

**COUNSELLING SUPERVISION IN HONG KONG:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE INTERN EXPERIENCE**

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GLOSSARY

Confucianism

Confucianism is a tradition rooted in Chinese culture (Yao, 2000). It contains a system of social and ethical philosophy nurtured by Confucius and followers of Confucius.

Counselling Internship

Counselling internship is an opportunity organized by the universities or the training institutes for the counselling students to gain clinical experiences in the clinical setting to have a realistic understanding of the working environment. They are required to fulfill an organized sequence of tasks (Holloway & Roehlke, 1987) within a fixed, limited period of time so as to integrate self into the profession (Paisley & McMahon, 2001) and to put the learned theories into practice under the supervision of the counselling supervisors.

Counselling Supervision

Counselling supervision is a distinct professional activity (Falender and Shafranske, 2004) in the counselling profession with its major aims at facilitating the professional development of the counsellors at their level of experience (Ellis & Ladany, 1997) to enhance the counsellors' ethical competence (Inskipp & Proctor, 1996), counselling efficacy for best counselling service to the clients.

Face

Face is the perception of self (Cupach and Metts 1994) with positive social value (Goffman, 1957) and the status in front of others (Bond, 1996) in a particular social contact.

Facework

Facework refers to the management of interpersonal relationship (Ginkel, 2004) to enact self-face, to sustain, and support another person's face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Face-granting strategies

Face-granting strategies refer to the methods or plans chosen to

bestow someone the respectability or to give someone a chance to regain prestige.

Face-saving strategies

Face-saving strategies refer to the careful plans or methods chosen to maintain the image or status in front of others.

Guanxi

Guanxi is an indigenous construct (Chen and Chen, 2004) and widely recognized concept in Chinese society to promote social harmony (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962, Ting-Toomey, 1988) which is based on the Chinese Confucianism (King, 1991) to denote the complicated relational dynamics. It is a key determinant of a person's social life in development of interpersonal competency and success. It refers particularistic (Jacob, 1979; King, 1991) ties and connection between two individuals with particular rules of exchanges which may be implicit to the outsiders.

Guanxi strategies

Guanxi strategy is the cultural (King, 1991) art of management or the chosen skills in utilization of social resources and networks through personal connection (Fan, 2002) for *Guanxi* promotion in finding solutions to the relational issues.

Novice

Novice refers to a person who is a beginner and has just started learning the skills and practices in a particular field.

Professionalism

Professionalism refers to an attitudinal and behavioral orientation (Helsby, 1995) that the individuals possess in their occupation which encompasses a special set of work ethics (Freidson, 1994) organized by the special professional body to regulate the manner and behaviors of the members in the profession.

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ABSTRACT

Internship and supervision are prerequisites for professional counselling training and are vital for professional efficacy. However, research of these training functions in the Hong Kong counselling professional context has been limited. This study aims to explore student counsellors' perceptions and experience of the counselling supervision in their training within a university-based counselling programme in Hong Kong. The research focuses on how far the culture and cultural assumptions affect the learning process when facing success, struggles and difficulties, and what constitutes and hinders an effective supervision environment for student counsellors.

Ten counselling psychology undergraduates, who had already gone through a large part of the internship and supervision process, were invited to participate in this research. A qualitative methodology, including the implementation of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and semi-structured interviews, was chosen and participants were asked to describe in detail their perceptions and experiences regarding their counselling internship and supervision. The data were generated through the Verbatim records of interviews and records of observation which included nonverbal behavior and the researcher's reflection journals. The interview

data were analyzed according to themes and subthemes. Five master themes emerged: *Guanxi*; Perception; Expectation in relation to the learning environment, Mental processing in the learning and *Guanxi* strategies. The data were analyzed and reanalyzed.

Three considerations, cultural, developmental and contextual, in the internship and supervisory experience are portrayed as implications for stakeholders. The notion of *Guanxi* and *Guanxi* strategies appears to be the dominant domain to which greater attention needs to be paid in the process of training, especially in regard to counselling supervision. Designers of academic programmes are encouraged to take into serious consideration the dimension of *Guanxi* in the training. The idiosyncratic desires of the student counsellors and their expectation in relation to the internship setting and supervision environment as well as the mental processing of student counsellors throughout the learning process are revealed. The results have implications for stakeholders with respect to the knowledge and understanding of the impacts of supervision and internship on professional development in our cultural context.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND RESEARCH FOCUS

1.1 Introduction

The practitioner approach in the counselling training process which requires the completion of sufficient hours of supervised internship is endorsed as a basic requirement for graduation (Holloway and Roehlke, 1987; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). To the counselling professional, this process arouses considerable anxiety and struggles for student counsellors and is full of challenging pressure and requires assiduousness.

The ambiguity of professional work is the major catalyst for novice stress. The elements are: acute performance anxiety, the illuminated scrutiny of professional gatekeepers, porous or rigid emotional boundaries, the fragile and incomplete practitioner-self, inadequate conceptual maps, glamorized expectations, and an acute need for positive mentors.

(Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003, p.45)

1.2 Historical and theoretical context of counselling development in Hong Kong

The development of counselling in Hong Kong has progressed for about a period of 40 years only. In those days, counseling training is limited, and supervision is rare. Little support and resource have been offered for the development by the Hong Kong government. The community has no clear demarcation between social workers and counsellors. Social workers are recognized by the Hong Kong

government while counsellors are not. Counsellors had no recognized professional identity. The search for professional identity has been a major issue in Hong Kong (Leung, 1999). Although counsellors have had no official professional identity in Hong Kong up to now, various social, serendipitous factors have triggered the recent development. The return of Hong Kong to the Mainland seems to have been an unfavourable environmental change to many Hong Kong people. Huy and Mintzberg (2003) state that there are three types of changes: dramatic, systematic and organic changes. Dramatic change descends from the top management, systematic change is generated laterally and organic change emerges from the grass roots. These three forces interact dynamically. I do believe that in adversity, human finds eyes. Actually, the return to China in 1997 has brought great dramatic changes to the community. The reforms in social services and opening up service contracts to business enterprises for competitive bidding alongside the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Lee, 2005) have brought changes and hope in the counselling profession. The Lump Sum Grant (LSG) subvention policy which was introduced in 2000-2001, allows many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from social service units to have more freedom to choose counselling trained employees who are well-equipped for their counselling services with the subvention resources. The unique professional identity of counsellors is more acceptable to the

general public now than in the past.

Over the past decades in Hong Kong, counselling practices were mostly based on the western theories and models. The question of whether western counselling theories can be directly applicable to Chinese culture due to different cultural characteristics (Saeki & Borow, 1985; Duan & Wang, 2000; Chong & Liu, 2002) has been brought into discussion more frequently. Counselling professionals have been increasingly conscious of the significance of the dimension of culture in the clinical practice.

As a senior in the counselling profession in Hong Kong, I hope that the essential aspect of my personal experience will make some contributions to enhance the counselling professional to have a more systematic development. This paves the ground of this research

1.3 Current Situation

Norcross, Prochaska and Farber (1993) find that clinical supervision is the second most frequently reported activity among members of the American Psychological Association (APA)'s Division of Psychotherapy. Although supervision is a domain of professional practice conducted by professional psychologists or counsellors, formal training and standards have long been largely neglected, especially in Hong Kong's counselling culture. It was not until the 1990s that a sizable amount of literature on

counselling supervision began to emerge in general (Falender and Shafranske, 2004). The situation was similar in Hong Kong. Very little research has been carried out in regard to the development of counselling supervision in Hong Kong. It is therefore of value to conduct in-depth and systematic studies on understanding this area in Hong Kong, a city facing a rapid increase in demand for counselling services (Leung, 1999, 2003).

Clinical supervision plays its role in facilitating counselling professional development by engaging student counsellors in a hierarchal relationship with a supervisor who is knowledgeable about client care in the counselling process and who evaluates supervisee learning (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). It is critical for a counsellor to have supervised counselling experience in counselling training. Clinical supervision, on one hand, provides supervisees guidance and training, and on the other hand, executes its role in the quality control mechanism in order to maintain high standards of competence in the profession. However, quite a number of trainees have reported negative supervisory experiences (Moskowitz and Rupert, 1983; Fleming and Steen, 2004). Barrett and Barber (2005) suggest that where supervisors choose a more authoritarian role in supervision whereas supervisees seek a more collaborative relationship, conflict is likely to occur, and besides, role difficulties are also reported when a trainee views the role and responsibility of the

supervisor as ambiguous. It is believed that the hallmark of successful supervision lies in the resolution of the conflicts which occur so naturally because of the power imbalance, differences in learning and teaching styles and relational difficulties between the supervisor and supervisee (Mueller and Kell, 1972; Safran and Muran, 2000; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004).

1.4 Purpose of this research

This study attempts to address a gap in current research by investigating the internship and supervision of the counselling undergraduates in the Hong Kong. The main purpose of the present study is to advance understanding regarding to the training needs of the counselling students. This understanding will create a database in the literature and provide insights into the factors influencing the quality of the counselling professional training especially in our cultural setting.

When I started planning this research, firstly, I intended to choose a methodology which allows the participants to describe in their own words the meaning of their experiences through the process of reflection and dialogue. This enables more thorough listening to the inner voices of trainees concerning their experiences, expectations, needs and struggles. This research aimed at assessing, from supervisees' perspective, what affected student counsellors' development (both personal and professional) during the internship year especially regarding their

clinical supervision experience, as well as what essential elements can be identified as necessary to provide an effective supervision and learning environment for novice counsellors.

Secondly, I hope that my efforts will be a step forward in understanding the ways to better the development of counselling psychology training and supervision in HK. I can see that there is a strong need to establish general accountability and effective supervision principles in the field of counselling supervision.

Counsellor education in Hong Kong has only a very short history. How to pass on our learned professional knowledge from one generation to another by promoting students' professional knowledge in understanding and addressing client problems and how to promote the continuation of the counselling profession, are in fact both of important value. Good theoretical-based planning for long-term intensive supervision and training programmes to produce quality counsellors and supervisors is essential. Therefore, a continual lifelong supportive theoretical enrichment of the profession is indispensable.

1.5 The structure of this research thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis is the introduction. Chapter 2 is a personal narrative which forms the foreground of the research. It gives an account of how my personal experience exerted an impact on this research. Chapter 3 covers the theory via a

general literature review which focuses mainly on the relevance of counselling supervision and its significance. It falls into five major areas: a general perspective of counselling supervision and its functions and objectives; theoretical, relational, cultural and historical developmental perspectives of Hong Kong in counselling supervision. Chapter 4 presents information on the methodology that I chose for the present research. It includes the rationale of my using qualitative methodology, the epistemology and ontology of this research project, and the research design. Ethical consideration and some related methodological issues such as data collection and analysis procedures, the issue of power, the issue of asking about distressing experience and the use of language are also described in detail in this chapter. Chapter 5 presents the research results which are also categorized into themes and subthemes in this chapter. Chapter 6 is the discussion chapter which focuses on the three considerations in the internship and supervisory experience of the participants with reference to the literature review. Chapter 7 provides the implications of the three considerations. It discusses the improvement of the supervision process, limitations and strengths of this research. Further research is also proposed in this chapter for further possible development of the counselling profession. Chapter 8 presents the conclusion.

As a whole, with increasing demand for counselling in the community and the

growing number of new applicants entering into the counselling profession, there has been an impetus for counselling educators to consider the relevant cultural, developmental and contextual issues to develop a better training protocol to meet the social needs in our culture. It is hoped that the outcome of this research will make initial and minimally significant contributions to the development of quality counselling supervision in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATING RESEARCHER POSITIONING: PERSONAL NARRATIVES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter can be regarded as the pre-construction of the thesis. This research seeks to study the counselling intern experience through qualitative approach.

The potential three crises (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) which the qualitative researchers must face with are (1) representation which denotes the difficulty to capture adequate lived experiences (2) legitimization, which addresses "a serious rethinking of such a term as validity, generalizability, and reliability" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.17) and (3) praxis which focuses on how the qualitative studies to be evaluated in contemporary, post-structural moment. These crises can be addressed by the practice of reflexivity, the provision for more rigor in qualitative research and making qualitative data more transparent and explicit.

In response to this, the main aim of writing these personal narratives was to make the implicit explicit and it was executed in twofold: to contextualize the whole research thesis and to search for the in-depth relationship between the personal experiences and research area by being reflexive. To facilitate this purpose, autoethnography was employed in the personal narratives of the research and used to explore the connection between self and the social-cultural context (Wall, 2006).

Autoethnography is a form of stories that we talk about ourselves within our context.

As defined by Ellis and Ellingson (2000, p.2293) as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness as it connects the personal to the cultural”. Understanding of people becomes a process of textual analysis (Josselson and Liblich, 2002).

The portrait begins with the tracing back of the path of narrative construction. This chapter consists of six major parts: (1) introduction of the structure this chapter; (2) the rationale for the choice of autoethnography to locate the researcher positioning; (3) the ethical concern in relation to the execution of autoethnography will be discussed and examined; (4) The narratives, which set the stage of the research with critical incidents; (5) Critical reflection on narratives, aiming at critically identifying the implicit connection of the present research to my deep-rooted past learning experience. (6) Identifying themes from the narratives. Themes which are deep-seated essential constituents of the research formation are extracted. It is my attempt to clarify my phenomenological frame and to identify some of the key issues which are critical to the formation of the research focus.

2.2 Rationale for the choice of Autoethnography

The best way to understand a phenomenon is to become submerged in it and to move into the culture and view it in its context as part of it (Krauss, 2005). The

rationale for the choice of autoethnography is portrayed in Figure 2.1 below.

I decided to use autoethnography, firstly, in the hope that the personal journey back to precursors of the thesis or backdrop tracing would help me to contextualize my narrative research. Cultural and social experience is significant. The context provides a lot of explicit as well as implicit contributing factors to the birth, growth and movement of the research process. My stories somehow reveal "an individual as well as a social perspective" (Etherington, 2004, p.20). Richardson (2000) proposes that writing is a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about oneself and one's topic. We cannot transfer things and experience that we do not have. Writing reveals, communicates and analyzes social experience. Framework and content are two interwoven components in the writing process.

My personal narrative is an antecedent to bring my research alive. Besides, Hay and Nye (1998) emphasize the value of spiritual awareness and they propose that it is an exploration of our values and beliefs and the meaningfulness of our lives and our relationships with ourselves, others and a higher power. We should not ignore its essence.

Secondly, the value of reflexivity is adopted and emphasized. Reflexivity has significant value in both research and professional development. Different scholars emphasize different aspects of reflexivity in the research process. The "self" is a very

powerful active agent in the counselling and therapeutic process. Lipp (2007)

argues that reflexivity includes a deeper and broader dimension of reflection. She

defines reflexivity as a meta-methodology for research using reflection as a platform.

Schwandt's definition of reflexivity includes:

examining one's personal and theoretical commitments to see how they serve as resources for generating particular data, for behaving in particular ways ... and for developing particular interpretations.

(Schwandt, 1997, p.136)

The process of systematic reflexivity is a self-examination process which facilitates

the explication and analysis of my theoretical and methodological presuppositions

(Coghian and Brannick, 2005) and the formation of my research questions.

Reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. Reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share.

(Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002, p.222)

Hertz suggests that reflexivity has a multitude of functions:

It permeates every aspect of the research process, challenging us to be more full conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience.

(Hertz, 1997, p.viii)

In our daily interaction with people, we are making frequent conscious and

unconscious judgment and interpretation. It is necessary for us to take into

considerations of these influences in the construction of explanation.

In counselling practice, we value genuineness, congruence and transparency.

Researchers have a "direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated and (be) present throughout the process" (Moustakas, 1990, p.14).

Transparency of personal involvement and a personal connection with the research study may affect the construction of the meanings and structures of research. Hence, reflexive methodologies appear to be congruent and appealing to us researchers with a counselling and psychotherapy background.

Thirdly, the spirit of counselling rests upon the respect of humanity. The basis of the humanistic approaches stems from the works of Martin Buber, Viktor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers and Jacob Moreno (Schapira, 1999).

One of the most exciting and promising developments in psychology during the latter part of the 20th century was the proliferation of diverse research methods and the articulation of their scientific and philosophical soundness within a sophisticated methodology that can be called humanistic.

(Wertz, 2002, p.231)

Humanistic approaches are a commitment to conceptualizing, and engaging with people in a deeply valuing and respectful way (Cooper, 2007). Based on my humanistic value of genuine respect and appreciation of life, I chose to use a more holistic approach to study human behaviour. What is attractive to me is that the vital substance of autoethnography is congruent with the counselling spirit, and the respect of self and feelings. Fourthly, epistemology concerns the understanding of

the source and essence of knowledge and how one acquires knowledge; one needs to accept that there are many ways of knowing (Jackson and Meadows, 1991). Subjective experience is valued. Autoethnography is grounded in postmodern philosophy; subjective experience is valued. There is no claim of objectivity. This is essential to the counselling profession.

We are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge.....We are self-interpreting beings and that language constitutes this being.

(Schwandt, 2000, pp.197-198)

Polkinghorne (1992) argues that psychotherapists rarely find psychological research relevant for practice. He states that knowledge of practice involves in turn postmodern ideas of knowledge. Experts' knowledge is dynamic and context dependent and there are multiple truths and meanings when we look into people's lives. Counsellors and psychotherapists emphasize the uniqueness of each client. In order to develop knowledge which produces beneficial effects for practitioners, I decided to employ autoethnography and its associated methodologies which enable us to go into the set of subjective personal experiences.

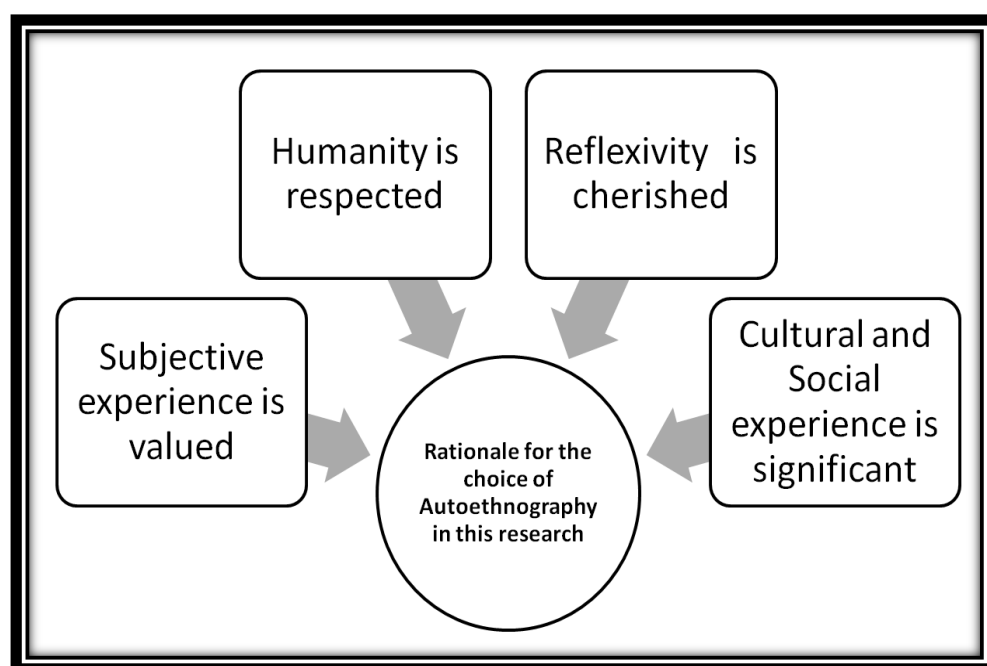


Figure 2.1 Rationale for the choice of autoethnography in this research

2.3 Ethical concerns in narrative composition

In counselling professional practice, we are committed to a set of ethical principles and guidelines which respect human rights and dignities, protecting the welfare of the clients, guarantee the quality assurance through supervision practice and ensure the integrity in the counsellor-counselee relationship. In this research, ethical treatment of human participants is significantly addressed. The principle of free and informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, are executed to protect their participants' privacy (BACP, 2013; ACA, 2014). The avoidance of harm and conflict of interests are significant ethical principles across the broad spectrum of professional relationships. It is important not to exploit any researched relationship to further personal, political, or business interests. And research participants have

the right to receive "appropriate information about the nature, results, and conclusions of the research" (APA, 1992, p. 1609).

All through my professional life as a counsellor, I have valued every opportunity to have in-depth sessions with my clients. Everyone tells their own stories in the counselling room. Supervisees also tell their stories in the supervision rooms. These stories reflect a lot of their perceived realities. Narratives provide us with a wealth of materials about one's personal psychological experience (White and Epston, 1990; Brown and Augusta-Scot, 2007). Nevertheless, I have the following ethical concerns when I use autoethnography in the writing up of research:

The first is how far and how deep I should go so as to avoid solipsism and self-indulgence. The searching for self and personal meaning is very enchanting to me; however, I know the purposes of the research are to listen and raise the small isolated voices, open minds to know and hearts to feel, and to create a sense of community, open new horizons and the possibilities to make changes and unrecognized connections. Autoethnographies can become a call to witness for both the author and the reader (Sparkes, 2000). I need to keep myself alert all through the research.

My second concern is that I cannot get immediate and direct responses from readers or the audience as I usually do in self-disclosure in the counselling room or in the

classroom. There is direct human contact in the counselling room between the clients and me. It allows me to use the techniques of checking and immediacy to explain and clarify the meanings in the interaction process. In research writing, I cannot do so. I feel uncomfortable about being misinterpreted by readers as being too ego-centric or self-righteous. Although I know that I cannot be value-free, I don't like the feeling of being "too subjective". The methodology, which I have employed and will be illustrated in the coming chapter, facilitates the study to be as transparent and rigorous as possible. The practice of "critical reflexivity" or "critical subjectivity" (Etherington, 2004), being more transparent and open has become my motto.

My third concern is the impacts that my positionality and personal characteristics (Bamberg, 2007) have on the research. I cannot take away my seniority and post in the profession while I am doing my research. My counsellor characteristics will undoubtedly facilitate the interviewing process. How much do my counsellor characteristics as well as my motherly style in communication and presentation have on the interviewing process and the researched? Certainly these elements will have influences on the research process. At one extreme, will the student counsellors have the tendency to offer a compliant narrative, trying to be subservient? Or at the other extreme, will they present a defensive narrative, being

too allergic and reactive? I do not want to see these happen. However, the culture that I have been brought up in is very sensitive to the use of power, hierarchy and collective identity (Bond, 1996; Sun, 2008).

McLeod's (2003) conclusion on six emerging strands in doing counselling research includes: a greater awareness of the relationship between research and practice, the recognition of needing to be reflexive, readiness to accept new methods of inquiry, the researcher being oriented to discovery rather than verification, appreciation of the power relationship between researcher and researched, and displacement of an over-psychological concept of the person in counselling research. These helped me to breathe a sigh of relief regarding this ethical issue. It is natural to find the hierarchical differences in human relationships, especially in Chinese culture. I treasure principles relating to equality and I do respect individuality. Fischer and Goblirsch (2007) have argued that self is "produced, maintained and modified in interaction and discourse". They call the ongoing social interaction process "biographical structuring". They raise three basic concepts which are of major importance in the creative process of self-constitution: interaction, memory (especially biographical memory), and biographical experience which individuals go through during their life and as constituted and co-constructed in talk. I do hope that the interaction process with the researched, i.e. the student counsellors, will enrich

their “biographical structure” in their own professional development.

