

Mentoring Relationship in Counselor Development

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This study explored the mentoring relationship in counselor development and examined how the encounter with mentors influenced the personal and professional development of counselors. Qualitative research methods based on semi-structured and in-depth interviews with professional counselors were used in this study. Two domains, the personal development domain and the professional development domain, were suggested in the examination of the transcripts. Under these two domains were categories that included: The mentor helped the mentee to identify personal strengths; the mentor helped the mentee to explore identity issues; the mentor served as the mentee's healer, supporter, and encourager; the mentor inspired the career development of the mentee; the mentor played the role of a coach in the mentoring relationship; the mentor influenced the mentee in choosing a specific counseling approach; and the mentor played the modeling role. Findings were discussed in relation to counselor training and future research directions.

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In Chinese culture, a mentor's role is to "convey wisdom, instruct, dispel doubt" (傳道、授業、解惑). A mentee has to "honor the mentor and respect his or her teachings" (尊師重道) and oblige to the maxim of "once a mentor, always a mentor" (一日為師，終生為師). In the traditional Chinese mentoring relationship, the mentee is expected to listen to the voices of the mentor, who is the expert and whose words are ultimate and final. The Chinese mentoring relationship emphasizes loyalty and obedience. It appears that this is a hierarchical and patriarchal rather than a collaborative relationship (Bova, 1995; Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 1995). It is related to the traditional concept of mentoring in which the older, wiser mentor holds the power in the relationship (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 1995). The mentee is expected to follow the footsteps of the mentor and maintain the status quo (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 1995).

In contrast, a mentor serves as a teacher, counselor, guide, protector, and friend in the Western way of the mentoring relationship (E. M. Anderson & Shannon, 1995). The mentoring relationship of the West involves more equal and collaborative interactions. On the other hand, Carl Rogers once cautioned that the presence of a mentor might become the blockage for a mentee's development (see Burton & Associates, 1972):

I was fortunate in never having a mentor, and thus never had any professional father-figure on whom I was dependent, or against whom I had to rebel ... This too made it easy to think for myself, without any sense of guilt or betrayal. (Burton & Associates, 1972, p. 68)

It appears that there are different views of mentoring in the East and the West in terms of balance of power and status. The purpose of this study was to explore how Chinese counselors in Hong Kong perceived how the mentoring relationship affected their development.

Literature Review

Mentoring has been used as an essential component in training counselors (McCrea, 1992; Tentoni, 1992). Levinson (1978) also mentioned that mentoring is one of the important components of an individual's life structure. In counselor education, mentoring is associated with the personal and professional development of counselors.

In personal development, the mentor plays the crucial role in the mentee's emotional development (Biehl, 1996). Specifically, the mentor provides the mentee with support and encouragement in times of turmoil. On becoming a professional counselor, the mentee may encounter various struggles, challenges, and crises. The mentor could assist the mentee to go through this process, and develop confidence to become a counselor (Biehl, 1996).

In professional development, the mentor can exert a powerful influence on the way the mentee develops his or her professional identity. On the one hand, the mentor can shape how the mentee practices counseling. On the other hand, the mentor connects the mentee to different networks in the work place. Individuals with mentors have been shown to get more promotions (Dreher & Ash, 1990) and have more job satisfactions (Turban & Dougherty, 1994) than do those without mentors. Mentees who received support from mentors also had reduced role stress and role conflict in the work place (Wilson & Elman, 1990).

In general, researchers have identified three primary functions of the mentorship: career, psychosocial, and role modeling (Kram, 1986; Scandura & Ragins, 1993). For the career development functions, the mentor plays the roles in sponsorship, promotion, exposure, coaching, and protection (Galbraith & Cohen, 1995). For the psychosocial functions,

the mentor facilitates the mentee's self-worth, competence, identity, and effectiveness through friendship, acceptance, and counseling. For the role modeling functions, the mentor serves as the role model for the mentee on how the mentee can become an effective counselor (Kram, 1985). The mentor provides the mentee with opportunities to experience and learn various approaches through demonstration and observation. The mentee could choose to integrate with respect to what most fits his or her style.

It appears that mentoring exerts a powerful influence on how a mentee develops from a novice to a professional counselor. However, there have been few studies that specifically examined the mentoring relationship for counselors in settings other than those in the Western culture. Although Awaya et al. (2003) claimed that this kind of relationship was in line with the Hawaiian cultural values, it is not known whether the mentoring relationship as described in the West is different from that in the Chinese context. This study explored the mentoring relationship of Chinese counselors to examine in what ways Chinese counselors found mentorship beneficial to their development.

