity and social stereotypes associated with specific racial and ethnic groups (Carter, 1995; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

*Social class* – Social class refers to an individual's standing in the social hierarchy in relation to such markers as wealth, education and occupation. Social class is thought to prescribe a set of attitudes and behaviours and is informed by societal norms and expectations associated with one's social class standing (Liu, Saleck, Hopps, Dunston & Pickett, 2004).

*Gender identity* – Gender reflects attitudes, beliefs and behaviours associated with one's biological sex. Like racial and ethnic identity, gender identity is informed both by individuals' attitudes toward their gender and the manner in which their gender status is valued in the social hierarchy (Gilbert & Scher, 2009). Furthermore, norms and behaviours associated with gender tend to be learned through a process of socialization whereby these behaviours and attitudes become automatic and unrehearsed (Nutt & Brooks, 2008).

*Sexual orientation* – Although some controversy exists around the definition of sexual orientation, here we define sexual orientation as an individual's engagement in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships or attraction to same-sex and opposite-sex partners. Within the counselling and psychotherapy literature, sexual orientation is now generally considered to be innate and not a result of choice (Fassinger, 2000). Similar to gender, the expression of sexual orientation is highly informed by social norms and socialization processes (Bohan, 1996).

*Religious/spiritual orientation* – Religious and spiritual orientation account for how individuals identify their belief systems associated with morality and faith. An individual might belong to a formalized religious system, which shapes the individual's identity and subsequent behaviours. Like all of the other facets, religious orientation encompasses both what an individual believes about his or her religious/spiritual identity and assumptions that others might make about the identity based on societal norms and expectations (Fukuyama & Selig, 1999).

### ***Hierarchy and power***

Within each of the social identity elements, the larger society imposes a hierarchy with some social identities (e.g. White, male and upper class) being valued more than others (e.g. Black, female and lower class). In addition to the cultural aspects of each social identity and its influence on the self, there is also the impact of the position an individual occupies in the social identity hierarchy. Identity and a sense of self can be influenced by the privileged or oppressed position individuals occupy based on race, ethnicity, gender, social class and sexual orientation (Hays, Dean, & Chang, 2007). It has been posited that individuals (including therapists) vary in how they cope with and respond to their position in the hierarchy, and these responses influence how they act and interact in the counselling process (Helms, 1995).

### *Assumptions of the integrated model*

The IMSAD is built on the following assumptions as it relates to the dynamic process of counselling and psychotherapy. Firstly, the model assumes that through bringing to consciousness aspects of the self-identity, students might have more control over their reactions to clients and therefore be better able to utilize these reactions to facilitate the therapeutic relationship. The integrated model seeks to have students identify these individual facets, provide some understanding of potential impacts of the facets, and then seek to explore the manner in which the facets intersect and interact. To illustrate, a student might describe her family background as one in which the expression of emotions was encouraged and rewarded. In turn, the student might present to their counselling training with an internalized value of emotional expression as healthy. Subsequently, the student might be engaged with a client who, for familial or cultural reasons, does not value the role of emotional expression. As the student reacts to the client's apparent "defensiveness", an awareness of her personal value systems and how this system has been shaped, could lead to an empathic rather than a confrontational stance.

An additional assumption that informs IMSAD is the notion that self-concept reflects an integration of various representations of self within a developmental context (Harter, 2001). As such, one can think of self-awareness in relation to the constructed stories of the self that the individual has come to accept and that subsequently inform how they interact with their environment (Gergen, 1991; Kitchen, 2009). This assumption holds the self as fluid. Therefore, an expanded self-awareness provides greater flexibility and heightens the ability of beginning therapists and counsellors to tolerate ambiguity.

### *Process aspects of the integrated model*

To facilitate the process of self-awareness, the IMSAD proposes a Socratic approach of systematic questioning and inductive reasoning to self-awareness development (Overholser, 1991). To illustrate, we apply the following questions to the Family of Origin facet; however, the questions can be utilized in the exact sequence for any of the other facets with relevant changes to the prompts according to the particular facet under discussion:

- Identify and describe your family of origin.
  - e.g. cohesive, conflictual, distant, warm, etc.
- What did you learn about yourself in your family of origin?
  - e.g. trust, safety, independence, collaboration, etc.
- What did you learn about others?
  - e.g. caution, openness, defended, different, similar, etc.

- Please identify some values that were shaped by your family of origin?
  - e.g. hard work, support, autonomy, forgiveness, assertiveness, etc.
- How do these values play out in your life today?
  - e.g. drive, judgmental, harsh, open, tolerant, critical, etc.
- What beliefs do you hold about the world that might reflect your family of origin?
  - e.g. equality, hierarchical, safety, danger, etc.
- How do you think the beliefs and attitudes reflective of your family of origin might impact your work as a counsellor or psychotherapist?
  - e.g. naïve, trusting, quick to judge, difficulty in confronting, etc.