Finally, when I reveal my stories related to my early childhood, especially those parts that involved my mum, I run the risk of creating a “bad” impression for readers about my mother. In Chinese families, childrearing is the major responsibility of mothers. The influence of mothers on the child is an extremely dominant factor affecting the growth of a person. My experience with my mother is actually cultural. Parents develop their parenting behaviour based on their own socialization experiences (Belsky, 1984). My mother had a similar experience as I did as her mother treated her in the same way. I have to state clearly here that she was a capable and loving mother. She has always been highly appreciated for the effort she made for the family. She has already done her best to be a good mother. She, like many traditional Chinese women, dedicated her life to the whole family. She had limited resources, both physical and psychological. She could only teach what she had learned. Her tough and sturdy character represents many Chinese women in her cohort. After serious considerations, I still chose to tell these stories, as these reflections will act as a catalyst for the exploration of cultural values and social issues related to the environment in which we were born.

2.4 Narratives

A "narrative" can be understood as one's story about one's own perception of reality.

This is "because language and thinking are always saturated by dominant cultural beliefs, narratives are not neutral in their effects" (Neal, 1996, p.66).

I am going to delineate a series of performative pieces which were kept track of as incidents which have had critical contributions to my research study. Readers are invited to go back and forth along the time channel.

There are two major dimensions of the models of reflection (Mann, Gordon and MacLeod, 2009) which facilitate me to conduct systematic self-reflection and introspection: an iterative dimension (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985; Schon, 1983), in which reflection is triggered by experience, and then produces a new understanding; a vertical dimension (Mezirow, 1991; Moon, 1999) which includes reflection on experience from superficial to deeper levels of analysis and critical synthesis. I will employ these two dimensions together. I begin with the recall of recent critical incidents, through association, relevant past personal memories begin to come into being. The emerging stories actually consist of essential components of the research and strategic choices. I also discover how life-altering cultural adaptation processes which I was not aware affected my own professional development. I intend to study how the "self" in culture affects professional development, especially student counsellors in their novice stage.

2.4.1 Setting the stage with critical incidents

Normally people view "critical incidents" as unexpected or significant events, turning points with great impact on us (Tripp, 1993; Furr and Carroll, 2003). We can uncover our most deeply embedded feelings and meanings from these deep experiences. The Critical Incident Technique (CIT), which is a set of flexible procedures for performing qualitative research for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles, was first used in a scientific study almost half a century ago (Flanagan, 1954). In counselling and counselling supervision, I have noticed critical incidents, which are usually emotionally-laden experiences having a powerful long-lasting influence on clients. These are events that have the potential to overwhelm one's usual psychological defences and coping mechanisms (Everly and Mitchell, 1999; Greenberg and Angus, 2004). Actually these are important open doors both for clients' and counsellors' inner world. Sometimes, the critical incidents will act as a falling domino.

Critical incidents tend to mark significant turning points, or changes in the life of a person or an institution, or in some social phenomenon (Tripp, 1993), and they are often unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled. Tripp (1993, 1994) emphasizes

that the majority of critical incidents that occur in our daily life routines are straightforward and not dramatic.

Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event.

(Tripp, 1993, p.8)

People construct meanings using what they have experienced. Critical incidents inform us of many things such as clients' past, worldviews, perceptions, emotions. Investigation of the critical incidents enhances me to generate rich social, cultural and contextualized data (Angelides, 2001) of my counselling research. Detailed analysis of critical incidents enables me to reflect real-life experiences, find connection among differences, and identify similarities and patterns. They can be a knowledge-base for this research.

2.4.2 Getting started

I will start off with a critical incident that happened years ago, which directly aroused my curiosity and interest in further research. The consequence of this critical incident set off a chain of related episodes under the domino effect. This incident was associated with a chain of other unexpected discoveries. I recalled one afternoon meeting with a student counsellor and her story of "I'm afraid"

One afternoon, a student (I call her KK to protect her anonymity) came into my office and asked if she could have a chat with me. She looked pale and her eyes were red and brimming with tears. She was very scared. A visible shudder swept over her as she began her story.

She told me that she had suffered every hell since the beginning of the supervision. She had no problems with her internship and her clients, but the supervisor. The supervision sessions scared her to death. Her supervisor was extremely pushy and forceful. She was forced to disclose her personal feelings in the group supervision at a time when she felt very insecure. This student was a withdrawing type. KK was so scared that the supervisor would fail her. She tried to say something to please her supervisor. Of course, these pleasing words could not satisfy her experienced supervisor. She made use of the group force to corner her. KK said that she was isolated and badly labelled in the group for keeping silent.

I identified instantaneously two issues in this case: firstly, the personality clashes between the supervisee and the supervisor; and secondly, the power issue in the supervisory relationship. This is my normal cognitive reaction. I know that I have to deal with this type of relationship problem. It could be big or small. It depends on how I manage. I am on the alert of my social role and responsibility as the internship coordinator.

There is a system in the university to ask for written feedback at the end of a semester about the supervision from the students so as to improve the quality of the supervision. It is my responsibility to collect all the feedback and process the discussion. I found that the written feedback from KK on her supervision experience was extremely positive. She expressed her appreciation and thanks to her supervisor. This was totally different from what she expressed to me personally. She told me that she was afraid to speak the truth even the confidentiality of the written feedback was ensured. She was hesitant about revealing her real feelings for fear of being failed in the internship.

My immediate response was to not force her to talk directly to her supervisor. If I did so, I would become another "horrible supervisor". I was sensitive to my power over

her. After the interviews with this student, I started to think but not feel, but as the internship coordinator, there must be something I could do to help the supervisor to have a better understanding of the student counsellors. I have a tendency to stand out and speak out for the student counsellors. However, I consciously remind myself to keep an appropriate emotional distance and be wise enough to handle the cases. I busily launched my research project, searching for journals and articles about the needs of student counsellors. I am attracted by Webb and Wheeler's (1998) study on how honestly counsellors dare to be in the supervisory relationship.

This incident was the "triggering point" of my choice of research area. I did not realize any connection with "myself". As far as I know, up to that moment, I was just trying to do something for the student counsellors.

But what and where are my feelings? I sat down and began to check my feelings. "Am I angry?" I asked myself. "A bit, but not exactly". "Is it sadness?" It sounds close. The sadness is so deep that it draws me in. The voice begins to emerge in my mind, "In order to survive under the authority, in our collective culture, we need to comply." This is a very familiar experience. There will be "potential danger" if you are rebellious against authority. Non-compliance to established doctrines and rules and individuality will have to face different forms of punishment. This is our cultural practice in parenting and education. The traditional Chinese family and societal

systems are prescribed by the philosophy of Confucianism which is based on hierarchy. It is essential that youngsters are trained to respect authority (Bond, 1996; Sun, 2008). Confrontation and arbitration are less frequently chosen by the less powered. Compliance is taught, encouraged, reinforced and valued in our society.

The student counsellor's story reminded me of another episode "At the edge of the razor" in my 20s. I had a similar experience with a counselling teacher.

It happened several times that I tried to voice my heartfelt feelings and ideas which were against her approach and points of view. I do not mean to be offensive. Yet, my way of presentation may have been too "egoistic". I am too absorbed in my own world of experience and neglect the outcome of my delivery and the receiver's perspective. I still remember one very critical dialogue between us. I said, "I am kind of Freudian in my counselling approach." She reacted, "Do you really know Freud? As a novice, how dare you fancy yourself as Freudian?" The more I attempted to clarify, the more defensive and bumptious she thought I was. I did not realize the impact of my presentation and performance. And it culminated in the worst situation one day. I was confronted by a jury. I was to be expelled from the programme for the reason that I was not suitable to become a counsellor. They explained that I was not "mature" and "humble" enough to be a counsellor and work with people. If there were no reflection and changes in my behaviour, I would be discharged from the programme.

I was shocked by the trial. I did not understand why at the very beginning. Many questions arose in my mind. How did they assess my immaturity? Had I done anything wrong? Their judgment was very subjective. I realized that it was no use asking. They pushed me, but did not help me to change. Perhaps they did, but I did

not feel that way. My change was an act of distorting. I learned the lesson painfully and desperately.

This was a valuable experience for me, in a sense. This was, I name it, my critical learning experience, when I first consciously realized that "I was different from them". I could identify at a later stage what was meant by "culture", which silently existed without notice. Das (1995, p.50) defines culture as "an inevitable silent participant in all counselling because counselling is a culture-specific human intervention. Each form of counselling is a reflection of the culture that produces it".

I then became cognizant of their shared perception of the image of being a counsellor. Smith (2004, p. 3) stated that "Culture is invisible without contrast". My behaviour, reaction and the ways of presentation are not supposed to be accepted by their community.

I was at the edge of the razor. I was too vulnerable and powerless to express and defend myself. I could only survive by being docile, acquiescent that what she said was right and what I had done was wrong. They then released me from the penalty.

I feel sad to say that instead of using Darwin's famous phrase "survival of the fittest", I would say the "survival of the most compliant", to denote the experience of the powerless in our bureaucratic culture.

Berry (1994, 2001) suggests four types of acculturation strategy: Integration,

Assimilation, Separation and Marginalization. At that time I used Assimilation strategy, i.e. I gave up my own unique voice and became absorbed into the powerful host culture. Why did I choose this strategy and not another realm of possibilities?

I will trace back my antecedents of the incident.

After years of continuous reflection, I have concluded that I went through several stages of professional identity development as a counsellor similar to the New Culture Adaptation Model suggested by Sue and Sue (1990): Stage 1: Conformity; Stage 2: Dissonance; Stage 3: Resistance and Immersion; Stage 4: Introspection or reorientation; Stage 5: Integrative awareness stage.

In the conformity stage, I experienced an intense excitement and euphoria at the connection with the culture of the counselling training institute. I felt relaxed and started to express myself freely. I thought of this as an ideal place with acceptance and unconditional positive regards for facilitating students' self-development. I openly discussed and shared my feelings and observations without considering other potential factors. This was my preconception. After that, I spent a great deal of conscious energy at the entrance of the dissonance stage to deal with the stressful difference which leads to both emotional and cognitive fatigue. At the resistance and immersion stage, I reacted with defence, confrontation and disappointment. It is a painful process.

After years of introspection and reorientation, I eventually realized that the problems associated with my ignorance of the cultural differences in the values, beliefs and behaviour of those teachers.

At the Integrative awareness stage, I can actively engage the change with many problem-solving and conflict resolution tools with some degree of success in other types of cultural conflicts. I know this growing realism has to do with my increase of psychological power and personal maturity.

2.4.3 Tracing further stories: Early decision

Regarding the above mentioned incident, I share KK's feelings and experience. This is especially common in Chinese culture. Only those who are obedient will prevail. Only those who have the power can speak. If you want to speak out, you have to count the cost. If you want to fight, you have to count and accumulate your stamps. To further illustrate the antecedent of the incident, I need to give a series of accounts of narratives, which is not in chronological order, but is mostly from my childhood stage, about my development and my cultural background. I will try to use a "third person" eye, which Schein (1985) describes as an "interested outsider" perspective, to narrate and examine my worldviews.

Family has a strong impact on individuals' lives. Although the family's functions are changing, family still plays a key function in people's socialization and enculturation.

It provides us with a sense of position in the world in which we are living. My parents and siblings are my significant cultural teachers. I learn patterned transactions in the family.

We, Chinese children, are taught to see things in terms of interpersonal relationships and mutual dependence within the family (Bond, 1986, 1996; Sun, 2008) at our early socialization stage. Role and authority sensitivity, emotion repression, and double-layered communications are obvious elements in family education. My experience of role sensitivity training- "It is your responsibility as the eldest sister":

"Poor" may be the most suitable description of my family. My parents needed to strive hard for a living. My parents had to work hard in order to have food. As I was the eldest in the family, my parents delegated sibling-care functions to me. I would say that I was early sensitized to the role responsibility instead of privileges. A lot of responsibilities followed me ever since my brothers and sisters were born. The firstborn is usually ingrained with a deep-seated sense of responsibility and duty to serve the family. I had neither childhood nor adolescence. I was trained to become a "little mother", who took care of most of the housework, cooking, washing and taking care of my siblings at 6 years old. I had to be "strong" and "work hard". My mother warned me at my early primary school age: "We are not able to support you financially for your studies. You have four sisters and brothers. We have limited resources. Search for your resources yourself if you want to go on studying after primary school." Their poor socioeconomic status directly affected my studies. I still remember those good old days when all my classmates enjoyed their after school social life, while I had to do cleaning and washing for the school so as to earn the subsidy for school fee. Life was tough.

My experience of authority sensitivity training- "Be obedient and compliant":

We, children in Chinese parenting, are taught to respect their parents, other siblings and other adults in positions of authority; and individual family members are to be aware of our place and position in the hierarchy of family membership. "Parents never make mistakes. Don't make them unhappy; be filial and dedicate yourself towards them." "Parents have absolute authority. Challenging their authority is unfilial, and is forbidden." "Harshness and strictness in family education will produce good human beings." "Respect teachers, and follow their teachings." These words are internalized and become the inner voices and "shoulds" in our heads. Any time when I showed any attempt to be rebellious against my mother's order according to her judgment I would be threatened by abandonment or exposure outside our house and every passer-by would make this assumption: "You must be a bad girl and disobedient to your parents." This is very shameful. It is useless to express and defend oneself.

These kinds of beliefs influenced by Confucianism are frequently found in Chinese community.

The Chinese concept of filial piety is one of the core aspects of Chinese familism. The unquestionable authority of parents has far-reaching consequences which may be extended to the social world outside the family. The "razor edge experience" I have mentioned above was exactly the case. This echoes my experience.

It is most likely not an exaggeration to say that all persons of Chinese heritage have been influenced by Confucianism to a certain extent and many in fact pay homage to Confucian values and beliefs.

(Sun, 2008, p.2).

I agree with Zhao (2002) that obligation and shame are the frequent mechanisms used by authority that help to reinforce societal expectations and proper behaviour.

At that time, I was so scared of my mother's punishment that I would no longer be

rebellious and naughty.

My experience of "You should not speak out your desires":

Ever since I was young, I was taught not to reveal my wishes and desires. I remember one episode. It was a festival ritual where we would pay family visits to friends and relatives during Lunar New Year. Normally we dress ourselves beautifully and good festival food and snacks will be well-served during our visit. Before the visit, my mum warned me to be alert of her approval signal and not to "*chan zui*", (not to be greedy about food), and reminded me to say "No, thank you" while the food is being served. Saying "No, thank you" is a form of politeness when you are served by others. Meanwhile, the aunt served me some very attractive candies, I said "No, thank you". Unfortunately, mother did not nod her head to show her approval. Those delicious candies could only remain in my mind in the form of a visual memory forever. I miss them so much. I learned to hold back my desire since my early childhood. We were trained to hide our feelings, desires and emotions. Although I queried my mother's instructions, which were against my will, I had to follow with no other choice or objection

Propriety is considered to be very important in Chinese communities. Again,

Confucian meaning of propriety covers a broad range of cognition and behavior, from simple politeness to ritual propriety to understanding one's correct place in society. Ritual propriety clearly distinguishes the hierarchy in dyadic relationship through protocols and ceremonies, ensuring that each person know his or her place in society and is fully conversant with what constitutes appropriate behavior.

(Sun, 2008, p.7)

The experience of "You are not OK" and its "double-layered message":

I have not received any direct verbal confirmation and appreciation from my parents ever since I was a child. The stratagem that my mother used was "you are not OK". I became accustomed to her criticism. Every time she criticized my performance, I felt so upset. I remember one episode: I got an "A" grade in my academic results,

but she said, "You are lucky this time, but not the other time. Don't be proud." It seems to me that it is inaccurate to feel that "I am OK" even though I have been OK.

However, after some time, I accidentally heard her talking proudly with the neighbours about my performance. Then I began to realize that there were double layers to mother's verbal message. At that time I did not understand why. I attributed her responses as, "I am not good enough".

My younger sister was not as lucky as me. She was not OK in her academic results. She could never understand our mother's stratagem, prodding the children into action by derision, sarcasm and ridicule. She felt so disappointed by mother's attributions.

Most Chinese mothers rely on using shame and guilt techniques as a mechanism to control their children's behaviour whenever they deviate from their parents' expectations (Suzuki, 1980). This was also my mother's frequent practice. Chinese seldom use direct verbal ways to show appreciation or express love among each other. They rather use indirect non-verbal messages or show concern by "doing".

The first time I read Eric Berne's books *Games People Play* and *What Do You Say After You Say Hello* in my early 20s, they resonated with my life experience. I started to understand that there are two levels: social and psychological in daily communication. You can't simply trust what mouths say. You need to listen to the "behind" messages. I am really curious about human behaviour and interaction. This is perhaps the most determining factor which draws me to the counselling and psychology profession.

2.5 Critical reflection on narratives

Barthes (1977, p.79) states, "Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society". It is only a matter of how we treat the stories. Mezirow (1994) believes that meaningful learning occurs only through self-examination of assumptions, patterns of interactions and the operating premises of action. Critical self-reflection, therefore, represents the essence of transformational learning. Counsellors are taught to self-reflect ever since their trainee stage. As in counselling, if the counsellors' or the therapists' personal unfinished business, internal pressure for unresolved personal issues are not well-managed, they will certainly interfere with the counselling process. Needy counsellors may spoil the therapeutic relationships because they themselves are busily occupied by their own emotions and personal needs and have no time to attend to the needs of their clients (Heppner and Roehlke, 1984; Skovholt and Rønnestad, 1995, 2003). The need to be critically reflective is very important for us counselling practitioners. No matter how hard we try, we are imperfect human beings. We are unavoidably affected by our own perceptions, assumptions and experiences. Therefore, self-awareness is a life-long practice for a counsellor (Neufeldt, 1999; McLaughlin, 2005; Heathcote, 2009; Hunter, 2011).

This process of inquiry facilitates us to discover and investigate unacknowledged dynamics in our choices and our perception. Reflective practice was first defined by

Dewey as

active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.

(Dewey, 1938, p.9)

Ward and House (1998) suggest that reflective learning processes provide a context for the critical analysis of base assumptions and beliefs about clients, change, and one's practice. Narration helps to facilitate our spiritual, cognitive as well as affective reflection.

I have classified my reflection process into two levels; the first is more connected with the present, which is more superficial, while the second is more to do with the past, which is more emotionally intense and veiled.

2.5.1 First-level Reflection: the parallel process

Mykhalovskiy (1996, p.141) notes that "to write individual experience is at the same time, to write social experience". Sparkes (2000, p.21) defines autoethnographies as "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding".

In autoethnography, the "self" and lived stories are allowed to be incorporated into the research study. Ellis (1997) claims that autoethnographic stories, which focus on the self in the social context, are able to connect social science to literature, academic interest to personal ones, emotions to cognition, and social life to concrete

life. Bate (1997, p.1156) also shares a similar view, saying that "thought and behavior cannot be properly understood outside of the context in which they are situated; it is knowledge of context that renders them intelligible".

Moustakas (1990) developed the heuristic inquiry paradigm which is an adaptation of phenomenological inquiry. It involves the researcher's self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery and the self of the researcher is present all along the research process. These six phases includes initial engagement of the research area, immersion into the topic and question, incubation to allow tacit and unconscious processes, illumination with new awareness and insights emerge leading to a synthesis, explication of what has emerged, allowing a comprehensive depiction of the core themes, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis which is the tacit and intuitive process of relating the story or reports to a variety of audiences. These phases briefly summarize what I have gone through intensely in the past ten years. I have spent quite a long time searching for the possible research area in the initial engagement phase. I have dwelled on the broad research concern in my professional areas and tried to explore my focus. I remember it took about two to three years before I finally made a decision to enter into the Doctor of Education programme of Nottingham University. Finally, I made a choice regarding "supervision of counselling education" which is directly related to my present roles

and duties. I spent another two years narrowing down the research area. This was another frustrating process. I spent countless hours in self-dialogues, self-challenges and self-discovery. Many questions occurred to me. These questions became entangled with each other. What should I do? What do I want to do? Much energy has been spent on a brain-and-heart contest because they were not in harmony. I needed to step back. I realized that I had begun to taste some kind of experiences similar to Moustakas' immersion phase. I felt that I fluttered back and forth in the corridor. The research becomes part of my life. I discovered that what I had been doing all along these years was really heuristic inquiry.

I started to feel how my "self" had had a powerful impact on the formation of this research. My worldviews, life scripts as well as my personal experience influenced my choices of topics, my objectives, my way of writing and even the process of the research.

Everything in my life seemed to be related to student counsellors, development and supervision. My whole mind was occupied with the words and concepts: "autobiographies", "narrative approaches", "stories", "supervision", etc. I experienced high and low tides in the struggling process. Sometimes, the ideas flowed fluently while at other times I totally got stuck. I injected my energy into the searching process. I suddenly realized that I was anxious.

"What happens in my clients happens in me!" The concept of parallel processes flashed across my mind. According to Ekstein and Wallerstein (1972) parallel processes can also be viewed as a way of learning. The connection would certainly entail my in-depth study.

Brookfield (1998) depicts four complementary lenses: the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of learners' eyes, the lens of colleagues' perceptions, and the lens of theoretical, philosophical and research literature, which facilitate us, practitioners to execute critically reflective practice and detect our hegemonic assumptions.

The feeling is so familiar with what I have described about student counsellors. Brookfield's (1998, p.198) first critically reflective lens, "Analyzing our autobiographies as learners has important implications for how we teach", our autobiography as a Learner of Practice, offered me a very useful reflective tool. I am in the state of the subjects which I am going to study. I am also a student counsellor, though not in clinical practice; I am at the novice stage in the research area. When "I" get involved in this process, this is on one hand offering insights and on the other hand, shortening the distance between me and the subjects in my research. "Human experience is built out of shared context for meaning making" (Josselson and Liblich, 2002, p.277).

2.5.2 Second-level reflection: implicit connection to my deep-rooted past learning experience

I started planning this thesis four to five years ago. And to my surprise, I realized that the “emerging” of this research began a long time ago. It was really astonishing to me. I could not make a connection with my own past experience until I had a narrative discussion with my research supervisors. Carrere and Weiss suggest that as a profession,

We are no longer detached, “objective” Copernican observers, rather our involvement in psychological work is revealed to be an intimate one....Accordingly, it is important that psychology as a science address the subjective and personal engagement of students in its professional education.

(Carrere and Weiss, 1988, p.151)

I also hope that the student counsellors’ stories would somehow remind us educators, supervisors, and counsellors in a more superior position to keep our ears and eyes open to the needs of the less powered and less experienced, to re-examine our attitudes, values and our practices by referring to those narratives in our profession. This is my utmost concern, perhaps my pre-supposition of this thesis.

2.5.3 My professional trajectory: Struggles and Persistence

I have gone through various stages of the professional trajectory for nearly 30 years. Although it started nearly 30 years ago, vivid memories of my novice stage struggles are still fresh in my mind. My personal journey has not been a smooth one, facing a lot of external barriers as well as internal frustrations. What cheers me up

is my constant belief in the Bible, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Bible, Philipines 3:13). "Never look back" and "Never regret" have become my mottos during this professional journey.

Professional identity confusion is the major issue that contributed to the frustration.

I was first attracted by the person-centered philosophy in counselling and I then made a "no-return" journey after the start. I did not have any clear thoughts about professional identity during my late adolescence, but was just full of passion to learn new things and interested to know about human dynamics. When I finished the training in college, I started to face the reality.