Method

Qualitative methods relying on in-depth interviews were used in this study (Hoshmand, 1989; Patton, 1990). Participants were invited to describe the critical incidents in their personal and professional development.

Purposeful sampling method (Patton, 1990) was used to identify potential participants who were or are in counseling profession. Nine counselors (six females and three males) participated in the research interviews. Five were master's-level and four were doctoral-level counselors. They took up positions as counselor educators, private

practitioners, university counselors, former counseling agency head, and counselors in private agency. Their years of experience ranged from 5 to 25 years. They have different counseling orientations and one participant had authored articles and books in counseling.

Potential participants were contacted by phone and invited to participate in interviews. Data were collected during individual interviews that lasted from 90 to 120 minutes. The interviews were conducted over a three-month period. Although the interviews were semi-structured, they were interactive and conversational. Before the beginning of the first interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to participants and their consent of participation was orally obtained. The researcher initially asked each participant to reflect on critical incidents in his or her personal and professional development. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The verbatim transcriptions were checked over three times by the researcher and another research assistant for accuracy. Data obtained were analyzed and interpreted according to content analysis procedure (Patton, 1990), noting themes, patterns, and categories from the data. They were summarized in domains.

Results

The findings emerged in the transcripts are organized under the two domains of personal development and professional development. These two domains include seven categories. Selected quotes from the nine counselors are presented as “raw data” to illustrate the research findings.

Personal Development Domain

Category 1: The mentor helped the mentee to identify personal strengths

The mentoring relationship exerted influence on the mentee’s

personal growth. The participants described how they met their mentors who helped to shape their character and life transformations.

One participant made a distinction between life mentor and professional mentor. The relationship with the former was informal whereas the relationship with the latter was formal. Life mentor helped him identify his personal strengths and limitations. He experienced love and care through the relationship with different life mentors. He thought he could rely on them in times of turmoil. Life mentors exerted influence on his character formation and life transformations. They provided support and guidance when he was in despair, offering care and encouragement; influenced his thinking and behavior; and inspired him to handle his life stress:

Life mentors had an important impact on me. They provided care and support. They helped me to be aware of my blind spots. For example, my inner fear. I could understand myself more. These life mentors, such as my father and other seniors, enlightened my life. They created a space of trust and intimacy in our relationship. I had experienced adversity in different stages of my life. These life mentors played an important role in taking good care of me, and encouraging me to handle the life stress. It was a meaningful experience to me.

Life mentors helped this participant in his developmental process. They participated in shaping his character, giving him guidance, support and encouragement when he felt lost.

Another participant experienced frustration and depression in the process of counseling training. Her mentor helped her identify her strengths during personal counseling sessions, which helped her regain her self-confidence:

During the process of counseling training, my mentor helped me to identify my strength. I discovered that I was not that bad for being a

counselor. She helped me to regain the confidence in another counseling practice.

Category 2: The mentor helped the mentee to explore identity issues

A participant described how her life mentor in her professional journey encouraged her to be herself, to love herself, and to follow her own path:

My life mentor reminded me the importance of integrity. She reminded me the importance of genuineness, and the importance of knowing how to love ourselves. She affected the way on how I related to people. We had deep sharing and it was thought-provoking in this relationship.

Category 3: The mentor served as the mentee's healer, supporter, and encourager

One participant experienced adversity in the developmental process. In times of frustration and failure, the mentor offered a listening ear and empathy; he or she became the mentee's psychological healer.

Another participant experienced self-doubt during the counseling training. There was a short period when she felt scared and worried about practicing counseling skills in class. The mentor's encouragement, support, and acceptance gave her space to reflect during the time of individual counseling. With insights gained in the process, she was aware of her limitations. The mentor helped her identify her strengths and affirmed her ability in doing counseling:

The mentor enhanced my self-awareness through individual counseling. I was despaired when I felt that my performance in the practicum was not good and I discovered my inadequacy. My mentor accepted me as a person. She enabled me to accept myself. The safety and security being with my mentor made me willing to take risks to try again in another

counseling practice. I felt free to disclose myself before her. She offered me support when I asked for assistance. She would not impose her judgment [on me] but just guide me to think during the whole process. She understood me. I was very thankful to her.