To facilitate awareness of each facet, the same series of questions with facet appropriate prompts can be employed, although the personality and relational style facets would require some of the questions to be restructured. (See Appendix A for sample questions for these two facets) Additionally, exploration of the personality and relational style facets could be facilitated by the use of such instruments as the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 2010) or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Hammer & Barger, 1996). Once students are able to isolate each facet, they then move to an understanding of how the facets overlap in relation to individual salience. Reflection on each facet as well as the interactions and intersections of the facets will aid the counsellor's understanding of the moment-to-moment experiences of the counsellors' self, especially within the counselling relationship. To return to the illustration of the family of origin facet, an expanded exploration of family of origin would necessarily include aspects of the family's racial/ethnic background, religious orientation and social class values. Here, the trainee would be asked to reflect on various values associated with these identity markers, and how these values might have shaped or informed previously identified facets of the family of origin, such as expression of affect and beliefs about the world (See Carter, 2003).

### ***Benefits of the integrated model***

The benefits of the IMSAD primarily apply to the facilitation of a non-defensive stance in which the trainee can explore and understand their personal experiences in the provision of counselling and psychotherapy. What the model attempts to do is the highlight for the student the manner in which current beliefs about self and other, beliefs about relationships and social systems, evaluations and judgements about behaviour and psychological functioning are partly shaped by these individual facets of personal and social identity. When a client or situation evokes a strong affective response in the trainee, and subsequently interferes with the therapeutic alliance, the IMSAD provides the

trainee a framework with which to explore the reaction and seek to make sense of it. The model therefore allows for the development of self-as-instrument in a conceptual framework that might foster more openness and less defensiveness.

### ***Application of the IMSAD model***

Most novice counsellors and therapists will come into their training programme with a schema based on their life experiences, which provides them with an understanding of themselves and the world, and will use this schema to interact with their environment. Trainees may not have a precise understanding of their schema or its origins, nor can they be expected to have the tools to develop such an understanding on their own. It would make sense then, that developing an understanding of the self is a fundamental aspect of counsellor trainee's self-awareness development. Trainees that take a critical and authentic self-inventory prior to seeing their first client would be in a better position to understand their own experiences with that client. Typically, such inventory taking has been encouraged in pre-practicum courses in the form of self-reflection papers or small group discussions. Although the literature suggests these to be effective ways of developing a better understanding of trainees' own experiences (Woodside, Oberman, Cole, & Carruth, 2007), the primary focus in a pre-practicum or introductory counselling skills course tends to be more on counselling techniques rather than personal development. Thus, while self-reflection is usually a component of these courses, facilitation of self-awareness is more a by-product than a central goal.

A second point that needs to be made is that trainees do not always receive the skills they need for self-awareness development in such courses. Although they certainly engage in identity explorations exercises, such activities are typically facilitated by the course instructor. Trainees are not given a set of specific tools that allow them to engage in self-questioning. In this arrangement, the student's self-reflection might stop with the end of the course. The integrated model, however, provides trainees with a framework that they can utilize in all aspects of training. As such, we provide two possible approaches to implementing the IMSAD.

### **Implementation of integrated model**

The first option in implementing the IMSAD is to create a course specifically geared towards developing self-awareness among counselling and psychotherapy trainees. A low student-to-instructor ratio would be preferred, allowing for one-on-one student instructor interactions. Similar to courses that already address self-awareness as an important ingredient for counsellor training, students would engage in self-reflective writing and group discussions. However, with the focus of the course on self-awareness development, class material can centre on helping students develop the skills to challenge themselves and their peers with critical questions. With more individual attention, students can be given prompts or suggestions tailored to their unique experiences and backgrounds. Students will also have the opportunity to bring up concerns and ask questions in an environment more akin to supervision settings. Personal attention may help students effectively cope with self-discoveries that provoke anxiety or negative self-image construction.

The second alternative for implementing of the IMSAD is to develop a programme wide integration of self-awareness training that is coordinated across coursework and

other training activities (such as practica, teaching and research). Core courses could build in a self-awareness component as it relates to the specific course material. For example, students taking a research methodology could be asked to write a reflection paper exploring aspects of their personality style and how these aspects might intersect with preferences for various methodological approaches such as quantitative and qualitative inquiries. However, irrespective of the mode of implementation, the role of the instructor is both central and critical.