Now I interview many new applicants for the Counselling and psychology programme in my University every year. Most of them share the same feelings. They have no clear ideas about their choices.

Counselling in Hong Kong in the 80's and 90's, Leung (1988) stated that at that time counselling in Hong Kong was like an adopted child from a different background trying to fit into a new family. I would rather say it was like an orphan. Very few counsellor posts were offered in the social service agencies in the 80s and 90s. If counsellors wanted to have future prospects, they needed to get a degree or master's degree in social work. Counsellors had no recognized professional identity.

At that time, many of my study mates had already left the field after their graduation.

Becoming a counselling professional requires determined and persistent effort. The evolvement from a lay helper, beginning student, advanced student, novice professional, experienced professional to senior professional phase (Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003) immensely reveal my qualities as a professional counsellor and supervisor. I do hope that the new generations will share the same earnest mission in this helping profession.

After 20 years of clinical practice, and after much consideration, I started to get involved in counselling education in the past ten years. To become a counselling supervisor and educator is, perhaps, another developmental milestone for my own career growth. I hope that the essential aspect of my personal experience will make some contributions to the profession. I run courses for counsellors-to-be and have been supervising student counsellors and counsellors in Hong Kong Shue Yan University. In addition, I also conduct training courses for the trainers. Training experienced counsellors to become clinical supervisors is my other responsibility in the senior professional phase (Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003).

I consider myself a farmer in the counselling profession. After 30 years of cultivation, I know that it is harvest time. Training the new generations is one of my

developmental tasks. I have written a poem to summarize my feelings as well as experience. In the future, I hope that I can respond to the hardship with imperturbation. Self-encouragement is a self-motivated strategy.

<A real farmer> Author: Pui-chi the farmer

We reap what we sow.

If we don't sow, we won't reap.

A farmer knows how to sow, and how to reap.

A real farmer does not mind no harvest at the moment for

She knows the time will come.

A real farmer does not matter no crops at the moment for

She believes what the Bible said,

"They that sow in tears shall *reap* in joy."

A real farmer trusts the power of the earth, and

She believes what the Bible said,

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that

regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

A real farmer knows she is a farmer and she trusts

the power of the Nature and the promise of God.

I know I am a real farmer!

2.5.4 My Career Milestone: Counselling Education and Clinical Supervision

Counselling education plays an important role in the development of the profession.

The transmission of professional knowledge from one generation to the next is very

significant for the continuation and prolongation of the profession. Systematic

formal graduate training together with life-long clinical supervision training forms the basic premise for this practitioner-driven profession (Tse, 2008). One of the major components of professional training is the integration of theoretical knowledge with technical skills in actual clinical practice.

The professional journey from novice to expert takes a long time. Worthington (1987, p.189) states, "Therapists and supervisors age like wine". There is no shortcut to professional development. There are different tasks for different stages. Internship is the most critical time in the life of an emerging counselling professional. It is an important time to apply what has been learned. Internship offers a real opportunity for students to deal with clients' demands, needs and organizational and relational dynamics. Supervised internship is the first required intensive training for student counsellors. Clinical supervision starts at the same time as the commencement of the internship.

At the beginning of every school year, I brief the student counsellors about the arrangement of the internship. They get themselves prepared after three years of pedagogical training and the final year is the high time of their study. Two major reactions are commonly experienced by student counsellors: excitement and anxiety. The excitement shines sharply in what they wear while their anxiety is displayed on their faces. They dress like professional counsellors. They are excited

because they are going to face the real world of clients. They start to bear the professional title as "counsellor-to-be". The anxiety comes from incompetency (Friedlander, Keller, Peca-Baker and Olk, 1986) and ambiguity of professional work (Skovholt and Rønnestad 2003) and they begin to face the demands from clients, supervisors, colleagues, and themselves.

It is a very rewarding experience to be a clinical supervisor. Seeing the qualitative growth of the counsellors is similar to my parenting experience. This is surely the second developmental satisfaction in my career. Success never comes singly. It is always accompanied by frustration and regrets. Supervision with different supervisees faces different difficulties. Success with one supervisee does not guarantee success with another supervisee. I start to realize that the journey from a novice to a skilled practitioner involves qualitative changes in skills, attitudes and knowledge (Stoltenberg and Grus, 2004). The capability of integration of what has been learned varies from stage to stage and from person to person. Although clinical supervision is one of the professional activities often performed by psychologists, the majority of clinicians have not received formal training and supervision in the area of competence (Scott, Ingram, Vitanza and Smith, 2000). Most of the supervisors in Hong Kong have no formal training. Models for supervision training have been available for years (Hersh, 1984), yet they have not been emphasized in

formal academic training programmes in Hong Kong.

Although supervision is considered essential to therapeutic effectiveness, trainees frequently report negative supervisory experiences. The differences in needs or expectations among trainees are major causes of such poor experiences (Barrett and Barber 2005). At the early stage of my supervision work, very often, like many other supervisors, I teach what I know. The more supervisees I have, the more diversity I face. I start to realize the importance of gender, personality and cultural difference. Some of the student counsellors grow very slowly but suddenly they have a growth spurt. Some of them start smart and bright but suddenly lose heart and procrastinate for some unknown reason. Some of the students, who seldom have conspicuous performance, grow steadily in the profession. What have I overlooked? What are the discounted issues I need to pay attention to? What are the barriers in the supervision process? What causes supervisee resistance (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004)? How are these resistances presented? What about my reaction to these resistances? What is effective supervision for student counsellors? What constitutes the favourable educational environments in their learning? All these reflecting questions cross my mind. Hence, my eagerness to study more about clinical supervision is aroused.

I seldom link up the concepts of developmental psychology with concepts of the

growth of professionals although I have been teaching students and parents for years about developmental psychology in relation to understanding their children's growth. In the developmental models, Chagnon and Russell (1995) point out that developmental conception of supervision is based on two basic assumptions: Supervisees move through a series of stages that are qualitatively different from one another toward competence; each stage requires a qualitatively different supervisory environment in order to obtain the best satisfaction and growth in the supervision process.

As an internship coordinator in the psychology and counselling programme in the University, over the years I have heard from many student counsellors their internal struggles. Learning to be a helping professional has been described as a complex and overwhelming process (Byrne, 1995, cited by Spruill 2000, 1995). These struggles are not supervisor exclusive. Many supervisors are exhausted and irritated by the wrestling during the supervision process. Sometimes I have a role to deal with the explicit as well as implicit conflicts between supervisors and supervisees. In the past, a lot of my energy was spent on dealing with the management of conflicts. The supervisees have gone through different stages, as have the supervisors. My personal struggles and the striving for betterment in my novice stage surely helps me to resonate with them.

Counselling is a relationship profession. What makes counselling work depend a lot on relationship building? The quality of the relationship is seen as essential to produce positive outcomes in supervision (Holloway, 1995). Relationships have long been viewed as the primary vehicle which supervisors can use to enhance the development of their trainees (Ekstein and Wallerstein, 1972; Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth, 1982; Mueller and Kell, 1972). The supervisory relationship builds up an important ground to nurture and facilitate the supervisees' growth. Supervision, like counselling, has the potential to harm (Nelson and Friedlander, 2001) and arouse conflict. The complexity of the supervisory relationship accounts for interpersonal conflicts. I also encounter a substantial number of student counsellors who have given up the chance to become a counsellor after graduation because they had a very bad experience in the internship with their supervisors. It is a pity to see some students who have lost confidence in the profession because their supervisors are too smart and authoritarian. What their supervisors do is detrimental to the supervisees' self-confidence. Their inner fire dies out. I still remember their defeated looking faces which impressed me so much when they came out of the supervision rooms. They feel a sense of failure and that they can never reach the expected level of their supervisors. The supervisees are fragile due to their sense of inferiority. From the view of the supervisees, I understand the hurts and frustrations.

From the standpoint of the supervisors, I understand another side of the story.

Sincere feedback from the supervisors may be misinterpreted as criticism.

What is effective supervision? What are the factors affecting the supervisory relationship in the counselling supervision? What makes a good supervisor?

Worthington and Rochle (1979) point out that trainees describe effective supervisors as pleasant and personable, willing to provide useful training and supportive of their supervisees' efforts to experiment. Worthen and McNeill (1996) similarly report that effective supervisors are seen as empathic, nonjudgmental, validating, non-defensive, and willing to examine their own assumptions. These presupposed characteristics are common qualities of an effective counsellor. The resolution of conflict between supervisors and supervisee is critical in the training process (Mueller and Kell, 1972). The effective supervision is able to create a safe environment for the supervisees to openly discuss their concerns, needs and insecurities and the freedom to experiment different skills and strategies (Barnett et al., 2007).

I wonder whether there is any cultural difference in relation to effective supervision.

Although negative interaction in supervision does not necessarily mean that a positive benefit cannot result (Nelson and Friedlander, 2001), I believe that tears and laughter are of equal importance in a person's life. It takes time to digest

negative experiences.

A growing number of counselling graduates who work as counsellors would like to seek individual supervision even though there is no supervision support from the working agencies. I have been running a systematic supervision course for several years. More and more experienced supervisors show interest in attending the courses. All this indicates that more research is needed on the subject of supervision in Hong Kong. I always ask myself, "What should be done to ensure the professional growth of the new generation of this profession through education and supervision?" I really hope that a growth-inducing model in counselling supervision be created.

2.5.5 Cultural implications of the narratives

Every person is affected by his or her own culture.

Culture can be defined broadly as the sum of intergenerationally transmitted and cross-culturally acquired lifestyles, ways, behaviors patterns, and products of a people that include their language, music, arts, artifacts, beliefs, interpersonal styles, values, habits, history, eating preferences, customs, and social rules.

(Harper and McFadden, 2003, p.1)

Culture influences and shapes what we think of as individual characteristics. Our stories reflect a lot of information about our cultural values and experiences. Pelias (2003, p.372) construed that autoethnography "lets you use yourself to get to culture".

The trend of multiculturalism means that professional counsellors need to increase their cultural sensitivity and gain greater knowledge and understanding of various racial-ethnic groups to develop culturally relevant counselling skills (Sue et al., 1996). Liddle (1991, p.665) writes, "Clinicians are increasingly conscious of the need to have a cultural and ethnic template in their clinical work".

To understand Chinese culture, one must first understand that Confucianism is based on the teaching of Confucius (Huang and Charter, 1996). It has become the major philosophy which controls the Chinese social structure and moral values, in the past, present and continuing into the future as well (Huang and Charter, 1996).

Under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese culture is collectivistic and relational. The core reference for people is not their own egos but the collective, and collective interests take precedence over individual interests.

(Lu, 2002, p.37)

To understand the stories, worldviews should be taken into consideration. Collectivistic worldviews emphasize relationship and interdependence. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that people in collectivist societies tend to have higher interdependent and lower independent self-construal, which is opposite to the individualistic societies. According to Tu (1998), family as a basic unit of society is the locus from which the core values are transmitted. Among the Chinese, "filial piety is not only a virtue for a perfect man, but also the glue that holds the family together and the cornerstone of an orderly Confucian society" (Lu, 2002, p.36).

Chinese children are taught to practise the “*Li*” (propriety) that includes honouring parents, loving siblings, respecting elders, trusting friends and maintaining loyalty to the family. The Confucian values have generated a high and idealistic guideline for family and social relationship.

How these values have influenced the stories is one of the key features in the narratives. And details will be further discussed in a later chapter.

2.5.6 My Poem for the counselling graduates: <The road to success is not straight.>

Narrative may be viewed as translating the “knowing” into “telling” (White, 1980).

Richardson (1990, p.183) states, “Narrative is the best way to understand the human experience because it is the way humans understand their own lives.” My writing tells the story of my professional struggles which I have experienced for over thirty years. This is a poem which I have written for Counselling and Psychology degree graduates, wishing them to be persistent in times of struggle and challenge.

The law of success has to do with perseverance. The construction of this poem reflects my belief of the value of “trying hard” especially in the unfavorable moment in my lives. This poem is somehow an echo of my belief and philosophy of life, “Struggles and hardship develop a person’s inner strength” and my coping stance, “Facing the hardship with no surrender”.

<The road to success is not straight>

Author: Puichi, the supervisor

The road to success is not straight. There is a curve called fear, a winding road called tears, speed traps called needs, red lights called hatred, alarm lights called self.

You will have flats called routines.

But, if you have a spare called Love, an engine called wisdom, insurance called "spiritual support from Pui Chi" and a driver called Jesus you will realize what I have taught you in the Counselling classes.

2.6 Identifying themes

The stories I have chosen are the building blocks of my self-narrative structure. I choose to be a story teller rather than a story analyst (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), writing my stories from a first person perspective, and not an omniscient narrator perspective. I intend to tell my stories with the cultural description. The voice I choose to employ is basically a supporting one, a sharing of similar difficulties I have faced. I strove for being transparent. I feel my urge to prepare my students to become sensitive to the cultural impacts on our development and don't be discouraged by those negative experiences. This agenda, not only becomes the inner driving force of my research, but also orientates my attention to cultural

imperatives for the counselling profession.

The selection procedure of what to represent and how to represent it requires attention to the purposes of the research and strategic choices consistent with those purposes (Richardson, 2000). The process in tracing the antecedents and searching for meanings of this research is both illuminating and exhausting.

In autoethnography writers are permitted to write in a highly personalized style with emotions, using his or her own feelings and thoughts to understand others and situations (Wall, 2006, p.1). Self-narrative writing moves between the deeply personal psychological aspects of experience and much broader cultural context (Ellis, 1999, cited by Long, 2008). The self-narrative writing process steered me towards a deeply personal spiritual journey.

Viewing the stories from a more distant lens alerted me to identify a number of themes in the narratives:

The first theme: The frequent emphasis on a hierarchical cultural dimension in explanations of human interaction. The sociocultural heritage in terms of hierarchy sensitivity is a bridge and a block to me. As a counsellor as well as a counsellor trainer, I need to face clients from diverse backgrounds. The role and position awareness enable me to bridge the connection with various types of "others". The awareness of our own roles, values, beliefs and cultural attributes affect our

competency in the counselling process. However, the high sensitivity and alertness obstruct me from moving freely and adventurously.

The articulation of Chinese cultural influences is domineering in the supervisor-supervisee relationship and learning. How the more powerful execute their power and how the less powered react and survive in the Chinese culture is salient.

The second theme: The emphasis on how to understand cultural differences and develop social and cultural competency. One of the central tenets of Chinese social competency is to maintain social harmony. Instead of using fighting or confrontation to face conflicts, how to assimilate, accommodate and integrate are alternative strategies.

I often teach my students, "You have to speak the right words at the right time in the right context". This is exactly what I learn in real-life situations. I find that I am always sensitizing students to the dynamics in relationships. I earnestly hope that they will not get drowned in the relationship swirl. Social competence based on the values of obedience and promoting harmonious hierarchically organized relationships is crucial to the developmental pathway for Chinese.

The student counsellors' voices aroused an echo in my heart. The supervisees' experience resonated with my past learner experience in a bureaucratic culture.

Although the intention was not consciously strong, I could not deny the implicit force in me to speak up for the powerless—the students. Nonetheless, the strategy I prefer of protecting the students has been peaceful and harmonious oriented.

The third theme relates to a quite consistent framework of life, my interpretation of the world and my sense of existence. Suffering and adversities are unavoidable. The tribulation in my life experience has had great impacts on my life attitudes as well as the formation of worldviews. It has influenced my psychological functioning, self-concept, cultural identity, emotions, coping skills, attribution and relational style. I notice, somehow, that my narrative is pessimistic but enthusiastic. Berne (1975b, p. 418) defines script as “an ongoing program, developed in early childhood under parental influence, which directs the individual’s behavior in the most important aspects of his life”. The script is a specific life map. The needs to “Try hard” and “Be strong” for survival are prominent in my life scripts. The ways I encourage myself and the graduates are of the same orientation.

2.7 Summary

Counselling and psychotherapy are constantly evolving and developing. This reflects the sensitivity of multiplicity of human experience. As a counselling educator, I have gone through stages of development in the profession. The reflective journey reminds me to be aware of the impacts of my past experience and my life script and

value on my present research and my counselling education focus in the future.

Areas of research interests, which include the intrapersonal and interpersonal process of the counselling students, their struggles and needs, their learning and coping, began to formulate in my mind profile the road map to help me to proceed with the planned literature review.

Chapter 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

The overarching goal of this chapter is to build on the foundation of previous research findings and non-research studies that point to the counselling supervision experience in order to set the stage for this research thesis. This is done with the intention to locate the context and background of this research and capture insights from existing research findings (Blaxter et al., 2006).

A literature review is a systematic way of selecting, identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the ideas, data, evidence, information produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners from different paradigms and perspectives based on their particular standpoints in relation to the research topics (Hart, 2001; Jesson and Lacey, 2006; Fink, 2010; Forrester, 2010). A critical literature review is a very specific piece of argumentative writing (O'Leary, 2004) which goes beyond the simple description, aiming at identifying controversy and gaps for further research studies. It shows how the investigation of the selected literature has gone through conceptually synthesized organization strategies and it helps to contextualize the research thesis (Carnwell and Daly, 2001; Blaxter et al., 2006; Jesson et al., 2011) through a critical background analysis.

My selection of literature review starts with a broad overview of my preferred research area, the counselling supervision and proceeds to specific up-to-date information which is related to the preliminary design of research questions. In order to make the literature review more beneficial, a systematic approach (Hek and Langton, 2000; Parahoo, 2006), which is governed by a prescribed methodology (Jesson et al., 2011), to generate the review is employed. The literature review evolves into distinct stages (Cooper, 1984; Machi and McEvoy, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins, 2011; Dawidowicz, 2010) as illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

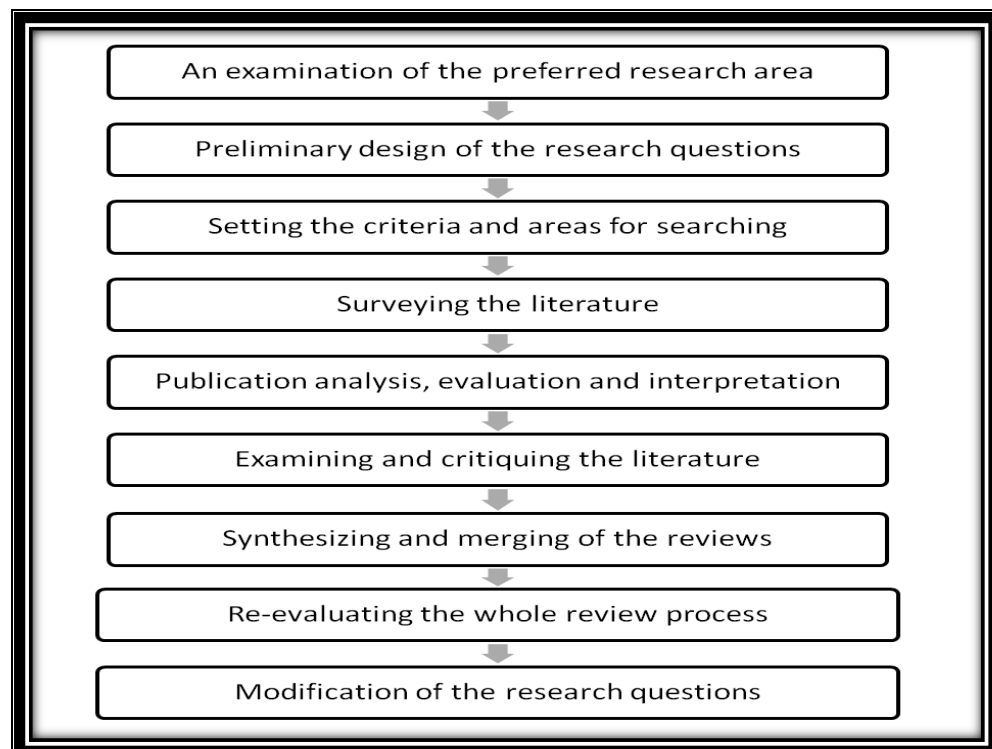


Figure 3.1 Procedures of Literature reviews (generated from Cooper, 1984; Machi and McEvoy, 2009; Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins, 2011; Dawidowicz, 2010)

The research areas were identified prior to the searching process. The procedures and criteria were set as the compass to enable a more systematic search. Novice counsellors, counselling internship and supervision are major foci of this study. I further extended the search to related areas such as novice professional growth, models of counselling supervision and counselling relationship. Databases were examined systematically with the above key words. Selection of the literature was governed by selecting strategies (Carnwell and Daly, 2001). Discipline-based journals, books and periodicals which publish research pertaining to clinical supervision, professional counselling training and education were examined systematically. The articles had to be data-based published professional journals. Area-specific reviews in fields of therapy and psychology included counselling psychology, developmental psychology, clinical psychology, school psychology, psychiatry, psychiatric nursing, school counselling, counselling on mental health, and rehabilitation were also explored. I located journals by perusing current issues. Abstracts of the articles were initially screened, and those which appeared to correspond to counselling supervision, education and training were evaluated on the basis of the full articles.

As the huge amount of research information expanded along the data surveying process, the organizing system was formulated to assist the retrieving process of

the data. The sources were then organized into themes and patterns. Each theme was investigated. The most challenging process was to critically examine the findings with new arguments. An ongoing updating literature review process was interspersed throughout the whole research process.

From the review it is evident that counselling supervision has been an expanding field in past decades. There has been a considerable increase of research into counselling supervision (Carroll, 1996; Wong, 2000; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004) in the last 20 to 30 years. Although there have been sizable contributions to the field of counselling supervision, very little research has been done on counselling supervision in the context of my local Hong Kong Chinese culture.

The analysis of my review of the literature is divided into themes and categories (Carnwell and Daly, 2001) summarized in the diagram below.

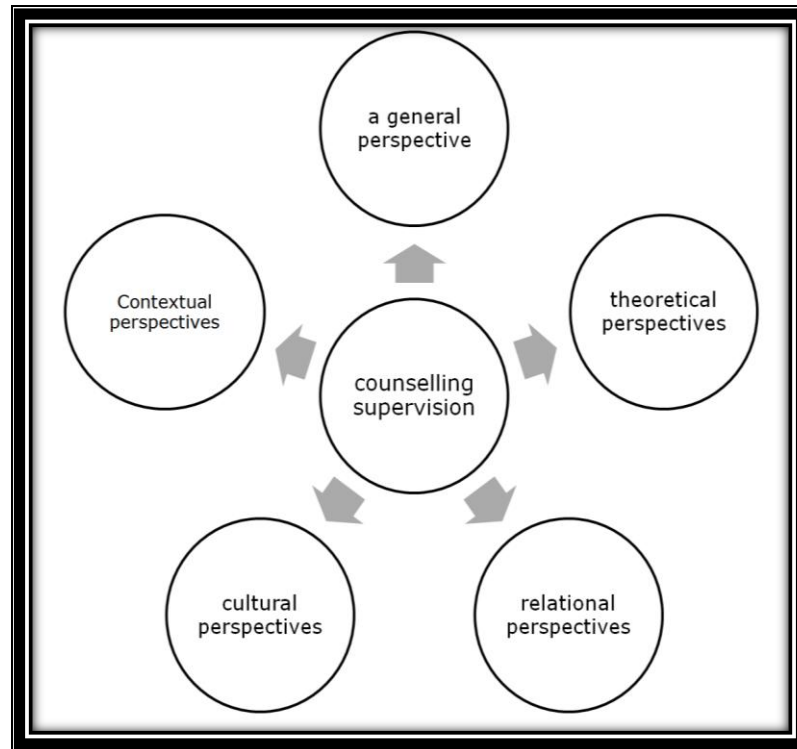


Figure 3.2 The five key perspectives of the literature review in counselling supervision

The five key perspectives as illustrated in Figure 3.2 provide a framework for a more comprehensive understanding of counselling supervision which steered the searching and thinking process of my study.