Still another participant described how her mentor helped her handle her emotional baggage through individual counseling. She thought this mentor was her spiritual mentor. This mentor helped her face her self-esteem problems and interpersonal conflicts, and encouraged her to express her innermost feelings:

I experienced struggles in self-esteem issues during the growing up process. My counselor helped me to uncover my innermost feelings. She was a mentor of my soul. She helped me to handle my emotions just like unblocking a drain which was silted up.

Professional Development Domain

Category 4: The mentor inspired the career development of the mentee

The mentor exerted powerful influence in the career decision and career development of mentees. Some participants met their mentors before joining the counseling profession, and these mentors might not be professional counselors.

One participant experienced confusion when he decided to leave the agency in which he had been working for over 20 years. He approached his mentor and sought his advice. This encounter changed the direction of his professional development:

Before I made the decision to leave the agency, my mentor reminded me to train up a successor to take over my work before I left. I did what he suggested me and in the end my hand-over process was very smooth. Because of this experience, I pondered that the Chinese organizations

does not emphasize to pursue the successor in their practice. Thus one of my focuses after I left the agency was to advocate the importance of training up successors in the Chinese church.

Reminded by the mentor, the participant found a successor before leaving the agency. He also thought about his career after his retirement. He took an active role in finding a successor in the Chinese community.

Another participant met her first mentor when she was in primary school. The principal aroused her interest in understanding human behavior when she was very young. She finally chose to join the counseling profession when she grew up:

This principal encouraged students to observe different walks of life while taking buses or ferries. To observe what they dressed and tried to listen to what they said. He aroused my interest of understanding people's behavior when I was very young. This experience influenced me to choose education and counseling as my career when I grew up.

Still another participant encountered a mentor who took the initiative to encourage her to pursue a professional degree in counseling:

I met my mentor in an introductory counseling course. She enlightened me to think of choosing counseling as my career. This mentor encouraged me to polish my knowledge and skills and suggested me to pursue a master's degree in counseling.

Category 5: The mentor played the role of a coach in the mentoring relationship

A participant met a mentor who encouraged him to develop the reading habit and interest in writing when he was in his teenage years. This mentor played the role of a coach. They met regularly. This mentor ignited his desire to become a counselor and a writer when he grew up:

I met one of my mentors who was a choir director and Sunday School teacher in my church when I was in teenage years. He led me into the world of books. He helped me to develop my reading habit. At that time, I had special interest in psychology and counseling books. We would choose a topic such as self-esteem to study together. He guided me as a coach. I think this mentor stimulated me in this realm of thought and nurtured my study interest. Nowadays, I hope to use the simplified concept to write books for the public in psychology and counseling area. I would regard myself as a writer as well as a counselor.

The same participant met another mentor in the work place. This mentor was also playing the role of a coach. They had collaborative work on different issues. With the help and guidance of this mentor, this participant took opportunities to make his way in the agency. Finally he became the leader of the counseling department:

Sometimes I would talk to my mentor who was my supervisor to discuss different issues in the working place. We stimulated each other in various counseling aspects. We had collaborative work in men's issue. He gave me support and assurance.

Category 6: The mentor influenced the mentee in choosing a specific counseling approach

One participant encountered mentors who influenced his view of human nature and his counseling approach. He focused on the integration of Christianity and psychology in his counseling practice after leaving graduate school:

My mentor influenced [me] not just because the skills he taught but also the convictions he conveyed. As a Christian psychologist, he considered that the counseling approach of a counselor should be integrated with his religious belief. He affected me to insist on doing so in my counseling

practice. He also influenced my view of human nature. I believe that people can be changed, can experience love and are able to love other people after overcoming their psychological barriers. My approach in running growth groups was influenced by my belief.

Another participant met her mentor when she was pursuing her doctoral study. This mentor influenced her to adhere to a counseling approach in her professional development:

My mentor was a disciple of humanistic approach. His teaching was fascinating. He could demonstrate in his life from what he preached to us. This encounter influenced me to choose the humanistic approach in my counseling practice.

Category 7: The mentor played the modeling role

When the participants were in their novice stage, they did not know how to be a counselor. With the presence of the mentor to guide them on the way to develop their professional identity, the mentor was an important role model. On the other hand, the mentor could demonstrate real-life counseling. These vivid examples helped the mentee to think more about how to put counseling knowledge into practice.