### ***Role of the instructor***

In very broad terms, the role of the instructor is to facilitate trainees' exploration of the various facets of their identity, subsequently helping trainees to integrate these isolated facets into a holistic view of themselves, which can then be understood in terms of trainee–client interactions. Beginning trainees are likely to have different levels of understanding and engagement with the various facets of their identities. Instructors would have to determine on a case-by-case basis where the trainee is in their development. The previously described Socratic questioning will help to both facilitate trainees' engagement with the self-exploratory process and allow the instructor to evaluate the trainees' level of understanding of themselves. As the trainees' self-explorations progress, the instructor needs to help trainees manage reactions to new self-discoveries. Trainees may have difficulty integrating new discoveries about themselves into a whole, simultaneously attempting to manage their anxiety in response to newly identified aspects of themselves while making sense of these experiences in the context of their lives. The instructor should take care not to fall into the role of therapist, yet be mindful of the personal impact on the trainees.

### ***Process considerations***

#### *Self-disclosure*

As Yourman (2003) indicates, trainees at times experience discomfort when discussing their clients. This discomfort tends to be associated with wanting to be seen in a positive light by their supervisor, recognizing the supervisor as a superior and experiencing a sense of incompetence as they disclose their reactions to clients. Although Yourman's paper focuses solely on disclosure about in-therapy experiences, it is conceivable that trainees experience similar concerns when disclosing facets of their identities or personal values to their instructor. Therefore, instructors should be mindful of this potential dynamic when engaging in the Socratic technique, and manage the trainee–instructor relationship carefully. Forrest, Elman, and Shen-Miller (2008) discuss the counselling student in the context of their environment. These authors suggest that the student's competence is both affected by and evaluated through their environment, and that their functioning must be understood within the environmental context.

#### *Ethical obligations*

Instructors must also be aware of their ethical obligations. The APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2002) state that psychologists cannot demand students to disclose private information unless that expectation was clearly stated in

admission materials (7.04). If such a clause is absent in current admission materials, such disclosures cannot be required of trainees until these materials are updated for incoming students. Furthermore, the American Counselling Association Code of Ethics (2005) states supervisors need to explicate the expectations of supervision (F.4) and grading system (F.5.). Instructors need to take care to grade their students with a system that is tailored to the individual because not all trainees start at the same developmental level.

### *Resistance*

Despite the documented benefits to self-awareness training, there may be some resistance to an explicit focus on self-awareness on the part of faculty/supervisors and trainees. Yet, there has been a surprising paucity of published research on possible sources of resistance to self-awareness training. One possible source of resistance is the perceived overlap between methods used for self-awareness development and personal therapy. This perceived encroachment may raise concerns about the ethical implications of mandating personal therapy (McEwan & Duncan, 1993). One way to mitigate this potential resistance is to provide a comprehensive informed consent to the trainees, from the outset, about the potential benefits and risks associated with self-awareness training and clearly delineating the boundaries between personal therapy and self-awareness development within the academic and training setting. Another possible source of resistance on the part of the trainee is the anxiety associated with reflecting on uncomfortable aspects of their life experience. Just as clients experience and manifest resistance to exploring and reflecting on difficult aspects of the self, trainees may experience this same resistance to self-reflection. Supervisory conditions that facilitate self-reflection may help reduce the anxiety associated with difficult experiences of the self: (1) experiencing a trusting relationship either with supervisors or peers, (2) opening up with fellow students in a safe relationship, (3) integrating the engagement in reflective tasks, (4) having self-trust/risking and (5) interacting with supportive academic personnel (Wong-Wylie, 2007).

In sum, the need for the instructor to attend to process dynamics and structural aspects of the training environment is therefore a core aspect of implementing the integrated model (IMSAD).

### **Summary and conclusion**

The IMSAD has been developed in response to the lack of an explicit and integrated approach to self-awareness development in counselling and psychotherapy training. The model draws from well-established constructs and attempts to provide a framework in which the trainee can consider and appreciate their professional and personal development. We recognize the model to be complex and somewhat ambiguous, yet these are the very elements that trainees encounter within the therapeutic process. As such, the IMSAD also represents a type of modelling of the therapeutic experience for the counselling student. Furthermore, given emerging empirical findings that outline the therapeutic value of counsellor self-awareness (Pieterse, Chung, Bissram & Ball, 2012), the IMSAD offers a framework in which researchers can further investigate the efficacy of self-awareness development in counsellor and psychotherapy training.

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**Appendix A – Sample questions and prompts for personality and relational facets**

- How would you describe your personality
  - e.g. extraverted, introverted, open etc.
- What factors informed your personality development
  - e.g. family experiences, developmental history, attachment style etc.
- What have you learned about yourself in regard to your personality style
  - e.g. cautious, defended, ambitious, self-effacing, trusting, etc.
- How does your personality style inform your values
  - e.g. sharing, trusting, work ethic, individualistic etc.
- How do these values play out in your life today?
  - e.g. drive, judgmental, harsh, open, tolerant, critical, etc.