3.2 Analysis of the literature

3.2.1 Key theme (1): General perspectives: counselling supervision and its significance

In the literature, there is strong agreement that counselling supervision is significant and crucial for the professional growth of counselling interns (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987; Holloway, 1992; Carroll, 1996).

an ongoing educational process in which one person in the role of supervisor helps another person in the role of the supervisee acquire

appropriate professional behaviour through and examination of the trainee's professional activities.

(Hart, 1982, p.12)

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2013) sees supervision as a formal process intended to help supervisees maintain ethical and professional standards of practice and to enhance creativity. "The principle of beneficence" (BACP, 2013, p.2) is an essential code of ethics for good professional service. Counsellors need

to use regular and on-going supervision to enhance the quality of the services provided and to commit to updating practice by continuing professional development

(BACP, 2013, p.2)

Supervision is an intensive, interpersonally collaborative one-to-one relational process (Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth 1982; BACP, 2013) which is normally provided "by a more senior member of profession to a more junior member or members of that same profession" (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004, p. 8).

From the literature, objectives of development, monitoring of counselling professionalism in client care, provision of support to supervisees, the transmission of professional values and commitments in the training process have been thoroughly discussed among scholars in the past years (Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth 1982; Holloway, 1995; Proctor, 2000; Falender and Shafranske, 2004;

Carroll, 2006). Bernard and Goodyear state more clearly the socialization objective of clinical supervision which is to:

socialize novices into the profession's values and ethics, protect clients, and finally monitor readiness of supervisees to be admitted to the profession.

(Bernard and Goodyear, 2004, p.2)

Assessment and evaluation, which constitute the supervisors' responsibilities to the supervisees, the education and training institutions, the profession, and ultimately the public, are important monitoring aspects in supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004; Falender and Shafranske, 2004). How can the restorative and evaluative objectives be achieved at the same time? Are they contradictory to each other in the operation process? Will there be conflicts in the execution of the various objectives of counselling supervision? In-depth studies on this area have not been found.

Counselling supervision has gone through many changes in its development. Its important functions in counselling training have been recognized (Holloway and Neufeldt, 1995; Stoltenberg and Grus, 2004). Counselling professional development is a lengthy lifelong process which starts from coursework in university or institute training programmes, and evolves throughout the entire career path. Falender and Shafranske (2004) cite the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) Task Force on Supervision Guidelines (1998) which states that supervised

practice is the cornerstone of counselling education and training as it provides the experiential foundation for the consolidation and application of counselling knowledge, skills, and values. However, what will happen if supervision cannot execute its functions? Will counselling supervision cause harm to the counselling interns instead of professional growth? These are questions wandering about in my mind all through the literature review journey.

Scott, Ingram, Vitanza and Smith, (2000) describe that although clinical supervision is seen as an important professional activity, the majority of supervisors have not received formal training in supervision. This highlights an interesting tension between the theory and practice of supervision which needs to be paid attention to.

One recent report from practitioners suggests that fewer than 20% of supervisors have received any formal training in the process (Peake, Nussbaum and Tindell, 2002). Bernard and Goodyear (2004) report that between 85% and 95% of counsellors with 15 years' experience or more are asked to engage in supervisory activity. The counselling profession in Hong Kong faces a similar situation as there are few supervision training courses for clinical supervisors to be found normally, the senior counsellors in the field automatically becoming the supervisors. The importance of counsellor supervision has been emphasized as foundational to The American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation guidelines and central to the

training of counselling supervisees. The need to provide a systematic training for the counselling supervisors and to engage the professionals' commitment to professional efficacy is critical for the current development in our cultural context. This gap is waiting to be filled so as to assist the development of the counselling profession here in Hong Kong.

3.2.2 Key theme (2): Theoretical perspectives: How far does the emergence of different theoretical perspectives affect the development of counselling?

There are many variables which contribute to the complexity of the supervisory process. An expanding literature on counselling supervision can be found regarding what constitutes effective supervision (Holloway, 1995; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004; Carroll, 2006). A model provides a framework or "a mental map for ordering complex data and experience" (Proctor 2000, p.12). Various approaches or models of counselling supervision aiming at integrating different supervisory concerns in the training process are frequently discussed and revealed in the literature. The theoretical perspective reflects our assumptions and provides frameworks for understanding and explaining phenomena.

Reviewing practice through these lenses makes us more aware of those submerged and unacknowledged power dynamics that infuse all practice settings. It also helps us detect hegemonic assumptions-assumptions that we think are in our own best interests but that actually work against us in the long term.

(Brookfield, 1998, p.197)

In order to facilitate counselling education, normally the counselling supervisors will incorporate the theory of the relevant models of counselling in the supervision process and the orientation of models reflects the theoretical assumptions, preferences and supervisors' priorities in their supervision practice. Understanding of these models and approaches will help the awareness of the underlying presupposition and objectives of the supervision (Page and Wosket, 2001; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004).

The evolution of counselling supervision models from therapy-based models to educational models indicates a movement from a therapeutic to educational stance (Bordin, 1983; Carroll, 1996; Bradley and Ladany, 2001; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). Knowledge of these models is considered fundamental to professional practice. The rise of these different supervisory approaches forms a rich resource to assist the supervisees to achieve their learning objectives. Effective supervisory practices assist the supervisee to fulfill their potentials, achieve their objectives in learning. Models of counselling are originated from western culture. In Hong Kong, different supervisors adopt different approaches. Supervisors' own supervisory and professional experience determines their approaches in their supervisory work. However, what is considered to be "good" or "effective" may differ greatly from one context to another. The dimension of culture provides a supervisory context for

approaching cultural issues. A culturally competent therapist must have the essential skill of “dynamic sizing” (Sue, 1998, 2006) knowing when to generalize and be inclusive and when to individualize and be exclusive (Chu, 2007; Hwang and Wood, 2007). The counselling and supervision efficacy may be enhanced by integrating the traditions and contemporary theoretical approaches.

3.2.2.1 Traditional psychotherapy-based supervision models

Psychotherapy-based models of counselling supervision maintained their stability in the 19th and 20th century (Watkins, 1995) by providing students a coherent set of theoretical knowledge and intervention techniques derived from a specific orientation in the supervision. Psychotherapy-based supervision helps students to build up specific competence and treatment protocols. Arguments in favour of these traditional psychotherapeutic-based supervision models emphasize the important role of supervision to familiarize the supervisees with theoretical understanding, conceptualization of the variables found in the counselling process and the knowledge of the theory (Watkins, 1995; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004).

The assumptions behind the early supervision models, which can be said to be counselling-bound models (Holloway, 1992) or Psychotherapy-bound models

(Bernard and Goodyear, 2004), are based upon an apprentice-master approach.

The major focus is the delivery of knowledge and skills.

The undergraduate counselling psychology programme in Hong Kong was launched in 2004. It employs the traditional scientist-practitioner model and the central value of the training is the respect of diversity. The programme encompasses a study of different theoretical frameworks with an emphasis on real-life application and research of different situations (HKSJU, 2013). A general overview of the therapeutic approaches will be introduced to the students. Supervisors are experienced senior counsellors who usually employ their own favourite and competent approach in their supervision to enhance the learning of the counselling students. This resembles the apprentice-master approach. The apprenticeship model offers the opportunity for the supervisees to imitate the master. However, it "contributes to a narrowness of learning confined to the experience and skills of the apprentice-master" (Carroll, 1996, p.25).

3.2.2.2 The emergence of Supervision-based developmental models

Supervision models which place emphasis only on the transmission of skills and knowledge with little time for reflection and discount the individuality of the apprentices (Carroll, 1996) have been challenged. Skills teaching without

considering the cognitive ability, developmental needs will encounter blockages in the learning process. The supervisees will not be able to identify and differentiate the therapeutic constructs. Pedder (2010, p.103) argues that the supervisees are not “passive recipient” of skills and information. He emphasizes,

We have to take trainees from where they are— most have had considerable background experience of dealing with people in a therapeutic role, whether as doctor, psychologist, social worker, or nurse. They are not empty vessels into whom we pour from a jug, nor inert lumps of clay to be fashioned after our own image. We are facilitators, gardeners, accepting the plants that spring up in our gardens and doing what we can by pruning.

(Pedder, 2010, p.103)

These models have been questioned concerning their narrow focus on teaching counselling theories (Falender and Safranske, 2004) without considering the unique characteristics of the supervisors’ teaching style and the supervisees’ learning style in supervision.

This led to the emerging of the supervisor-based integrative and supervision-based developmental models (Bradley and Ladany, 2001). A change from one paradigm to another appeared in the counselling supervision profession. More and more models based on various dimensions in the supervision have been found, such as the developmental stages (Hogan, 1961), the social roles (Hawkins and Shohet, 1989),

professional competency (Falender and Safranske, 2004), and the system approach (Holloway, 1987). The supervision discipline is beginning to bloom.

The rise of developmental models of supervision (Holloway, 1987) marks the paradigm change in the 20th century. Professional development is the process from the beginning of an individual's career to retirement through which he or she gains experience and becomes an expert (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 1995). The basic assumptions of the developmental models are that supervisees move through a series of qualitatively different stages toward competence and therefore require a qualitatively different supervisory environment for the best satisfaction and growth in the supervision process (Chagnon and Russell, 1995; Brown and Srebalus, 1996; Fong et al., 1997; Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth, 1982; Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003).

A novice is defined as a person who must rely on rules to guide practice because he or she has no experience from which to draw a response (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 1995). Not only the cognitive dimension, but also the relational and personal, emotional maturity (Furr and Carroll, 2003) should be taken into consideration in the supervision process.

Bruss and Kopala (1993) use an analogy to discuss the development of graduate psychology students. They use an object-relations approach and view students in

terms of professional infancy. Beginners like infants, are completely dependent but head towards independence if the environment is productive and supportive. Developmental models use development as a metaphor for the process of a supervisee's growth. Meadows (1986, p.19) construes that "stage models of development are relevant to the concept of continuity and discontinuity in development". Counsellors advance through various sequential, progressive, hierarchal stages of maturation at a rate commensurate with their current abilities (Barrett and Barber, 2005).

Hogan (1961) was one of the earliest to formulate four developmental stages about the needs of therapists. He also emphasizes that one recycles through the levels rather than remaining at the achieved level.



Figure 3.3 Hogan (1961, p.140): Developmental stages about the needs of therapists

Loganbil, Hardy and Delworth (1982, p.17) regard development as “continuous and ongoing throughout one’s professional life span”. A stage 1 supervisee is ignorant, lacks creativity and deals with problems with linear solutions. Stage 2 supervisees are confused and in conflict with a realization of the problems. Stage 3 supervisees experience “a new cognitive understanding.....and personal security based on awareness of insecurity” (Ibid. p.19).

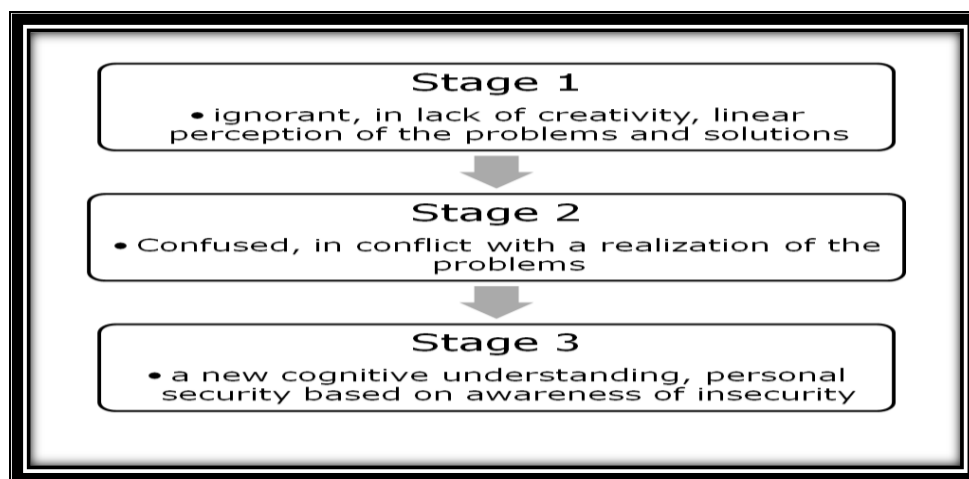


Figure 3.4 Loganbil, Hardy and Delworth (1982)-Supervisee developmental stages

Does every supervisee go through these stages with similar characteristics? How does the development take place? What potential factors will facilitate or hinder the development? The literature does not make clear when and how a supervisee moves from one level to the other, nor how the competencies at each level are evaluated (Carroll, 1996; Kaufmann, 2003). Empirical investigations have not been addressed much in response to these questions. From my experience in supervision, although

supervisees vary in their characteristics across stages due to many factors such as personality differences, responding and learning styles, they nevertheless share certain similarities across stages. Sometimes, supervisees may move back and forth along the stages. The relational chemistry between supervisors and supervisees are essential in the learning process.

Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) argue that novice counsellors normally lack the cognitive ability in the case of conceptualization with an integrative theoretical perspective in spite of having an enormous undigested amount of academic knowledge from the universities. This knowledge is insufficient for them to deal with the all sorts of challenges from clients in the real world. To a certain extent, I agree with this point of view. This is especially true to those undergraduate students who are totally new to the profession. They have to go through a sense of uncertainty, and feelings of anxiety and frustration, before they can integrate theories and conceptual knowledge and operate intuitively and competently as experts. To those master level students, the anxiety level may be slightly lower due to their previous exposure in their profession. Etringer et al., (1995) state that development is a process that involves individuals moving from declarative (factual) knowledge to procedural knowledge. If students are to develop generalized working schemas

across various situations, they must repeatedly practise on cases with varying degrees of similarity.

Does it make any cohort difference in the professional development process with reference to the effects of globalization and advances in technologies which provide more opportunities to learn through the internet? Or is it just the opposite, the technology actually creates more stress and tension in the interns of contemporary cohorts than those of the past decades? Technology in contemporary world becomes an optimal medium for self-directed learning and economized the processing of information. The continuous development in educational technology really offers multiple pathways to both educators and students in the teaching and learning. Video-conferencing, web-based guidance and instructions from the supervisors have substantial impact on supervision. However, this development can be overwhelming and burdensome to traditional supervisors. The increase in huge amount of cognitive knowledge does not necessarily mean the integration of the theoretical underpinning and the clinical challenges.

Skovholt, Rønnestad and Jennings (1997) argue that novice and expert may work equally well with clients with good relationship skills, while only the expert will succeed in managing clients with severe trauma. They further propose,

Expertise occurs when the practitioner has evolved to an internalized style after thousands of hours of practice and an average of 15 years of professional experience. At this point the practitioner has internalized theory and research, found a comfortable working style, developed methods for judging success, and shed elements of the professional role which are incongruent with the self.

(Ibid., 1997, p.364)

Developmental perspectives enable us to understand professional growth in a more coherent way. Supervisors must be cognizant of the developmental issues. The ability to manage all sorts of difficulties and conflicts are stage different. It reminds the counsellor educators to design appropriate training programmes that address all relevant aspects of counsellor development and examine experiences that have an impact on counsellor development. Supervision research generally supports the notion that there are specific levels of training and various focuses of the developmental models start to emerge (Holloway, 1987; Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth, 1982; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004).

However, quite a number of issues arise from these models. Are there any differences in the developmental stages with regard to cultural diversity? Would there be any effects on professional development with regard to different theoretical orientation and background experience? How should novice counsellors who are cognitively smart but relationally and emotionally insensitive in working with clients or vice versa be supervised? These questions raise attention for further researchers

in the future in regard to the developmental models. I have encountered a number of these supervisees who are smart in academic study but poor in self-and other awareness. It takes time for them to taste and experience the social world and the clinical settings. Sometimes conflicts and difficulties are functional as these will arouse their attention and sensitivity.

3.2.3 Key theme (3): Relational perspectives: What are the contributions of relational perspectives to counselling?

The supervision process is a collaborative relational endeavour between the supervisor and the supervisee as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

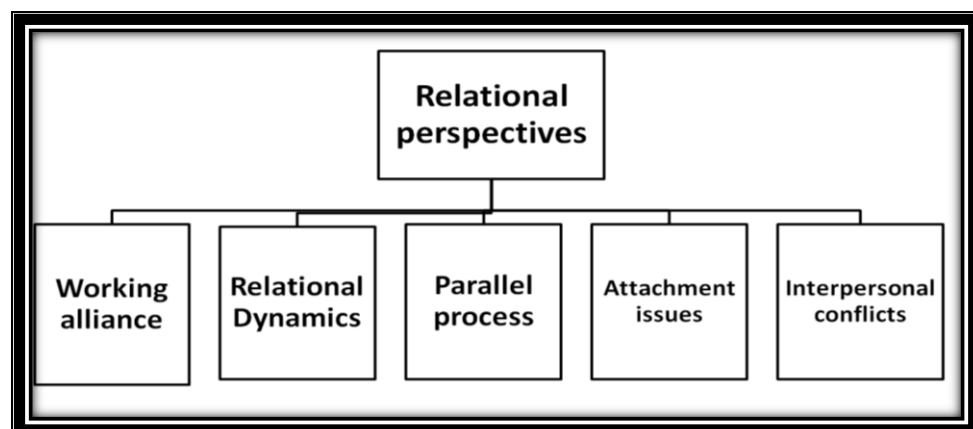


Figure 3.5 Five areas of relational perspectives (generated from Ekstein and Wallerstein, 1972; Doehrman, 1976; Hardy and Delworth, 1982; Ladany, Ellis and Friedlander, 1999; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001; Gazzola and Thériault, 2007)

3.2.3.1 Understanding the working alliance in counselling supervision

A consensus agreement on the importance of the supervisory working alliance is found in the literature review (Ekstein and Wallerstein, 1972; Doehrman, 1976;

Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth, 1982; Ladany, Ellis and Friedlander, 1999; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001; Gazzola and Thériault, 2007). A "Working alliance" which is originally used as a psychoanalytic concept to discuss relationship variables within the therapy relationship is commonly found in supervisory relationships (Bordin, 1979; Ladany et al., 1999). Efstation et al., (1990, p.323) define the supervisory working alliance as "the set of actions interactively used by supervisors and trainees to facilitate the learning of a trainee". The notion of supervisory working alliance is a common concept underlying supervision models (Ladany et al, 1999). The positive supervisory relationship experience which has long lasting experience in the supervisees is a pivotal element in the professional development of counsellors (Holloway, 1992; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001; Orlinsky, Botermans and Rennestad, 2001 Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003). Personal variables, interpersonal variables as well as consequences of good supervisory relationships are found in the literature (Worthington and Roehlke, 1979; Heppner and Handley, 1981, 1982; Carey, Williams and Wells, 1988; Ladany and Friedlander, 1995; Thompson and Perlini, 1998; Patton and Kivlighan, 1997).

From the literature, the strong alliance with a high level of agreement consists of three related components (Bordin, 1979; Safran and Wallner, 1991; Ladany, 2004):

- (1) relational bond which denotes the affective quality of the relationship including

trust, understanding, rapport and respect; (2) collaborative tasks which are characterized by specific activities in the training such as advising, instructing, monitoring, evaluating, modelling, consulting, supporting, sharing (Holloway, 1995); and (3) working goals which include the learning objectives such as goals for the personal and professional development of expertise (Johns, 2012).

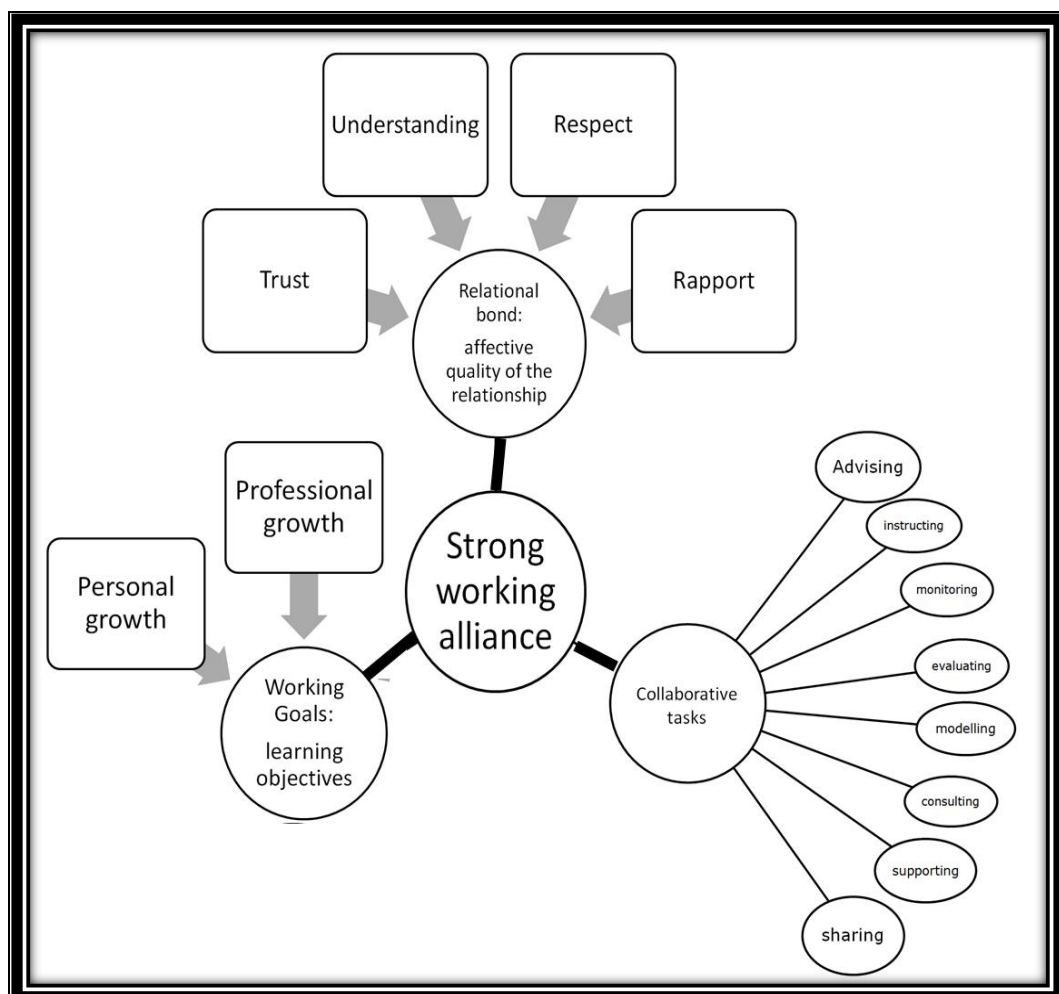


Figure 3.6 Model of a strong working alliance (adapted from Bordin, 1979))

Figure 3.6 is a model I have adapted from Bordin (1979), which delineates the significant elements of a strong working alliance. The establishment of a good working alliance in supervision which is predictive of a lesser sense of role conflict in

supervisees is as important as the therapeutic alliance (Ladany and Friedlander, 1995; Webb and Wheeler, 1998). Bordin (1979, 1983) argues that the working alliance comprises more important intervention skills in the change processes in any interaction between two individuals.