One participant met the mentor who brought her into the counseling world during her study abroad. This mentor's modeling deepened the participant's interest in counseling:

This mentor ignited the fire in my mind. I fell in love with counseling. She had passion to fight for social justice. She could put what she advocated into action. She inspired me to ponder what it meant to be a counselor as a way of life. It deepened my interest in counseling.

This participant experienced that counseling was not just an armchair profession. It was a way of life. It was closely linked with life.

This mentor was influential not only because what she taught was meaningful but also because of her acceptance, care, and respect of the needy people. She could vividly demonstrate in class what she preached in real life.

Another participant encountered two mentors during her counseling training. One equipped her with counseling skills, and the other was her counselor-therapist. She called the latter one her spiritual mentor:

One of the mentors gave me freedom and personal space to explore. I could walk my own path. She showed me how I should treat my clients in the counseling process. I learnt to have various tactics to help clients. My mentor inspired me to learn different tactics in order to be an effective counselor. She really gave me a good model for how to be a supervisor.

The same participant had insight regarding how to do counseling from her spiritual mentor who listened to her struggles in her growing process. The mentor's presence made the participant willing to open herself and felt she was understood in this relationship. Her first experience as a client let her understand the important elements of the counseling process, and what was effective in the process:

This therapist's role model enlightened me. During the counseling process, she could guide me to reflect, and helped me to listen to my own voice. I could feel and see how the therapist walked with me on the whole process. She helped me to experience pain. She could express accurate empathy. She was congruent. I found that when the therapist could be more empathetic and could reflect my inner feelings accurately, I would feel safe and [be] willing to open my heart to her. There was a bonding of hearts between us. She did not talk that much. She was also my mentor and a role model. I learnt how to do counseling from her.

Mentees expected that the mentor not only talked about skills and knowledge but also demonstrated the application of skills in real life. One participant met a mentor who could demonstrate how to be an effective counselor:

In the personal counseling process, the acceptance and the listening attitude of my mentor gave me a good model on how to be an effective counselor.

Another participant met a mentor in the working place, and this mentor influenced him to a large degree:

He was very transparent. He demonstrated how to take care of people, and how to get in touch with people. He stimulated me to ponder the counseling knowledge. He had a broad view and a solid concept in counseling. He was compassionate to the needy people.

Still another participant met her mentor when she studied overseas. This mentor's passion and devotion to the profession set a good example for the participant. The mentor became a live model before the mentee committed herself to the profession:

My mentor was married to her profession. She was passionate in teaching. I was proud to be graduated from this institute. This mentor influenced my having a sense of belonging to the school and a strong identity for being a therapist. She taught me about holistic care. She gave me a good model for doing therapy. I dedicated myself to being professional, responsible and to put clients first.

The same participant met another mentor after she graduated from the professional school. In this mentoring relationship, the mentor was transparent and willing to self-disclose his weaknesses. In their interaction, they could take off the masks and connected at a behind-the-mask level:

My mentor also mentioned a pastor was also a human being with flesh and blood. He shared his experience of depression and mentioned how he overcame it. He gave me a very positive image. He was very human. He did not mind talking about his weakness. He was also transparent about his family. His modeling influenced me so that I would not put on airs when I became a minister.

Discussion

The major findings in this study indicated that the mentoring relationship exerted a crucial impact on counselors' development. The participants considered that mentors helped them identify personal strengths and weaknesses, and that they were the important persons on whom the mentees could rely in times of hardship. In addition to the roles of supporter and coach, the mentor was also the mentee's healer. The participants appreciated that the mentor could make a safe space for them to self-reflect and allow them to listen to their own voices. The mentor also acted as a good model for showing how to be an effective counselor.

There is some convergence between the current findings and those of past research. The themes that emerged in the research are similar to those on the mentoring relationship which helped the personal and professional development of counselors (Biehl, 1996; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

From the current study, most of the participants respected their mentors' authority. They highly regarded the benefits of the mentoring relationship. However, it seemed that the participants not only expected mentors to play the role of conveying wisdom and dispelling doubts, but also to provide them with psychological space to explore and take risks, to encourage them to be themselves, and to help them listen to their own voices in addition to the voices of the mentors. They were

also concerned that they could be independent even though they were involved in an intimate mentoring relationship. They did not want to always practice under the shadow of their mentors after they had gained confidence in their professional practice. As one participant said:

I become more independent. I have my own ways of thinking. I am not getting used to the mentor who is very authoritative. Sometimes I would like to attach to this relationship. Sometimes I prefer to detach from it. She has a lot of expectations on me and I don't want to make her feel unhappy. I found that I have struggles in getting along with her. Nevertheless, I still respect her very much.