In applying Bordin's concepts of working alliance in supervision, should there be other components that need to be taken into consideration, such as cognitive styles and personality traits? Can supervision still be productive in the absence of a positive supervisor-supervisee relationship? How does working alliance change across stages in the supervision?

Ladany (2004) summarizes the advantages of a good working alliance to allow for effective evaluation practices, more self-disclosure by supervisees and more satisfaction with the supervision process. On the contrary, a poor supervisory alliance is often associated with non-disclosure, unethical professional behaviour, conflicts and counterproductive transactions in supervision (Worthen and McNeill, 1996; Ladany, 2004; Webb and Wheeler, 1998). Good supervisory working alliances increase the trustworthiness of supervisors and affect the counselling performance measures and counsellors' self-efficacy (Carey, Williams and Wells, 1988; Ladany and Friedlander, 1995; Thompson and Perlini, 1998; Patton and Kivlighan, 1997). This view has been supported by empirical literature (Skovholt

and Ronnestad, 1992; Stoltenberg, McNeil and Delworth, 1998). Worthen and McNeill (1996) state that the focal and essential nature of the quality of the supervisory relationship has been clearly evident in all their reviewed case studies. Interestingly enough, disregarding the importance of the supervisory relationship, there are reports stating that many supervisors have not invested much energy in supervisory relationship work (Wulf and Nelson, 2000; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001). Why do supervisors pay less attention to the building of supervisory relationships? Are there any cohort differences in this phenomenon? Is it caused by the supervisors' personal training experience or theoretical orientation of the supervisors? To facilitate the betterment of the supervision profession, this dimension needs to be addressed in further studies.

Worthington and Roehlke (1979) report that trainees describe good supervisors as those who are pleasant and personable, willing to provide useful training and are supportive of their supervisees' efforts to experiment. Worthen and McNeill (1996) find similar reports saying that good supervisors are seen as empathetic, non-judgmental, validating, non-defensive, and willing to examine their own assumptions, possessing the attitudes of respect and acceptance. These presupposed characteristics are common qualities of an effective counsellor found in the literature (Page and Wosket, 2001; Mearns, 2003; Nelson-Jones, 2009). It is

understandable that supervisees of the counselling profession expect their supervisors to possess the similar qualities as their learning models. However, are these qualities too good to be true? Would there be disadvantages to the supervisees' learning if the supervisors are so perfect?

3.2.3.2 What are the contributing factors to the relational dynamics?

The supervisory relationship has been a significant focus in the literature. How do supervisees and supervisors think and feel about this relationship? How do they approach each other? How do supervisees and supervisors view themselves and each other in the relationship? What are the relevant variables affecting the supervisory relational processing? Topics such as conflicts and impasses in the supervisory relationship, the parallel process (Grey and Fiscalini, 1987; Schneider, 1992) are frequently discussed especially in the psychodynamic supervision. Quite a no. of the social role models, e.g. Hess relationship model (Hess, 1980), Holloway system approach, 1995, attempt to address the roles of supervisors and offer concentration on the study on the supervisory relationship. The supervisory relationship is subject to be influenced by many variables and a number of them have been addressed in the literature. It is multi-layered with the supervisee as hinges. It is a relationship about other relationships (Grey and Fiscalini, 1987; Doerhman, 1976). It involves interaction between the supervisor and supervisee

about the supervisee's relationship with a third party, his or her client (Grey and Fiscalini, 1987; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001). That is to say, the dynamic of the supervisory relationship is caused by the nature of the relationship.

Frawley-O'Dea and Sarnat (2001) suggest three domains to conceptualize the supervisory relationship. The first one is the nature of the supervisor's authority in relationship to the supervisees. This domain describes the authority of the supervisor from a continuum running from an uninvolved, distant and objective expert to one which is highly involved and judgmental, absorbed with an absolute claim to expertise. The power differential between the parties is one dominating factor in relational conflicts (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). The second is the supervisor's focus: the relevant data for supervisory processing, ranging from focus exclusively on the client's issues, diagnosis and appropriate intervention skills to focus intensively on the supervisee's own issues, such as counter-transference, anxiety and self-esteem, which are found in the counselling process. The third one is the primary mode of the supervisor's participation within the dyad, studying the supervisors' preferred roles and respective behaviour modes which will affect the supervisory relationship. These three dimensions, which have their roots in the psychodynamic approaches, provide rich perspectives for studying the supervisory relationship and a useful conceptual map to explore the constitutional

characteristics for all supervision. However, the supervisor's influence is treated as dominant while the supervisee's influence seems to be neglected or treated as secondary.

Dye (1994) categorizes two major groups of contributing factors to supervisory relationship: static and dynamic. Gender and sex role attitudes, supervisor's style, theoretical orientation, age, race and ethnicity and personality characteristics are prominent static factors receiving frequent attention (Borders and Leddick, 1987; Leddick and Dye, 1987). Dynamic sources exist in varying degrees or forms (Borders et al., 1991), such as process variables, relationships and cultural dynamics. In addition to these two variables, I would like to suggest a two-dimensional model: the overt and covert, and the static and dynamic dimensions through using four quadrants (see Figure 3.7) as a four-quadrant framework for analyzing the contributing factors to the supervisory relationship. This conceptual framework is created to facilitate subsequent detection and analysis of the dynamic in the supervisory relationship. This model is a visual aid which is used to highlight the significant variables intended to give a clearer understanding of the variables associated with relational dynamics.

	Static	Dynamic
Overt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gender •Social role •age •race •ethnicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social status •Process variables •Cultural practices •Relationship skills •Coping behaviour
Covert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personality characteristics • sex role attitudes • supervisor's style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relationship preference •Theoretical orientation •Social Values •Mental status •Strength and weaknesses •Past experience

Figure 3.7 Four-quadrant framework for analyzing the contributing factors to the supervisory relationship

The overt-static quadrant represents factors which are obvious and steady, such as gender, age and social role. The overt-dynamic quadrant represents factors which are constant and changing like social status, cultural practices and relationship skills, and coping behaviour. Personality characteristics, sex role attitudes and supervisory styles are factors which belong to the covert-static quadrant. Finally, relationship preference, theoretical orientation, values system, past experience, mental status and personal strengths and weaknesses are components of the covert-dynamic quadrant.

3.2.3.3 How does the parallel process impact the supervisory relationship?

Supervision aims at promoting growth in the supervisees. Supervision sometimes "... can feel more like therapy and therapy can feel more like supervision" (Pedder, and Winship, 2010, p.97). The supervisory relationship is active and dynamic and

not a static one. It involves a lot of arousal of emotions and feelings in the interaction. The psychodynamic approach takes into consideration of human interaction based upon drives and dynamic forces. It facilitates our caution to micro-dynamics in the supervision process and provides rich conceptualization of phenomenon in the supervisory relationship.

The client, counsellor and supervisor become the principal triad in the supervision. This triadic relationship can be the basis for parallel processes, isomorphic phenomena and triangulations among the participants (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004; Doehrman, 1976). The origin of the parallel process in supervision has been derived from the psychoanalytic concept of transference (McNeill and Worthen, 1989).

Searles (1955, p. 135) defines parallel processes as "processes at work currently in the relationship between patient and therapist are often reflected in the relationship between therapist and supervisor". Friedlander, Siegel and Brenock described parallel processes as unconscious identification phenomena in which:

supervisees unconsciously present themselves to their supervisors as their clients have presented to them. The process reverses when the supervisee adopts attitudes and behaviors of the supervisor in relating to the client.

(Friedlander, Siegel and Brenock, 1989, p.149)

Russell, Crimmings and Lent suggest two ways that parallel processes can be useful in supervision:

First, as the supervisee becomes aware of the parallels in the relationships with the client and the supervisor; understanding of the client's psychological maladjustment is increased. Second, the supervisee's understanding of the therapeutic process grows in that the supervisee learns how to respond therapeutically to the client just as the supervisor has responded to the supervisee.

(Russell, Crimmings and Lent, 1984, p.629)

It has been emphasized in the psychodynamic supervision approach that parallel processes are useful to enhance the supervisor and the supervisee's awareness and to assess the implicit relational dynamics in the supervision. However, if not recognized and responsibly dealt with, they can become problems (Friedlander et al., 1984; Russell, Crimmings and Lent, 1984; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). Although this is an important aspect, supervisors who have no psychodynamic background training may have more difficulties to recognize the parallel processes. And would this cause harm to the supervisory relationship and learning? This issue needs to be addressed distinctively in the supervisor training.

3.2.3.4 Assessing the role of attachment issues and their role in the supervisory relationship

A supervisory relationship is an intense interpersonal exchange between two individuals that extends over time; it is likely to elicit attachment-specific behaviour from the supervisee (Watkins, 1995; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). There are

many characteristics in the supervisory relationship resembled the parent-child relationship, such as the protective, evaluative, educative functions. Supervisor therefore shares the characteristics as the attachment figures. When the attachment figure is responsive to the signals of distress and able to provide a safe and secure base, the individual will experience comfort and support. If there is frustration, irresponsiveness and insecurity in the relationship from the beginning, the individual will experience feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. Sometimes, the protector function of the supervisor allows the supervisee to be depended on during fear and frustration. Supervision helps to remediate the impairment in the supervisees (Holloway and Neufeldt, 1995). They have the role as gate keeper to evaluate the work of the supervisees. Supervision has the potential to influence the supervisees' attitudes, beliefs, and skills, trainee's performance with clients, and client change (Holloway and Neufeldt, 1995). The presence of an attachment relationship rests largely on the implicit mental models of both the supervisors and supervisees.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1988; Ainsworth, 1979) tries to explain human development by addressing the dynamics of the mother-infant relationship which provides a shelter of safety for human growth and social development, and provides a very useful framework for understanding diverse social and interpersonal

relationships. It ensures the child's environmental exploration with a sense of security developed from mother-infant contact. Vast research and studies have evolved after Bowlby (Ainsworth, 1979; Maccoby and Masters, 1970; Sroufe, 1983; Waters, Hay and Richtersm, 1986, etc.); and the researchers started extending its applicability to other relationships beyond that of a child and the primary caregiver (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Brennan and Shaver, 1995; Collins and Read, 1990, etc.) and it has also been explored in the context of counselling supervision (Watkins, 1995; Pistole and Watkins, 1995; Kim and Birk, 1998).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a four-category model of adult attachment: Secure, Preoccupied, Dismissive and Fearful. Secure individuals view themselves and others positively, while Preoccupied individuals have a negative self-image and a positive other-image; Dismissive individuals have a positive view of self, yet view others negatively, and Fearful individuals have negative views of self and others. Watkins (1995) identifies three different groups of negative behavioural patterns derived from insecure attachment styles: (1) the compulsive self-reliance group which is resentful, distant defensive, resistant and over-assertive; (2) anxious attachment group which has strong needs to be the favourite and have fears of abandonment; and (3) the compulsive caregiving group which is eager to relieve the clients' pain, and oversensitive to minor difficulties. The

supervisory relationship acts as a secure base for novices (Pistole and Watkins, 1995) that facilitates supervisees to move from being immature, dependent to independent and autonomous in their professional developmental process.

Although attachment theory offers us a wider horizon to study the dynamic supervisory relationship, not many in-depth studies can be found with regard to supervisory relationships. Would the attachment style in a collective culture be different from in an individualistic culture? How does that affect the supervisory behaviour, cognitive process and emotional responses of the supervisors and supervisees? Besides, it is interesting to know how supervisees who have insecure attachment styles have gone through their struggling process as a professional counsellor. Lots of these questions need to be researched in the future.

3.2.3.5 How are the interpersonal conflicts presented in supervisory relationship?

Disagreement and conflicts exist everywhere especially in close relationships. Conflict has been defined as a disagreement between two interdependent people who perceive that they have incompatible goals (Guerrero, Andersen and Afifi, 2001).

A supervisory relationship is a kind of close relationship with close encounters, aiming at facilitating supervisees to solve the difficulties they face in counselling but at the same time this is also a source of supervisory conflicts. Various sources of

supervisory relationship conflicts are obviously researched and discussed in the literature (Mueller and Kell, 1972; Friedlander et al., 1984, 1986; Olk and Friedlander, 1992; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001; Oetzel et al., 2001). How far does the potential hierarchy impact the dynamic supervisory relationship and the supervision and their learning? What are the potential conflicts found in the relationship? How do the student counsellors' coping mechanism when facing these conflicts? How far do the cultural assumptions and values affect the learning process?

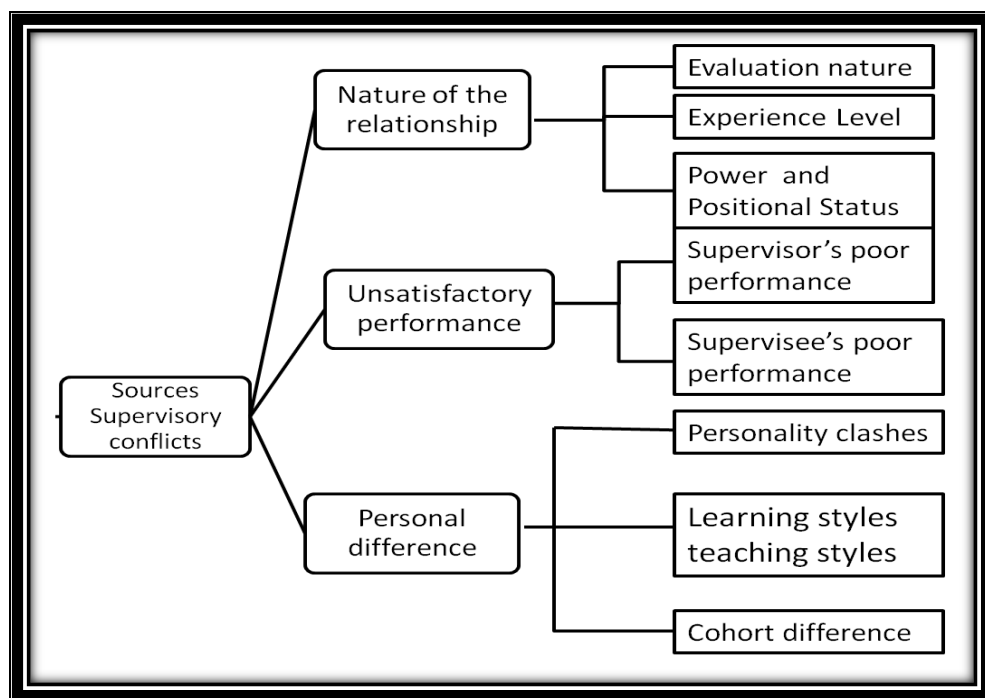


Figure 3.8 Sources of supervisory interpersonal conflicts

I have categorized three major sources of supervisory relationship conflicts from the literature (see Figure 3.8). Firstly, the nature of the supervisory relationship is the principal source of interpersonal conflicts. This is paradoxical in nature and the

complexity of the relationship has set the stage for interpersonal conflict. A supervisory relationship is an evaluative relationship in which the performance of the junior counsellors is evaluated by a more experienced professional (Stoltenberg and Grus, 2004; Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). Some critical functions of the supervisory relationship which have contributing impacts on the complexity of the relational dynamic have been touched (Doehrman, 1976; Friedlander et al., 1984; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001; Gazzola and Thériault, 2007). The supervisees, in order to learn, are contented with the notion that they might need to be directed, but they expect the mastery to be operated in a very clever and subtle way (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004). When supervisors reject and disapprove of their thoughts and feelings, react inflexibly, conflictual feelings will be aroused (Gray, Ladany, Walker and Ancis, 2001). Supervisees, especially novice counsellors, are viewed as vulnerable to poor judgment (Nelson and Friedlander, 2001). However, I am curious if the way and manner of presentation of the judgment will affect the responses of the supervisees or not.

Difference in experience will result in difference in understanding and perception of the reality. Power and positional status is another critical factor that contributes to the supervisory conflicts. Supervisees' sense of powerlessness is expressed frequently in terms of feeling controlled or in terms of a violation of boundaries

(Nelson and Friedlander, 2001).

Secondly, unsatisfactory performance, either from supervisors or supervisees, hinders the supervisory process. If the supervisors show little interest in developing the supervisory relationship, it will cause frustration in the supervisees. Educational neglect and emotional neglect (Kozlowska, Nunn and Cousins, 1997) remoteness and being uncommitted to establishing supervisory relationships (Nelson and Friedlander, 2001) are examples of poor performance. Interns will also feel conflict when supervisors give little recognition of their strength and discourage their independence (Wulf and Nelson, 2000).

The third source is personal difference. McAdams (1995) argues that individual differences in personality can be described on three levels: what a person has, what a person does and how the person makes meaning of his or her experiences. Personality is regarded as one of the most important determinants in studying conflict (Ahmed et al., 2010; Robbins et al., 2008). The relationship between personality and conflict has captured the attention of researchers for many years (Bono et al., 2002). Personality clashes take place between supervisee and supervisor with opposite polarities which can cause great tensions and relationship conflicts. Personalities are genetically determined resulting in different sets of emotional reactions and orientation of thinking patterns and behaviour patterns.

Learning styles refer to the ways an individual characteristically acquires, retains and retrieves information (Felder and Henrique, 1995). It has been extensively studied in educational psychology literature (Schmeck, 1988). Similar to learning styles, teaching styles refer to the pervasive way of approaching the learners. Mismatches of supervisee learning styles and the supervisor teaching styles is a potential conflict in the supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004).

'Cohort' is widely used demographically referring to people of about the same age with similar experience of a particular generation. 'Cohort model' refers to "a group of students who begin and complete a program of studies together, engaging in a common set of courses, activities, and/or learning experiences" (Barnett and Muse, 1993, p. 401). Rosow (1978) defines 'cohort' as people who share a given life experience and this experience is socially or historically structured in a common generational framework which distinguish one generation from another and are relatively stable over the life course. Normally, the supervisors and supervisees are from different generations with different professional experience. The difficulties, which they have encountered, such as social status, workplace norms, social perception of the professional identities, are different from the newer generations. Conflicts caused by cohort difference are frequent sources I have seen in my working experience. However, little research has been done especially in the

counselling profession.

Conflicts need not be destructive. Conflicts are actually signals to arouse our attention to the needs. They play an important role in facilitating personal as well as relational growth. From the literature and my experience, having a conflict in supervision is not necessarily negative. Positive learning and self-discovery can result from the experience (Nelson and Friedlander, 2001) if the conflicts are well-acknowledged and properly managed. More in-depth studies will surely benefit the supervision profession. Besides, how do counselling students cope with different types of conflicts in the internship process? Are there any significant differences in the handling of different types of conflicts? What types of strategies will student interns prefer and why? These are interesting questions which I wished to explore in this research.

3.2.4 Key theme (4): Examining the intersection of culture with counselling supervision

The six areas of cultural perspectives as illustrated in Figure 3.9 are categorized after the literature reviews with regards to the counselling supervision. Worldviews are sets of beliefs and assumptions that define our perception of reality. Cultural influence plays a significant role in influencing the worldviews of both the counsellor and the client (Jackson and Meadows, 1991; Sue, 1991; Ibrahim, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002). The issues of cultural influence on a person's upbringing and life

experiences are important in counselling and they can impinge the quality and outcome of the counselling relationship and the counselling process (Sue, 1991; Gadamer, 1997; Ibrahim, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002). Confucianism can be defined as a way of life taught by Confucius and it is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese cultural influence. The notion of collectivism, *Guanxi*, social harmony, face and facework are significant Chinese cultural domains which will be discussed in the following sections. If a counsellor requires having cultural sensitivity when working with clients, does it imply that the counselling supervisor should be more culturally sensitive than the supervisee? Cultural competency which involves a better understanding accompanied by responses to unique combination of cultural variables is essential in counselling professional training. Cultural competency which involves a better understanding accompanied by responses to unique combination of cultural variables is essential in counselling professional training. In order to achieve cultural competency, the continuous expansion of cultural knowledge in the training protocol and ongoing interaction experience with different people are important.

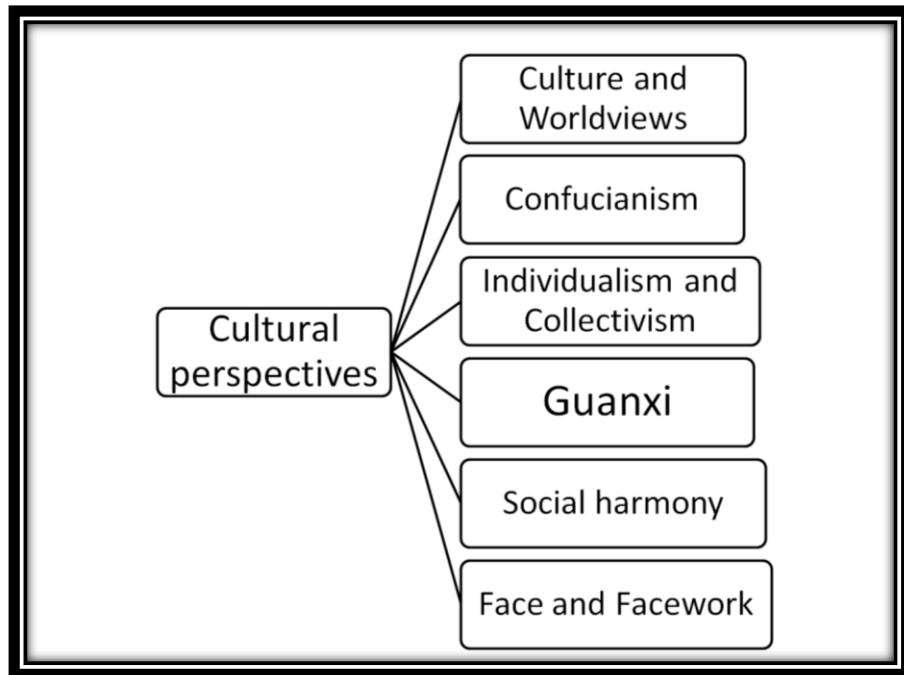


Figure 3.9 Six areas of cultural perspectives (generated from Jackson and Meadows, 1991; Pedersen, 1991; Triandis, 1995; Lu, 2002; Sun, 2008)

3.2.4.1 How are worldviews related to counselling supervision?

Since culture influences and shapes our thoughts and perceptions, how does culture affect the supervision process and the outcome? Through the investigation of one's worldviews, we will understand how culture becomes involved in our lives and relationships. The concept of cultural encapsulation denotes the ignorance of another's cultural background as a form of self-protection (Wrenn, 1985). It reminds counsellors to be aware of the cultural assumptions and stereotypes in the counselling and to be sensitive to the cultural variations among individuals (Pedersen, 1991; Sue, 1991; Ibrahim, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002).

Worldviews, which are “sets of beliefs and assumptions that describe reality” (Koltko-Rivera, 2004, p.3), portray a consistent and integral sense of existence and provide a framework for generating and sustaining interpretations of knowledge and reality. Worldviews can be described as the reservoirs of our attitudes, values, opinions and concepts, and as the “lens” through which people apprehend and interpret their world (Ibrahim, 1991; Williams, 2003). These are cognitive frameworks structuring every aspect of our lives including how we think, make decisions, behave and define events. They generate the makeup of the world (Sarason, 1984; Jackson and Meadows, 1991) with presuppositions and assumptions (Horner and Vandersluis, 1981; Pedersen, 1991; Sue, 1991), language, meanings, and constructs.

Multiculturalism “the fourth force in psychology” (Pedersen, 1991) postulates that virtually all counselling is multicultural. It involves challenging one’s own assumptions, appreciating others and being genuine in all interactions. No single approach or technique will work with every unique person or group. Multiculturalism arouses much attention and appreciation of “difference” and emphasis of understanding of difference must foster unity through similarity. The trend of multiculturalism means that professional counsellors need to increase cultural sensitivity and obtain greater knowledge and understanding of culturally diverse

groups and develop culturally relevant counselling skills (Pedersen, 1991; Sue, 1991; Sue et al., 1996) as well as one's own culture. Poortinga highlights the characteristics of culture as

shared constraints that limit the behavior repertoire available to members of a certain sociocultural group in a way different from individuals belonging to some other group.

(Poortinga, 1990, p.6)

If a counsellor or a supervisor is unaware of the one's cultural constraints on a client's, supervisee's or even their own behaviour, he or she might impose his or her cultural values on others. As theories from various counselling and psychotherapy approaches represent a variety of worldviews with their own values and assumptions about human behaviour, nature, and belief constructs (Pedersen, 1991; Sue, 1991; Sue et al., 1996; Ivey, Ivey and Simek-Morgan, 1997), a professional counsellor or supervisor, therefore, needs to be able to recognize his or her own cultural heritage; see how personal cultural background affects attitudes, values, and beliefs about the interpersonal process; understand the limitations, multicultural expertise and competency; and realize the root of discomfort with different clients regarding race, ethnicity and culture (Arredondo et al., 1996; Pedersen, 1991; Sue, 1991; Koltko-Rivera, 2004). Mutual enrichment, benefit and respect are considered to be the essential aim of multiculturalism.

All education is to a certain extent, multicultural. The necessity of this multicultural awareness in the supervisory relationship is prior to the onset of supervision.

A supervisor's ability to impart knowledge and skills in diversity issues can be significantly influenced by trainees' perceptions of supervisors' multicultural competence and its implementation within the context of a supervisory relationship.

(Inman, 2006, p.73)

In counselling supervision, recognition of one's own cultural difference from the supervisee's and facilitation of the student counsellor's cross-cultural awareness in the counselling practice is of equal importance. A good match of teaching approaches with cultural sensitivity will surely improve the supervisees' competency. The culturally diverse phenomena between the supervisees and supervisors receive equal or even more attention because this provides an educational platform for the supervisees to learn.

Supervisors may serve as catalysts for increased attention to multicultural dimensions in the counselling supervision (Constantine, 2001). Although the culturally diverse experience between the supervisees and supervisors provides an educational platform to distinguish cultural differences, little research has been conducted on the exploration of how this is processed in the supervision.

The first factor that interferes with the integration of multicultural counselling and counsellor education is the lack of sufficient multicultural counselling training or

minimal clinical experience in this area (Ridley et al., 1994). Constantine (1997) in her research found that 70% of the supervisees that she surveyed had received training in multicultural issues, whereas 70% of the supervisors, i.e. the trainers, in her study had received no such multicultural academic training. This represents a serious gap in supervisor competence and clearly supports the call for systematic training of clinical supervisors in the various dimensions of multicultural interactions. Although her research was done long ago, it is worth, to a certain extent to be addressed in Hong Kong since very little research and formal training of supervisors in clinical supervision has been done in our culture, not to mention the focus of research in multicultural competency in supervision. Secondly, most counsellor education programmes have responded to the professional challenges by adding one core course in multiculturalism (Ponterotto et al., 1995), which is only a tag on, and not a philosophical shift to the counselling training process, indicating that not enough investment energy has been expended. Counsellor educators are at the forefront of influencing the perceptions and skills of counselling professionals. Although important strides have been made in the counselling field in promoting multicultural competence, there is still a lot of work to be done and issues that need to be addressed to allow for an in-depth understanding.

Teaching and learning cannot be separated from culture; education is also contextual (Moir-Bussy and Sun, 2008). Hong Kong still relies much upon the Western inputs in counselling education due to its lack of systematic indigenous studies and research. Few writings and research about the indigenous characteristics in Hong Kong counselling education have been done to enable the development of its own identity. Moir-Bussy (2006) in her recent PhD study explores with Hong Kong graduate counsellors how they 'acculturated' ideas learnt from multiple contexts and then engaged in the transformation of these ideas for counselling practice. Hong Kong counsellors also engage in a process of selecting elements of Western theories, recontextualizing them for counselling in Hong Kong. Her study provides insight for studying a dialogic approach to education which both addresses their cultural context and maintains the values of their cultural heritage, while at the same time allowing for expansion of knowledge through acceptance of intercultural ideas (Moir-Bussy and Sun, 2008).

3.2.4.2 Identifying conceptual systems within Confucianism

The comprehension of culture in forms of different systems will facilitate a more comprehensive perspective to recognize differences among people. Baldwin (1980) speaks of three conceptual systems: European conceptual system, an Asian conceptual system, as well as an African conceptual system, each distinctly different

from the other in terms of their basic survival thrust and fundamental character. The European system focuses on a material ontology, with the highest value placed on the attainment and mastery of objects; the African conceptual system accentuates both a spiritual and material ontology with the highest value on interpersonal relationships between women and men; the Asian conceptual system gives prominence to the ontology of cosmic unity, with the highest value placed on the cohesiveness of the group (Jackson and Meadows, 1991).

Confucianism, the basic tenet in Chinese culture, can be said to be the cradle of Chinese character and is often recognized as a system of social and ethical philosophy. It "dwells primarily on the spiritual and moral content of life" (Huang and Charter, 1996, p.36), and has influenced Chinese culture for thousands of years. Confucianism philosophy emphasizes the formation of ideal human relationships (Miller et al., 1997). The spiritual qualities of selflessness, modesty, patience, friendliness, self-discipline, moderation, and compassion (Jordan, 1998) are significant in the maintenance of social harmony. The Confucian teaching values self-control, restraint, and deference, not assertiveness (Chang and Myers, 1997). In supervision, feelings and ideas can hardly be expressed openly in front of the authority. Direct expression may arouse discomfort in the interaction. Hofstede and Bond (1988) formulate the concept of Confucian Dynamism as one of the cultural

dimensions in the study of cross-cultural differences in human behaviour. They suggest that individuals who are high in Confucian Dynamism are more persistent, have a higher respect for status, place a greater value on thrift, have a greater sense of shame, and place more emphasis on self-enhancement, contribution to society, stability and rewards, and openness (Jaw et al., 2007), and more compliance with social norms (Lu et al., 1999; Ornatowski, 1996).

Under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese culture is collectivistic and relational. The core reference for people is not their own egos but the collective, and collective interests take precedence over individual interests

(Lu, 2002, p.37)

Confucianism controls the Chinese social structure and moral values, no matter in the past, present or continuing into the future as well (Huang and Charter, 1996).

Collectivistic, hierarchical and power-sensitivity in Chinese culture originates from the philosophy of Confucianism (Sun, 2008). Although Confucianism plays an important role in the socialization process of the Chinese, it is interesting to know how far its influence will go on the Chinese into the 21st century. How does Confucian thinking affect Hong Kong counselling students who are exposed to the counselling worldviews?

3.2.4.3 How is the dimension of individualism and collectivism executed in our culture?

Normally culture is divided into collectivist and individualist. Individualism values individual rights and collectivism values sacrifices and social benefit.

Individualism-collectivism is one of the major dimensions between the East and the West (Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, 1980). In the counselling profession, a sense of personal control is associated with less depression and the need for freedom, and satisfaction with self-predicted well-being. However, such an intervention strategy would be inappropriate for a client who endorses collectivism. How do the differences of worldviews of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism affect our interaction and the counselling profession? This is another focus which needs to be addressed.

Hofstede's (1980, 1983) pioneering research maps 53 countries on four dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity and uncertainty avoidance, which have been very inspiring. Society which favours individualism, stresses individual initiative, a greater focus on the self and emotional independence. It also emphasizes self-reliance and freedom of choice, and the ties between individuals are loose (Bellah et al., 1985; Hofstede, 1991), individual rights and cost-benefit analyses in determining personal responses (Triandis, 1995). In contrast, collectivism emphasizes the group goals over personal goals, conformity and in-group harmony, and defines the self in relation to the group (Triandis, 1995).

Collectivism, which stands for a society in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups throughout their lifetime, emphasizes sharing, duties, protection, loyalty and obligations (Hofstede, 1980, 1991) based on the assumption that individuals are simply a component of the group or society. It affects many aspects of the Chinese such as self-concepts; well-being and emotion; attribution style, relationship and communication, and conflict resolution style, and thus affect the overall counselling and supervision efficacy of Chinese (Hofstede, 1980; Sun, 2008). People in collectivist societies tend to have higher interdependent and lower independent self-construal, more concern with social compliance, humility and the importance of interpersonal network, whereas the opposite relationship is expected in individualistic societies (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Xu et al., 2005).

Williams (2003) reviews the studies by Oyserman et al., (2002) and analyzes the differences between individualism and collectivism in the notions of self-concepts, well-being and emotion, attribution style, relationship, communication and conflict resolution styles. These aspects of psychological functioning influence the ways that individuals see themselves and the world around them (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

On attribution style with regard to assessment in counselling and psychotherapy, Oyserman et al.,'s (2002) results indicate that individuals who subscribe to

individualism are more likely to attribute the cause of an event to dispositional rather than situational factors. These results are extrapolated to the assessment process that counsellors who subscribe to an individualistic orientation are more likely to attribute a client's distress to personal characteristics as opposed to environmental stressors.

Constantine (2001) studies the link between individualism and collectivism and the assessment process. She examines the relationship between counselling trainees' preferences for individualism and collectivism and their ability to conceptualize a case from a multicultural perspective. She finds that trainees with greater preferences for individualism demonstrate less ability to conceptualize a case from a multicultural perspective than trainees who endorse collectivism. Specifically, trainees who endorse individualism fail to integrate crucial situational factors, such as sexism or adjustment to graduate school, into their case.

It is necessary to develop an antenna which would sensitize us to see the world and experience from perspective of the clients, without imposing our rigid expectation and explanations on their issues (Laungani, 2004). Hong Kong has undergone a lot of radical changes in the years after the return to China in 1997 as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HK SAR). The influence from both Western and Eastern culture has formed Hong Kong's cultural identity. Hong Kong was a British

colony for over 150 years under the influence of Western culture. People have been influenced by individualistic worldviews. Sun (2008, p.2) also argues that “it is most likely not an exaggeration to say that all persons of Chinese heritage have been influenced by Confucianism to a certain extent, and many in fact pay homage to Confucian values and beliefs.” Studies have shown that a traditional collectivist culture is very dominant in the local culture (Cheung, 1985; Ho, 1974; Lee, 1995). The exclusive focus on improving individual satisfaction and personal wellness without taking into consideration the collective cultural demands will not produce any lasting effects for Chinese clients (Hofstede, 1980; Duan and Wang, 2000). Few studies on counselling supervision have focused on this dimension in supervision work. Even in the one-to-one counselling or supervision, the invisible influences from the community or the group identity cannot be neglected.

With the rapid growing influences of globalization, the merging of cultural influences makes the identification of differences and similarities more difficult. How do these worldviews affect our assessment and intervention? The application of the individualism—collectivism distinction in counselling and psychotherapy extends in various forms and we have to be sensitive before we can be competent in facing clients from different parts of the world.

3.2.4.4 *Guanxi*: the key to success in Chinese culture

Guanxi is one of the most dominant aspects that have been deeply embedded in the Chinese culture for thousands of years which has an enormous influence on the way and life of the Chinese people. *Guanxi* affects many aspects of a person's life and it is like the "delicate fibers woven into every Chinese individual's social life "(Luo, 1997, p.43). *Guanxi* can be viewed as support (Xin and Pearce, 1996) and source of information (Davies et al., 1995). It is also a means of risk reduction (Standifird and Marshall, 2000). It is an effective tool of market expansion (Park and Luo, 2001). It "has both positive and negative connotations" (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002, p.3).A detailed study of the notion of *Guanxi* will shed light on the understanding the social structure of Chinese society (Zhou, Wu and Luo, 2007). *Guanxi*, literally describes the interpersonal connections. Luo (1997, p.43) defines *Guanxi* as "the concept of drawing on connections in order to secure favors in personal relations; it is an intricate and pervasive relational network which Chinese cultivate energetically, subtly, and imaginatively". It can be viewed as a source of "social capital" (Park & Luo 2001, Putnam 1995) or "embedded resources" (Lin 1999) ingrained in human relationships. The notion of reciprocal obligation and indebtedness (Gold, Guthrie & Wank, 2002) which denotes implicit mutual obligation, assurance toward long-term relationship, is essential to the system of *Guanxi* in Chinese society.

Hwang (1987) explains *Guanxi* in terms of "expressive ties" which exchanges

qingqing (affection to the loved ones) and ganqing (emotion to friends) in order to satisfy personal need of love and sense of belonging; “instrumental ties” which is driven by physical benefits, it does not involve ganqing (affection); and “mixed ties” which involves both exchange of ganqing (affection) and physical benefits. Fan (2002) puts forth three similar Guanxi categories: “family”, “helper” and “business *Guanxi*”. The question on how *Guanxi* is operated in the counselling supervision comes to my mind along the literature reviewing journey.

Bao and Zhao (2008) summarize five characteristics which distinguish *Guanxi* from other kinds of relationship: (1) personal assets (Fan, 2002); (2) invisible (Tsang, 1998); (3) dynamic and transferable (Fan, 2002; Luo, 1997; Wong, 1998); (4) reciprocal (Alston, 1989;) and (5) long-term orientation.

Although many scholars have interests in understanding *Guanxi* especially in the business world, it is too sophisticated and dynamic to acquire definite understanding of such concept (Wong, 1999).

Gold (1985) argues that *Guanxi* involves power and it is a form of coping mechanism in the absence of impartial government. Supervisory relationship involves evaluative power. Are there any special characteristics regarding supervisory *Guanxi*? Little researches can be identified in this area.

3.2.4.5 Social harmony: tracing the influence of ‘Li’ in counselling supervision

How do the cultural assumptions derived from Confucian philosophy affect the counselling students' performance towards the potential hierarchy in the supervisory relationship? Perhaps the major tenets of the Confucianism illustrated in Figure 3.10 may shed light on this question. Social order and social harmony is one of the major theme in Confucian philosophy (Sun, 2008). Conflicts, argument and disagreement are not encouraged since it will be detrimental to social harmony. This causes great influence in social relationships. *Li* (propriety), *Xiao* (filial piety), *Jen* (Benevolence) and *Yi* (appropriateness or righteousness) are the major guidelines of Confucianism to facilitate the Chinese to maintain social harmony.

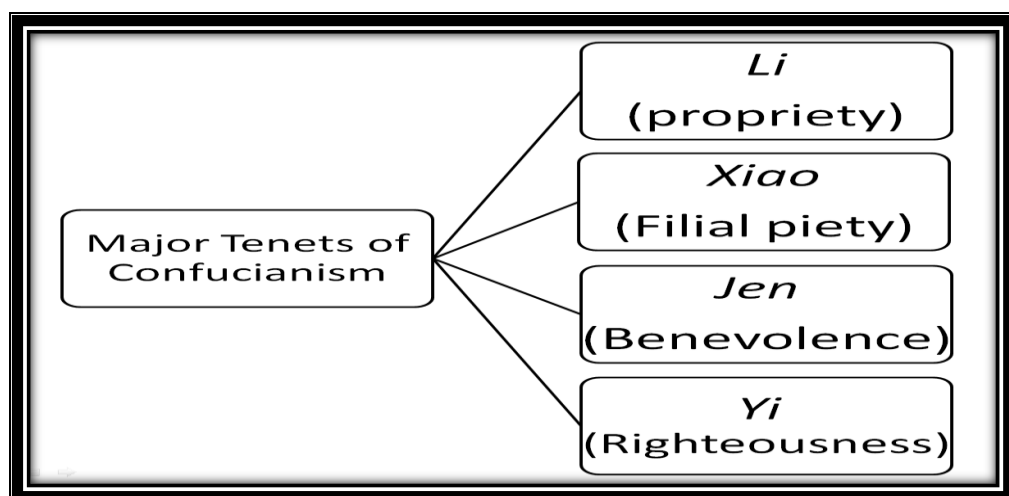


Figure 3.10 Major Tenets of Confucianism (generated from Huang and Charter, 1996; Sun, 2008)

Li refers to the ritualized norms of proper conduct to regulate human interactions in accordance with one's position in the family and society (Hsu, O'Connor and Lee, 2009). Propriety acts as a guideline to "educate" people on how to behave in legal,

polite and appropriate ways. Chinese are taught to practise the *Li* that includes honouring parents, loving siblings, respecting elders, teachers and authority, trusting friends, and maintaining loyalty to the family since childhood. *Li* combines the proper rituals with the sincere inner attitude (Hsu, O'Connor and Lee, 2009). In other words, a person has to be genuine, and should not pretend to perform *Li*.

How do social harmony, avoidance of conflicts and *Li* affect the supervisory interaction in the counselling supervision? What strategies will the supervisors and supervisee execute when they face conflicts and disagreement? Little research can be found in this area. It is necessary to take Chinese cultural peculiarities into careful consideration in the professional training process.

Xiao indicates the primacy of parent-child relations (Hsu, O'Connor and Lee, 2009), which require complete obedience of sons or daughters to parents during their lifetime (Hsu, O'Connor and Lee, 2009), and becomes indelibly imprinted on a person. The consequence of filial piety attitudes has also affected how the Chinese face authority figures. The concept of communication in Chinese is different from that of the West. "The extension of *Xiao* is *zhong*, or loyalty to one's ruler, employers" (Sun, 2008, p.9). Employees who bear the filial attitudes are highly recognized. Students who carry the filial characteristics are highly acknowledged by their

teachers. How is this attitude operated in the supervisory relationship? The literature honed my attention and interest in this study.

Jen (Benevolence) means humanness and humanity, which refers to the attribute of being fully human (Hsu, O'Connor and Lee, 2009). In Confucianism, *Jen* is the greatest and highest attainable virtue (Huang and Charter, 1996; Sun, 2008). Confucianism perceives that human heartedness consists in loving others and benevolence is an inherited tendency, like apple seeds, which after being sown, will sprout and grow (Huang and Charter, 1996).

The internalization of benevolence becomes the determining factor of self-discipline.

As a consequence, Chinese naturally are other-sensitive when they make decisions.

Focus on personal desires without considering others is the major cause of personal and social disharmony. Huang and Charter (1996) further divide the principle of self-regulation into two humanistic attitudes: altruism, an active, constructive attitude with an emphasis on external, expressive behaviour, and conscientiousness, a passive, preventive measure designed to intervene in one's destructive impulses or desires, which come from unrestricted expression. Altruism and conscientiousness result in the concepts of oughtness, one's duties in society; and righteousness, the value that drives a person to comply with the oughtness of a situation.

Yi (appropriateness or righteousness) connotes an ingrained sense of justice, and right and proper behaviour. Righteousness is

Righteousness denotes an innate sense of justices and Confucianism teaches that Man is the noblest of all beings because Man has spirit, life, and perception, as well a sense of justice.

(Sun, 2008, p.7)

Mencius, a disciple of Confucius, believed that the sense of compassion is the beginning of benevolence and that the sense of shame and guilt is the beginning of righteousness (Winberg, 1965). Sun formulates the relationship between benevolence, righteousness and propriety, saying that,

Propriety lies at the root of social stability, whereas righteousness dictates how resources are to be allocated. Between benevolence and righteousness, benevolence is the content, and righteousness is the context; between righteousness and propriety, righteousness is the content, and propriety is the context. Behind propriety, there must be righteousness, because propriety without righteousness becomes ritualistic, and conveys affectations rather than true sentiments. Righteousness is also at the back of benevolence, because benevolence without righteousness leads to indiscriminate displays of love, care, and concern, and is disruptive to the social hierarchy upon which relational harmony is founded.

(Sun, 2008, p.8)

Thus, Confucianism has implanted these basic values which deeply affect the social functioning of Chinese.

How are *Jen* and *Yi* operated in the student counsellors' interaction with their supervisors? In counselling supervision, the student interns still have much to

learn in the profession according to the supervisors. This paves the way for the development of a hierarchical relationship which is common and sensitive in Chinese culture. Especially when the supervisors exercise their evaluative functions, the supervisor has various types of power, such as expert, information and illegitimate (French and Raven 1959) over the supervisees. Hierarchical methods should be used in the service of teaching skills to provide clear instructions. However, in the power-sensitive culture, interpretations are different. Confucianism does not encourage individuation or self-actualization and is disdainful of self-aggrandizement or success in desire gratification and provides no room for the discussion of childhood traumas and hurt due to various forms of psychological difficulties (Huang and Charter, 1996).

Hierarchies are distinct social structures in Chinese society in which role, performance and power distance are designed with clear moral demands and obligations are set within each layer (Hofstede, 1980; Bond, 1991; Huang and Charter, 1996; Sun, 2008). Authority sensitization (Sun, 2008), which is the result of the concept of hierarchy, describes the Chinese's sensitivity and acquiescence to authority of all sorts. In the hierarchical relationship, the supervisor exercises influence through knowledge and experience in the setting. Simultaneously, the supervisee must be ready to be taught and influenced. The supervisee needs to

know the appropriate way to face the supervisors and authorities. How to communicate with the authorities has been a significant learning topic ever since childhood. How and what are the coping strategies being formulated under such cultural contexts?

3.2.4.6 Is “Face” and “Facework” a necessary relational strategy and why?

The issue of Face in communication is familiar to all Chinese as one of the significant strategies in social interaction. In order to develop a socially-accepted self-image and show propriety, “Face” is actually used to describe and manage relationship-related issues (Legge, 1960a). The theory of face from Goffman (1955) is widely applied to illustrate the attitudes of face in social interaction. Goffman (1955) suggests that once people establish and practise socially accepted behaviour, they may receive positive comments from others and claim their social value. Face seems to be constituted in the communication style in Chinese culture and is always broadly defined as behaviour which aims for a positive image through daily human interaction (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

In clinical supervision, the professional authority of the supervisor is beyond question. Student counsellors experience a sense of inadequacy when confronted by supervisors. It is interesting to know how the supervisee deals with the challenges

from the authorities. How is face managed in the supervision relationship and how does it affect the supervision process? Research in this area is really scarce.

Van Ginkel (2004) points out five Face concerns (see below Figure 3.11) which are significant in understanding the supervisory relationship or management of supervisory issues, including resisting unfair intimidation; reflecting a person's chaotic psychological status due to fear of losing social approval; refusing to step back from a high-esteem position in a hierarchical system; suppressing conflict issues by applying defensive and protective strategies when encountering face-threatening conditions; and fake face concerns. The dimension of face provides a framework to explain the social complexity on why and how the potential hierarchy impacts the dynamic supervisory relationship. The face concern is one of the solutions to human relational difficulties.