Another participant mentioned:

I have a cognitive clash with my mentor. I would resist to some of his viewpoints. I feel that I am loyal to myself. I would not belittle myself in order to make him happy. I want to walk my own way.

On the other hand, it appeared that the participants did not adhere to the traditional Chinese maxim of “once a mentor, always a mentor” in their development, as was the case of one participant who found that his mentor's style did not fit his character and voiced his decision to terminate this mentoring relationship:

I found that that was not the way I wanted to go. Her points of view, her assistance, and the direction she guided me. I began to feel that it did not suit me. With the encouragement of my colleagues, I terminated this relationship.

It appeared that the mentoring relationship in this study was situated in between the interface of traditional Chinese way of mentoring that emphasizes the authority of the mentor and the Western way of mentoring that emphasizes the autonomy of the mentee and the balance of power in the relationship.

Regarding the implications of this study, from the participants' responses, it seems that mentoring not only requires the mentor to play the supervisory role to convey knowledge and skills, but also calls for an investment in a learning relationship that addresses the mentees' developmental and emotional needs. For the novice who will some day be involved in handling the developmental needs of clients, mentoring is an expansion in depth and commitment of the mentors' role beyond supportive, administrative, and teaching functions.

Furthermore, the participants reported being touched and inspired by the passion of their mentors. Thus, it seems that counseling training is also an education of the heart (K. R. Anderson & Reese, 1999). In other words, it requires something more than traditional Western forms of instruction that transmits counseling knowledge and skills:

It requires a mentorship of the heart, a relationship with a teacher of life who is able to convey what was learned from the teacher's own faithful mentor, a way of life that is formed, not merely instruction that are given ... To educate the heart requires learning that frees the imagination, prepares ears to listen, focuses eyes to look with attentiveness; it requires an open heart. (K. R. Anderson & Reese, 1999, p. 17)

It seems that the participants appreciated life mentors more than professional mentors. Many of the critics of formal mentoring programs are supportive of the development of informal mentoring relationships. Informal relationships tend to be long-term, multifaceted, and potentially profound in impact. Students with mentors reported that the best mentoring relationships occurred informally (Summers-Ewing, 1994).

Finally, it appears that the mentor's living example on how to be an effective counselor is an important element that can touch the heart

of the participants. Kottler (1992) once mentioned that when faculty members teach the importance of warmth, caring, respect, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard, they should also set an example to model these elements in relationships with mentees or students. The participants in this study treasured and craved a meaningful mentoring relationship. It seems the focus of the mentor-mentee relationship is as critical as that of the counselor-client relationship in counselor training. However, in training institutions, professors or teachers may be too busy to interact with students. The mentoring relationship seems important not only in the making of effective counselors but also in helping mentees deal with the effects of life stress.

Research limitations

Similar to other qualitative designs, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to apply to other groups of subjects. The sampling method focused on the information-rich subjects but not on the representative group (Patton, 1990). In addition, the sampling method may have excluded other experienced counselors who could provide rich information not tapped in this study. Future research might give more due attention to the diversity of research participants, and examine more closely the issues of the mentoring relationship (such as the issues of male and female counselors) to provide more insights into the possible cultural differences in the mentoring relationship in counselor education.

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師徒關係與輔導員的發展

本研究旨在探索師徒關係在輔導員發展中所扮演的角色，並探討與師傅的相遇如何影響輔導員的個人及專業發展。研究以專業輔導者為對象，採取質性研究的深度訪談法進行訪談並收集資料，從訪談逐字稿中歸納了「個人發展」和「專業發展」兩個範疇，在兩個範疇下再歸納為幾個類別，當中包括：「師傅幫助徒弟發掘個人強項」、「師傅幫助徒弟建立專業身分」、「師傅是徒弟的治療師、支持者和鼓勵者」、「師傅啟迪徒弟的事業發展」、「師傅在師徒關係中扮演教練的角色」、「師傅影響徒弟的輔導取向」及「師傅是徒弟的楷模」等。最後，本文根據研究結果，對如何加強輔導訓練課程內容和未來研究方向提出建議。