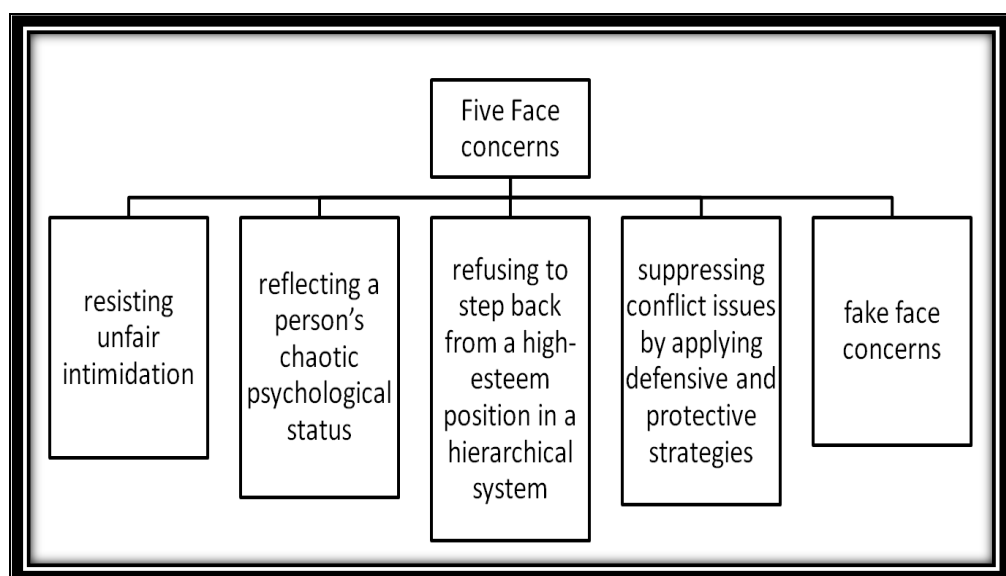


Figure 3.11 Five Face concerns by Van Ginkel (2004)

Direct confrontation is considered inappropriate in Chinese populations (Bond, 1991; Sun, 2008). Chinese mainly focus on social comments while Westerners focus on the self-comment and less on social comment (Oetzel et al., 2001). Chinese people may show their superficial acceptance based on propriety rather than real acceptance (Bond, 1991; Sun, 2008). From the Chinese, this is regarded as, *Li*, maintaining *Face* and respect in the relationship. Chinese students seldom challenge their teachers. If Chinese teachers are challenged by the students, this is regarded as invasive, impolite, a lack of *Li* and not accepted by society. This is a form of other-evaluation. Communication in Chinese tends to protect and avoid losing self or other face and Western culture tends to be competitive with others and they want to act more superior than other parties (Oetzel et al., 2001).

Facework refers to the strategies practised in interpersonal communication to enact self-face, to sustain, support or challenge another person's face (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998; Sun, 2008). Goffman (1959) also states that face can be granted, saved, lost and pursued. There are many strategies in facework, such as acting passively to prevent the loss of face; avoiding the expression of one's own viewpoints until others have done so and agreeing conformably with that idea afterwards; ignorance of others' opinions is also a facework for Chinese to protect face. Gaining admiration, appreciation and respect from others are the most

common motives of face-gaining acts (Sun, 2008). People who gain face will feel more confident, and view themselves as more valuable and accepted by others. By doing things like avoiding conflicts, paying respect to others and maintaining social harmony, gaining face can achieve benefits like enhancing group reputation, self-esteem, honour and dignity, status and power, networking, and a sense of vanity (Lin, 2001).

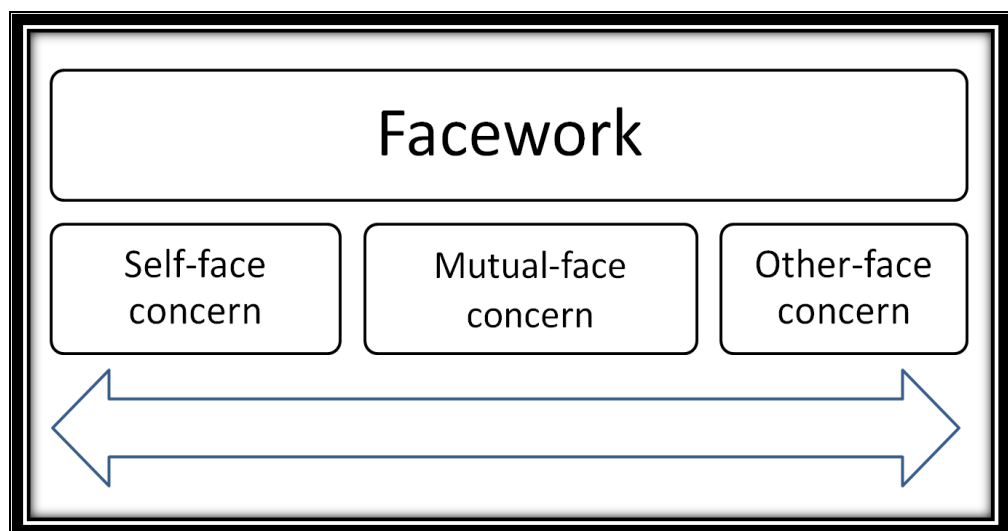


Figure 3.12 Three major concerns in facework (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998)

Self-face concern, other-face concern and mutual-face concern are three described perspectives (see Figure 3.12) during a conflict situation that people may be concerned about (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998). There are five styles of facework: (1) integrating, which is high on both self and other-face concern; (2) compromising, which is middle on both self and other-face concern; (3) dominating, which is high on self-face concern and low on other-face concern; (4) obliging, which is low on

self-face concern and high on other-face concern; and (5) avoiding, which is low on both self and other-face concern (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto et al., 2001). Oetzel, Ting-Toomey and associates (2001) illustrate 13 types of facework behaviour, and are categorized into dominating facework style, avoiding facework style and integrating facework style. The dominating facework style includes aggression and self-defence. The avoiding facework style refers to avoidance, giving in, involving a third party and trying to pretend. The integrating facework style consists of making an apology, compromise, considering others, choosing private discussion, remaining calm and talking about problems. Expressing feelings is regarded as both dominating and integrating facework styles.

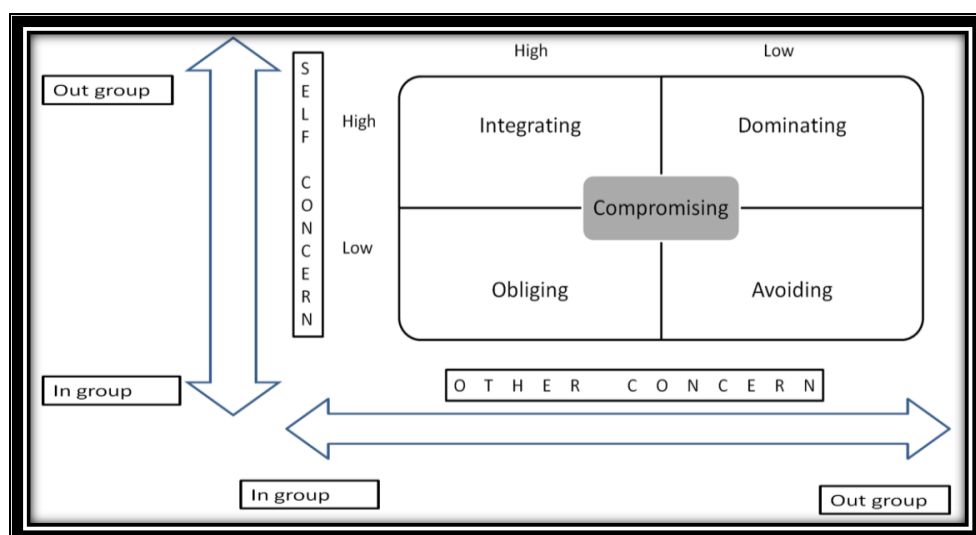


Figure 3.13 Five types of facework with consideration of in-group and out-group influence (adapted from Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto et al., 2001; Sun, 2008).

In Chinese society, there is a clear distinction between in-group and out-group members. I have tried to incorporate the in-group and out group influence in the five types of facework (see Figure 3.13). In-group members may be family members, friends, co-workers and someone who has a relationship with you. Out-group members may refer to strangers and enemies. The differentiations of in-group and out-group members are not merely in different relational circles, but also the communication pattern and face concern (Bond, 1996). The insider effect has an influence on communication patterns and face concerns. As harmony and relationship maintenance are the most essential considerations of in-group members, the consideration of other-face concerns would be higher because people do not want to harm the relationship (Oetzel, 1999). Therefore, communication within insiders is usually more respectful and enthusiastic. Since outsiders are those people with whom we do not have relationships or oppose us, it is not essential for us to protect their face or feeling (Oetzel, 1999). Therefore, there is a higher tendency for Chinese to speak their mind when facing outsiders. It is less likely for us to consider how to gain face for outsiders.

Face permeates Chinese daily life activities, which shows that it is essential for the supervisors and educators to pay attention to the face issues in the supervision process. I am curious to know whether facework has been executed in the

supervisory relationship. Will these face-work strategies be operated? How are they executed in the counselling supervision process? If the facework style is not appropriate and not being realized, supervisors and supervisees may feel that they are living in different worlds. Supervision efficacy is undermined. Research in this area is insufficient.

3.2.5 Key theme (5): Critiquing current challenges and opportunities in the counselling profession in Hong Kong

The counselling profession started in Hong Kong around the social unrest in the 60s with the establishment of the first formal counselling service by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (Leung, 1988). Higher education institutions played a leading role in the development of early counselling services in Hong Kong. Counselling programmes in the early stages were fragmented and informal (Tse, 2008). There has been a rapid increase in counselling-related training programmes run by many tertiary institutions and universities in recent years in Hong Kong (Leung, 2003). They have gradually become more systematic under the university curriculum. However, these counselling programmes are mostly “adjunct” (Leung, 2003) master’s programmes which are under social science, social work or education faculties, or collaborative master’s programmes with foreign institutions.

Leung, Chan and Leahy (2007) used SWOT analysis to examine the internal strengths, internal weaknesses, external opportunities and external threats confronting the counselling psychology profession in Hong Kong. A number of strategic issues central to the growth and development of counselling psychology are identified and discussed and a vision of the counselling psychology discipline in Hong Kong for the next decade is presented. Leung (2003) discussed a number of challenges facing the counselling profession in Hong Kong. The search for professional counselling identity has been and still is a major issue in the development of counselling in Hong Kong (Leung, 1999; Tse, 2008). What should be the required credentials of a "professional counsellor? Regarding the training curriculum, in Hong Kong, there is no agreed core curriculum. Each university has its own training programme and there is a great divergence in the content of the courses from one university to another. Some of the training programmes are designed for specific target groups of clients. Leung (2003) argues the need to have a core curriculum covering domains related to theories, practice and research. He has made some preliminary suggestions on the procedures which are still very vague and need to be expanded and researched in the future. Counselling in Hong Kong has been very much influenced by Western theories and approaches. Western cultures are very much different from Eastern cultures. Should we adopt Western

practice as a reference or should we develop a more indigenous practice which suits the local development?

The lack of financial government support, the provision of employment and the quality of the existing training programmes are all significant challenges which are worth paying attention to. Leung (2003) delineates counselling training as time and money consuming and the shrinking of financial government support for postgraduate training in Hong Kong has become one of the major challenges.

However, the expansion of the counselling programme in Shue Yan University is an example of a self-funded model which is worth studying. Shue Yan College (now Shue Yan University), a private college that receives no public or government funding, was one of the earliest academies to set up a systematic curriculum to train diploma holders in counselling and guidance in Hong Kong. The accreditation of the undergraduate programme of Shue Yan University (SYU), the only university in Hong Kong offering counselling and psychology programme, symbolizes a great stride in the history of counselling education in Hong Kong (Tse, 2008). Shue Yan University is currently the only department providing undergraduate training in counselling with theoretical knowledge in counselling and psychology with an annual undergraduate intake of 130 in Hong Kong (HKSJU, 2013). What does this trend mean to the counselling profession in Hong Kong? Does it stand for the acceptance

of the counselling profession in the new and young generation? Counselling training is no longer the patent of mature adults. Counselling is recognized as an effective and unique means for developing human potential.

There is still a lot of improvement to be made in our community. High-quality professional practice in counselling and psychotherapy must be upheld by systematic training and supervision. Counselling supervision is an undeveloped discipline in Hong Kong. There is no systematic training programme regarding supervision in the university. Formal systematic training in counselling, which teaches experienced counsellors supervision theories and concepts, is an extremely important and indispensable theoretical underpinning of the development of the counselling profession.

3.3 Conclusion

Research encompassing counselling supervision with undergraduate student counsellors in HK is in its beginning phase. A relatively small proportion of the literature and research has been done on counselling supervision despite its importance in the training processes within the profession. This is an indicator that the professional community needs to put more effort in the future into research and studies so as to strengthen professional training.

Five important areas to be discussed in the literature review: the general view of counselling supervision; the emergence of different theoretical perspectives; the contributions of relational perspectives to counselling supervision; the contributing effects of culture in counselling supervision; and finally the challenges and opportunities for the counselling profession in Hong Kong.

As the literature and research suggests, the growth of a professional has to go through a process with no short cuts. Practitioner-driven knowledge is extremely essential in this profession. Supervision is critical in maintaining the standards of the profession (Holloway and Neufeldt, 1995). Systematic training programmes for clinical supervisors have been insufficient and are unable to meet the requirements of the increasing number of undergraduate counsellors. This demand forms the essential part of this research. This study will specifically look for emerging themes encompassing how the counselling supervision in internship affects professional growth.

The following chapter will present the procedures that are used in the research. The specific components regarding the research philosophy, methods, tasks, techniques and tools approaches will be delineated and discussed further.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an in-depth description of the choice of research design conducted in this research. The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of the student counsellor in the Hong Kong cultural setting. The research focus in terms of the following research questions is stated as below:

(1). What is effective supervision for student counsellors in a HK university environment?

The focuses will be centred on firstly researching what the developmental needs and struggles are as reported by student counsellors; secondly, what constitutes and hinders the favourable educational environments that facilitate their learning; and thirdly, how do student counsellors cope with or get through the struggles.

(2). How do “Chinese cultural selves” affect the professional learning, training and supervisory relationship in the counselling supervision?

The points of convergence will fall on firstly how far the cultural assumptions and values affect the learning process; secondly, on how far the potential hierarchy impacts the dynamic supervisory relationship and the supervision and their learning; and thirdly how culture affects the student counsellors’ coping mechanism when facing struggles and difficulties

It is significant to have a full picture of the research design which fits the research focus. Research designs are research plans on how to execute the data collection, analysis and report options (Lapan et al., 2012). Appropriate choice of the design will generate rich data in the research process. Research design comprises the

methodology and the relevant strategies.

To give a clear portrait of the research design, I divide this chapter into the following sections: locating the research paradigm and delineating the rationale for choosing the research approach; the epistemology and ontology of this qualitative research project; researcher's Social Positioning and self-knowledge in this research; ethical consideration which will cover the issues on power and language in the research; and the research method which includes the implementation of IPA and the use of semi-structured interviews; selection and recruitment of participants; the character portrait of the participants; the role of the researcher; data collection procedure; data analysis procedures. Finally a summary of this chapter is given.

4.2. Locating the research paradigm: why qualitative research?

Research can be seen as "a complex form of collective learning" (McLeod, 2003, p.10). Doing research in the counselling profession has significant implications for counselling practice. Polkinghorne (1992) argues that psychotherapists seldom find psychological research relevant to clinical practice. The counselling profession emphasizes the process, the relationship and the interconnection with people. The subjective data are valuable resources for practitioners. I strongly agree with McLeod's (2003) observation that research is significant in the establishment of the

legitimacy in the counselling profession. He has identified several reasons for explaining the importance of doing counselling research, which I think are worth paying attention to in the counselling profession. Research studies allow us to gain a wider perspective from the work of other therapists. In order to achieve a good public image, McLeod (2003) emphasizes that research-based systems of accountability to ensure clients' welfare are essential.

Owing to my interest in the investigation of the complexities of human interaction as well as the inner lived experience of the supervisees in the counselling supervision process, I chose a qualitative approach which allows exhaustive immersion and exploration of the data. This kind of information is difficult to obtain through statistics and structured data collection instruments. Denzin and Lincoln's definition provides us a more generic picture of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3)

The researcher is regarded as part and parcel of the qualitative experience research

instrument (Klinker and Todd, 2007).

Rather than determining cause and effect predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population....(qualitative researcher) might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved....(by) understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

(Merriam, 2009, p.5)

Much energy has been spent on debating the differences between and relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative methods (Willig, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Tewksbury, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term "paradigm of naturalistic inquiry" which describes an alternative paradigm under the name of "naturalistic" to confront the empirical scientific tradition that all questions can be answered by empirical, testable, replicable research approaches. The focus of being naturalistic, descriptive emphasis, process, inductive work and finally exploration of meaning (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) are five distinctively dominant characteristics in qualitative approaches.

Qualitative methodology is a holistic approach which allows me to expand the research repertoires and facilitates the understanding of the emerging picture of the social context (Janesick, 2004) and transforms data into findings (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative methods can be used as a means to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). They can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain

more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively.

Qualitative inquiry assumes that there are multiple constructed realities with no single truth and the results are not generalizable but universally understandable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The use of self-knowledge is essential in this research process and is executed in the following way: (1). Self as connector to interweave the data which I have collected from the participants. The self is an active agent in experiencing the world. Autoethnography facilitates me to examine my personal self and my cultural self. This process enhances me to have a deeper examination on both connection and differentiation of the participants' stories and mine. (2) Self as an organizer to execute strategies to search for recurring patterns, themes, applying theories and frameworks for the information. (3) Self as facilitator to enhance the participants' expression. My capacities for showing empathy, attunement and relational skills are useful in the data collection process. Besides, all inquiry is value-bound and inherently influenced by my values, presuppositions and choice of paradigm which are explicitly stated for open consideration.

In this research, effort was made in "exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants" (Smith, 2008, p.2). This is really time-consuming and labour-intensive (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) and perhaps an emotionally aroused research process due to the exertion required to get

in touch with the invisible inner world of the participants. This helped me to understand the participants' worlds from new perspectives and more abundant descriptions over human complexity which conventional quantitative research cannot reflect. The profound description can "generate the culturally specific meaning from participants involved in the context itself" (Holloway and Carroll, 1996, p.53). Discovery-oriented research methods also allow this research to substantially penetrate the phenomenon by moving on from specifics to the identification of general themes (Patton, 1990) of the participants' report. The exploration of the student counsellors' experience in their internship and supervision process helps to find out what an effective educational and supervisory environment should be. How is the professional knowledge transmitted to the new generation to meet the students' needs? This can only be explored through listening to the inner voices of the students.

The literature has provided some kind of information, but not in-depth enough, about the complex professional growth of student counsellors. Besides, the cultural impacts, especially Hong Kong Chinese culture, have left the questions unanswered.

The cultural dimension forms the fundamental ground (Sue, 1991; Gadamer, 1997; Ibrahim, 1999; Triandis and Suh, 2002) for the development of a counselling professional.

The present research focuses on the phenomenological experience of the participants' internship and the supervision process. This enables the researcher to explore a deeper existential understanding of the phenomenon and involve "some kind of direct encounter" (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002, p.199) with the participants.

4.3. Identifying the researcher's epistemology and ontology

A paradigm can be defined as the "basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105). The qualitative paradigm is totally different from the conventional quantitative one in its epistemology and ontology.

"The ability to identify the relationship between the epistemological foundation of research and the methods employed in conducting it is critical in order for research to be truly meaningful" (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p.19). The notion of a paradigm forms an overarching framework which organized my research approach. In order to achieve a greater degree of clarity, there was a need to make explicit the epistemological and ontological position behind my choice of research methodology which is significant in the spirit of qualitative research.

All research concerns the notion of knowledge. The term epistemology comes from the Greek word *epistêmê*, which is the philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know (Trochim, 2000).

Epistemology pertains to understanding the source and essence of

knowledge....it has to do, in part, with how one acquires knowledge,
one needs to accept that there are many ways of knowing

(Jackson and Meadows, 1991, p.74)

Ontology refers to the nature of reality. It is one of the most ancient fields of philosophic investigation (Kattsoff, 1953). "The issue of ontology lies prior to and governs subsequent epistemological and methodological assumptions" (Chua, 1986, p.604). Ontology, epistemology and methodology are closely linked to each other. Without clarification of an ontological perspective, behaviour can be misinterpreted. Behaviour that is considered abnormal in one culture may be considered normal in another (Jackson and Meadows, 1991). Therefore, it is essential for researchers to understand their own view of reality and notion of knowledge in the choice of research methodology.

A constructionist worldview influenced my choice of research topic and method (Schwandt, 2000). The social world is multi-faceted. The basic constructionist argument is that reality is socially constructed by and between the persons who experience it (Gergen, 1999). This perspective views an individual as a sense maker and each of us seeks to understand or make sense of our world as we see and experience it (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1999, 2001a, 2001b). It allows the unique differences of individuals to come into focus while at the same time permitting the essential sameness that unites human beings to be identified

(Ashworth, 2003). Everyone has a unique reality and individual interpretation of their experience from the constructionist perspective.

I chose a research design with an epistemology that believes knowledge is embedded in the richness of personal experience and interactive transaction. It allows the voices of the participants to be heard, and their unique personal experience be honoured and respected. Instead of just outcome and products, the process which the participants have gone through, and meaning-making of the student counsellors, are treasured (Creswell 1994). I want my involvement in the research process to benefit not only my thesis, but the students, the organization and the counselling profession as well.

4.4. Researcher's Social Positioning and self-knowledge in this Research

The importance of self has always been emphasized in counselling. Self is a very important healing agent. The therapeutic effects are heavily determined by the authentic use of "self" and make a connection with clients. Personal encounter is the major essence in counselling. As a counselling researcher the need to mindfully self-reflect is a very important means to facilitate the use of self in our professional practice. The stories we are told and hear consist of values and feelings (Ellis, 1997). To engage in thoughtful and reflective practice has great significance in the helping profession. This helps the practitioner to unmask the "how" power and underlying

assumptions that operate in and affect the interaction. I adopted the same attitude in this research process.

I attempted to list the similarities and differences of my social positioning with the participants (see Figure 4.1). By exploring the crucial aspects which are critical to the formation of this research, a form of critical lens analyzing how, when and under what circumstances the “self” has impacts on the development of the this research was employed all through the research process.

The social positioning of the researcher	The social positioning of the participants
The researcher as a novice in the research field	The participant as a novice in the counselling field
Hong Kong Chinese	Hong Kong Chinese
Senior in the counselling profession	Novice in the counselling profession
The researcher went through some difficulties in the training in her early internship years.	The participants are undergoing the struggles in their internship year.
The researcher shares the core beliefs in counselling.	The participants start to share the core beliefs in counselling

Figure 4.1 Identifying the similarities and differences of the social positioning of the researcher and the participants

I found that my own identities as a novice researcher, my positionality and seniority in the counselling profession field, personal characteristics as a mother and my past training experiences as well as cultural background as a Hong Kong Chinese have had a considering effect on this research formation. At the beginning of the interview,

I shared with the participants the aims and focus of this doctoral study. The openness in sharing our similarities and differences and my mission to bring improvement in this profession and my effort to create a better learning environment to the students counsellors enhance the further processing of the interviews. They showed appreciation to have a chance to reveal their experience. My attitude of openness and genuineness together with my listening ears and empathy was important catalyst for in-depth sharing from the participants.

As for myself, the clarification of my positioning allows me to develop my self-awareness. Etherington (2004, p.22) mentions, "As the researcher, I believe I need to be transparent so that you can inform yourself about my part in the co-construction of these stories". The narrative journey through autoethnography enabled me to weave together these past stories and events of mine during this process of Inquiry.

4.5. Ethical consideration

4.5.1. Ethics in data collection

The ethical issues in qualitative research mainly rest on the protection of the participants and data collecting and reporting. Prior to the initial interview, subjects were asked to read and sign an informed consent (see Appendix C) regarding their participation in the dissertation project (Maxwell, 1996; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

After review of the consent agreement I collected one copy, which was signed by both myself and the participant, along with the general information form completed by the participants. The purpose of the study was clearly stated. The participants were significant partners in the research process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and their full participation was highly appreciated. I use fictitious names for the participants in the reports to ensure confidentiality and to preserve anonymity. Besides, the names of institutions and their supervisors are not disclosed. At the start of each interview, the purpose of the study was reiterated and each interviewee was given a chance to ask any initial questions he or she had. I reminded myself not to impose any values on the participants.

Audiotapes and soft copies of the interview transcripts were kept in a secured location only be accessible by me. The audiotapes and raw data will be destroyed three years after the completion of the thesis.

The transcripts were sent back to the participants for checking and proofreading through email to ensure that each transcribed interview is an accurate and complete representation of the actual interview. They were asked to identify any inaccuracies.

They were given the chance to delete text that they were not comfortable with. After their confirmation emails were received, the complete transcripts were analyzed.

4.5.2. The issues of Power

All knowledge is socially produced and therefore influenced by power relations

(Bhaskar, 1989). Power is a fundamental aspect of everyday social life (Cartwright, 1959). Ferguson et al., (2004) propose that a faculty which engages students as participants in their qualitative research often encounter methodological issues between the faculty and their students arising from the fiduciary relationship, which is an unequal relationship. The more powerful person is entrusted to protect the best interests of the less powerful (Lemmens and Singer, 1998). Potential issues of faculty conflicts of interest also need to be addressed (Lemmens and Singer, 1998). Vigilant attentiveness has been made due to my role as an internship coordinator in the context of the potential harm to the participants though there was no direct lecturer-student or supervisor-supervisee relationship between the researcher and the participants. One needs to be aware of the possibility of arousing intrinsic tension between the needs of the researcher and the rights of the interviewees. Disclosure of sensitive and embarrassing information may evoke psychological, social harm in the participants and is potentially risky (Kavanaugh and Ayres, 1998; Dantzker and Hunter, 2012; De Vaus, 2002; Adler and Clark, 2011). It is the researcher's duty to protect the best interests of the participants. The fundamental tenet of the protection is the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality which would ensure the feeling of security in the participants in their honest and genuine discussion of their internship experience. Respect was demonstrated through

empathetic listening to the inner voices of the participants with no value judgement.

Students were fully informed of the aims, objectives and procedures of the research and reassured of their rights to participate or not. They were invited to make amendment on the transcripts afterwards.

4.5.3. The issue of asking about distressing experience

The potential for participants to be upset by recalling possibly distressing material is another ethical issue to be considered. During the interviewing process, some questions may elicit strong emotions from recalling painful or traumatic memories.

The nature of traumatic memories is stressful. Cromer, et al. (2006) have a research on comparison of the distress experienced while completing self report trauma surveys to distress experienced in everyday life. 63% reported distress related trauma surveys rated experience was no more distressing than other experiences in everyday life. As a counsellor, we have encountered a lot of traumatic stories described by the clients. Proper way to manage distressful or traumatic experience is actually a very significant healing process. Understanding and acceptance is very effective psychological painkiller. The ethical principles of respect and confidentiality will help to reduce potential harms to the participants.

4.5.4. The issue of language.

The use of language is essential in conducting research. As Seale points out,

The attempt to use language to refer to, describe or explain aspects of the social world (even if these aspects are the uses made of language in certain contexts) is a basic commitment for qualitative researchers and must ultimately depend upon some modified form of realism.

Seale (1999, p.157)

In this research, all the interviews were conducted in Cantonese which is the mother tongue of the interviewees and the interviewer. This has an advantage in the research process. The understanding of the message delivered by the interviewees is not blocked by language. However, the transcripts were written in English. I needed to be aware of the effect of the language filters. Awareness of the possible cultural and linguistic filters that exist in bilingual research is important (Chiu and Knight, 1999).

Although there was not much difficulty for the interviewees to read the transcripts when sent back to them afterwards, I needed to pay attention to the translation of the messages into another language which matched their original meanings. Language was a key means used by the participants to construct and communicate their meanings of their experience. The role of language is significant in the sharing of the values and meanings in the socially constructed world (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Shotter, 1993). Interpretation is a complex process in that an interpreter can select to interpret meaning from a range of words or phrases, but words themselves have a range of connotations across different languages and contexts (Edwards, 1998). The right choice of words and meanings is very important. Discussions with

the interviewees on the transcripts helped to maintain the accuracy.

4.6. Research methods

4.6.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A study of lived experience

This research is a phenomenological investigation of the participants' perception and experience in the undergraduate counselling internship in Hong Kong Chinese culture. Moustakas states,

Phenomenology seeks meanings from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings.

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 58)

Moustaka also stated phenomenology as being, "to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (Moustakas 1994, p.13).

Phenomenological methods are particularly suitable to grasp the meaning-making process that humans continually engage in, and mediate some of the richness of human experience.

(Reichelt and Skjerve, 2000, p.26)

Kvale (1996b) claims that phenomenological perspectives, without any considerations about the origin or cause of an experience, focus on the life world and carry openness to the experiences of the participants and a primacy of precise description. He (1996b, p.53) also states, "In phenomenological philosophy, objectivity is reached through intentional acts of consciousness and is an expression

of fidelity to the phenomena investigated”.

The purpose of this research is to generate rich and valuable descriptive data of the participants’ perceptions and experience in their beginning stage of the professional development journey. The contributions from developmental models, dynamic of relationship dimensions as well as cultural perspective were taken into consideration in this research. The developmental models functions as a conceptual framework to guide my understanding of the participants’ stories and consider the changes. The dimension of relational dynamic opens my perspectives in the viewing the participants’ transactional phenomenon in the stories. Cultural perspective opens my horizon to look at the differences and diversity and starts to understand how culture shapes identities and responses. Besides, it sought to gather data regarding the growth-facilitating factors and the professional growth-confining factors for student counsellors during their supervision and internship. The importance of this study lies in its value and aim to make contributions to counselling training especially in the supervision of the juniors in Hong Kong Chinese culture. I was and am a counselling supervisor. I understand that there are a lot of struggles for the participants. In gaining a clearer perception of their experiences, it is hoped that the quality of provision of culturally-appropriate training for the professional counsellors may be better addressed.

IPA is an experiential qualitative approach developed by Jonathan Smith (Smith and Osborn, 2003). It has its roots in phenomenological psychology. In this study, IPA was adopted to analyze the data from the interviews. This research approach is dynamic in nature. Smith delineates,

Phenomenology and IPA are concerned with exploring the lived experience of the participant or with understanding how participants make sense of their personal and social world.

(Smith, 2008, p.2)

This approach acknowledges that participants are understood to be experts in their own experiences and their own stories. IPA aims at using an “insider perspective” (Hewitt-Taylor 2002) for examining the personal experiences of the participants and allows them to voice and make sense of their experience. Schwandt proclaims,

We are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge.....We are self-interpreting beings and that language constitutes this being.

(Schwandt, 2000, pp.197-198)

IPA believed that human beings are sense-making creatures and the accounts which participants provide will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience.

Smith and Osborn (2003, p.51) refer to the concept “double hermeneutics”, which is a two-stage interpretation process, as the participants “are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world”. This takes into account the dual role of the researcher with mental, personal skills and capacities as the participant who shares a fundamental

property of being a human being, and at the same time, the researcher self-consciously and systematically accesses the participant's experience through that participant's own account of it (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

IPA acknowledges any insights gained from the analysis, "researchers accept that such understanding can only be gained through the researcher's engagement with and interpretation of the participant's account" (Willig, 2008, p.70). The nature of the internship and supervision experience is a dynamic subjective process which can hardly be assessed objectively and is therefore well suited to the IPA approach in the investigation.

4.6.2. The choice of qualitative semi-structured interview as a method

The qualitative research interview is actually a form of knowledge construction. Interview is a primary data gathering method for information collection from participants about their own experience, beliefs or feelings. The in-depth interview has been described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p.80). "An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest." (Kvale, 1996, p.2). Conversation is "an ancient form of obtaining knowledge" (Kvale, 1996, pp.8) which enhances human interaction and the sharing of social knowledge. In our everyday life, people use various ways to communicate. Different ways of

communication will formulate different styles of presentation. Different conversational genres use different rules and techniques (Kvale, 1996) which reflect significant data about the individuals.

There are three types of interviews found in the interview continuum, the informal unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Patton, 1990; Pawar and Pawar, 2004) and the degree of structuredness and unstructuredness varies. The semi-structure interview is chosen in this research study. Semi-structured research is more flexible and is less constrained by structure. It requires a certain degree of careful planning prior to the interviews. Questions are partially designed in advance (Wengraf, 2001) to allow flexibility for variant responses from individuals. The semi-structured interview format also permits two-way communication; both the researcher and participants can ask each other question. The direction of the responses can be changed according to individual needs and different scenarios in semi-structured interview.

In IPA approach, the researcher needs to be open-minded and to be aware of one's preconceptions in conducting the interviews (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Kvale (1996) used two contrasting metaphors of the interviewer, as a miner or as a traveller to represent different concepts of knowledge formation. They helped to illustrate the implications of different theoretical understandings of interview

research. He elaborated the miner metaphor,

Knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal. Some miners seek objective facts to be quantified; others seek nuggets of essential meaning

(Kvale, 1996, p.3)

Something inside needed to be uncovered by the miner. The interview is a digging process. The interviewer goes beyond the facts and the conscious experiences to explore the essential meanings of the products. Kvale went on illustrating the traveller metaphor which refers to a postmodern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research. The interviewer as a traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversation with the people encountered. The traveller may also deliberately seek specific sites or topics by following a method, asking questions that lead the participants to tell their own stories of their lived world. These two metaphors accurately capture the essence of the spirit of the researcher.

The face-to face interview enables the researcher to directly observe verbal and non-verbal communication, identify problems or misunderstandings (Pawar and Pawar, 2004), and hear the voice of the participants to talk about their experiences.

"Semi-structured interviews maximize rapport between the interviewer and participant" (Dallos, 2005, p.182). Since the orders of the questions are not the first priority, the process as well as the persons is more important. This requires the

interviewer to be skilful enough to manage the different changes.

4.6.3. Selection and recruitment of participants

Recruiting a closely defined group is significant in IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Purposeful sampling is the dominant strategy in qualitative research. This sampling strategy seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in depth (Patton, 1990).

Purposive sampling is:

based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned

(Merriam, 1998, p.61)

There are many advantages of purposive sampling. Those target participants who are based on identified variables for the sampling study are chosen. The population for study is highly unique. The costs for carrying out the sampling procedures are greatly reduced. This will be less time consuming in choosing the suitable, available and accurate representatives to be studied. They will enable the researcher to answer your research questions. However, purposive sampling is too subjective, narrow and restrictive to a very specific population. The criteria for selection which the researcher uses can be very arbitrary.

There are no strict criteria for the sample size in qualitative research. IPA research favours the idiographic nature and is therefore characterized by purposive, small and homogenous sampling (Smith and Osborn, 2003). The aim is to provide

in-depth understanding of the selected group. I planned to collect the data through in-depth interviews with the participants. Smith and Osborn (2003) point out that there is no objectively finite sample size for an IPA study.

This study incorporated data from 10 counselling psychology participants. The inclusion criteria were: (1) They are students from counselling and psychology undergraduate training; (2) They have already entered into an internship in their final year study; (3) They are expected to receive at least weekly regular individual and monthly group supervision sessions with their current supervisors; (4) They have motivation to enter this professional field after the graduation; (5) They did not have any supervised counselling experience prior to the internship; (6) They have the willingness to participate in this study.

Three participants were male and seven were female. The types of the internship agencies as well as the supervisors were assigned by their university. Three of them were allocated to secondary schools and four of them to primary schools. Three of them were allocated to social service centres as their placement centres. Details of the participants will be introduced in the account chapter.

The participants were volunteers and not paid for any part of their involvement in the research. The interviews were carried out during the last two weeks of their internship and before their final supervision session. This was to make sure that they

had already gone through a large part of the internship and supervision process.

4.6.4. Portrait of the Participants

4.6.4.1. Overall impressions of the interview with the Participants

All participants did not express any hesitation when first invited to participate in the research. They were very punctual at the interview meetings. All of the ten participants were very cooperative. I was indeed an authority figure to them. I knew the distance could be reduced by respect and listening attentively with appropriate empathy. I tried to listen more so as to facilitate their expression. I did not feel any negative feelings, withdrawal or passivity in the interviewing process. They genuinely described their strategies when they faced authority. They could share so honestly and openly with me their stresses, negative feelings and struggles. All of them showed enthusiasm in the interviews. They expressed thoughtful, rich descriptions of their counselling internship and supervision experiences when asked to go into more details.

It was a great experience for me when I immersed myself totally in their stories.

Although we were different cohorts, their experiences took me back to my young adulthood stage. I began to smell their stories and the whole atmosphere they were facing. I began to smell their stories and the whole atmosphere they were facing.

Their narratives is like a thread that weaves the stories and events together and that enhance me to go into their world of experience and allow me to have a deeper

understanding of their struggles, work, their interests, their achievements and their failures. I could feel the diversity and commonalities from their unique personal styles and their common cultural characteristics. Most of the participants were talkative and expressive and only one of them may have had insufficient vocabulary to describe her quite complicated feelings. More probing questions were needed to help her to express them. All participants considered their counselling internship and supervision a significant part of this professional training.

4.6.4.2. Background Description of participants’ Counselling internship and supervision arrangement

This section contains individual profiles for each of the ten Interns (see Figure 4.2). These profiles were derived from information in the interviews with the interns. Brief individual profiles are given to provide a backdrop and facilitate a visual image to be associated with each Intern. They were the counselling psychology students coming from the same university which was the only university in Hong Kong that offered the counselling and psychology undergraduate program. Their age ranged from 22 to 23 years old.

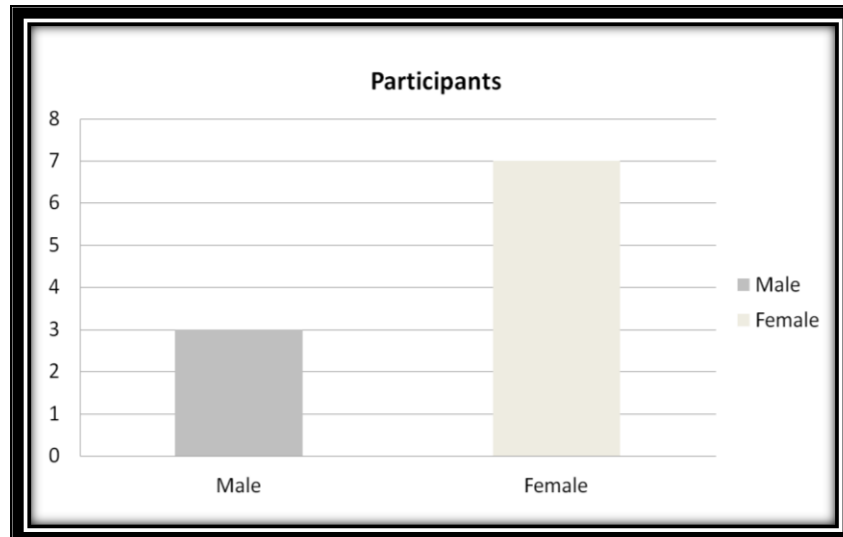


Figure 4.2 No. of participants in each gender

The students were allocated to different types of internship agencies. Some of them matched their choice while some of them not. And three of them needed to work alone while the seven of them needed to cooperate with their cohorts. The information of their allocation (see Figure 4.3) and the types of their internship agencies their allocation (see Figure 4.4) was illustrated below.

<i>Interns</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Types of Internship Agency</i>	<i>Nature of agency and target clients: match or not match his or her first choice</i>	<i>Work alone or work with Cohorts in the internship</i>
An Wah	M	Mental Health Service Unit	Match	Work alone
Bik Kuen	F	Primary School	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort
Can Ming	M	Secondary School	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort
Dui Yin	F	Secondary School	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort
Eng Lin	F	District Council Community	Not match	Work with 3 Cohorts

		Service		
Fung Chi	F	Primary School	Match	Work alone
Ga Lung	M	Primary School	Match	Work alone
Hui Yung	F	Family Multiple Intelligences Centre	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort
Ip Ting	F	Secondary School	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort
Jo Ching	F	Primary School	Not match	Work with 1 Cohort

Figure 4.3 Information of allocation of the participants

Five types of internship agencies were allocated among the counselling students.

They needed to work with clients from the target clients and work with different types of professionals in the assigned agency.

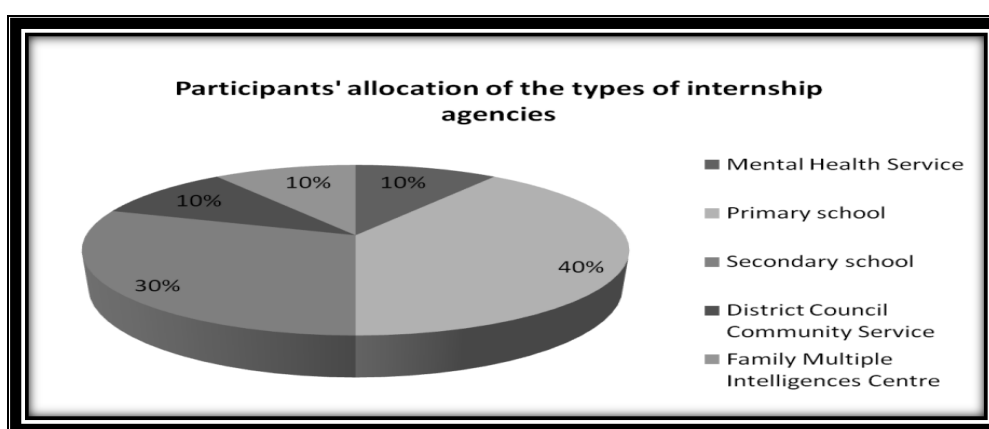


Figure 4.4 Participants' allocation of the types of internship agencies

4.6.4.3. The portrait of the participant's character traits

An Wah (Male) (pseudonym)

An Wah is outgoing, active and sociable and expressive male.who looks assertive and smart in his appearance. He is a responsive, highly motivated and

self-disciplined learner as from his self-report. He frequently used his head to think and analyze. He looks calm and stable in his presentation even when he mentions about his frustration and struggles. He processes the emotional elements in a very rational way. His description of his experience is detailed, clear and concrete. He enjoys varieties and has a big appetite for new knowledge.

He has been very skillfully in managing the relationship with the agency staff. He is very sensitive to the hierarchical relationship with both his agency and university supervisor.

Bik Kuen (Female) (pseudonym)

Bik Kuen is another smart looking female who is outspoken and expressive all through the interview. She is confident in expressing her own points of views And she is willing to talk and her expression is fluent, clear and concrete. Not much effort is needed to facilitate her to speak in the interview. She is quite relaxed. She feels at ease in sharing her experience throughout the entire interview process. She looks confidence in her appearance. She attributes herself as a self-demanding, highly motivated and self-disciplined learner.

Can Ming (Male) (pseudonym)

Can Ming is a tall and smart looking male who looks confident and rebellious in his appearance. He is not a very talkative person unless he is facilitated to talk. He is

not quite fluent in expressing his feeling and is rational in his speech but his emotions can be easily recognized from his facial expression. He is very critical and negative in his thinking.

He faces great difficulty in his relationship with the university supervisor. He reports that the strong character of his university supervisor actually activates his rebellious tendency. After the resolution of the conflicts with his university supervisor, he becomes more positive and develops the sense of competency in relational management.

Dui Yin (Female) (pseudonym)

Dui Yin is a female with a carefree style in her speech. This sometimes gives an impression of resistance and defensiveness to people. I could feel her hidden anger immediately when she begins her description with her university supervisor. Her emotional expression is quite obvious. My empathetic responses are helpful in facilitating her sharing of her feelings towards her supervisor. She could express her anger towards her easily and honestly when her feelings are accepted.

She reports that she is frequently confronted by her university supervisor on her being too "superficial". She feels confused and helpless over the attributions. The passive aggressiveness makes the situation even worse. She has experienced extremely traumatic experience in her supervision.

Eng Lin (Female) (pseudonym)

Eng Lin is a very nice looking female who carries the warm and tender character; approachable and caring with a soft and gentle voice. She looks calm and stable.

She is typically a feeling type person and she is able to engage with others' feelings easily. However, she does not express her feelings openly. She is afraid that this may cause harm to other people. She is very sensitive to the needs of others. She is not assertive enough to express her own needs and feelings. Sometimes she is too obedient and compliant and this makes her feel frustrated.

She has dissatisfaction over the supervision process but she is afraid that her expression may hurt her supervisor and therefore she remains silent and helplessly accepts the perceived reality.

Fung Chi (Female) (pseudonym)

Fung Chi is a shy female who looks a bit nervous and tensed at the beginning of the interview. Her lack of self-confidence outlook shows that she needs more time to warm up and feel relaxed. She has experienced frustration in her supervision but she cannot identify the reasons why she is hesitant to be present in the supervision sessions. She attributes all the problems to her own self-inadequacy. She experiences discouragement in the supervision process and she is not able to stand up strict to discuss all the negative feedback from the supervisor. She has

insufficient vocabularies to express her feelings and she was inconsistent in her responses especially towards those questions reflected her own needs and feelings. It takes more effort in probing her to elaborate her answers in more details. The ideal to work as a counsellor is upset by the reflection of her weaknesses by the supervisor. She is just like a frightened child after the internship, disappointed with herself and sorry about her poor performance.

Ga Lung (Male) (pseudonym)

Ga Lung is a smart, happy and polite male and looks energetic in his appearance. He always wears a smile in his face and that makes him more approachable. He reports that sometimes his smile helps to hide his frustrations and anxiety. He appears to be excited about participating in my study. He is very helpful and talks enthusiastically about the internship and supervision experience. He is highly sensitive to the others' feelings and has the tendency to please others. He demonstrates merits and efficacy in his work in the internship. However, he is not assertive and confident enough to stand firm with his own point of views.

Hui Yung (Female) (pseudonym)

Hui Ying looks tough and strong in her appearance but is gentle and soft in her heart. This is reflected in her relationship with her children client. She reports that she is like the disciplinarian in the eyes of the children. During the internship, she has

encountered serious family issues which are traumatic to her. She has experienced a good support from her supervisor and that helps her to pass through the hardship. She feels being reassured by her supervisor. She doubts herself a lot and she feels inadequate in the internship performance.

She is talkative and is able to express her feelings and thoughts fluently. She demonstrates her openness and honesty in the interviewing process. Her emotions are easily recognized from her facial expression.

Ip Ting (Female) (pseudonym)

Ip Ting is another very approachable, warm and tender female who is a feeling type person. I could feel her emotions very easily from her voice and words. She bursts out into tears when she mentions her frustration with her supervisors and her internship partner in the interview. She is very sensitive to the environment and relationship. She is compliant in her character. She spends a lot of energy to maintain harmony with people. However, she does not express her feelings openly and the suppression makes her feel tensed. She is especially sensitive to her own mistakes.

The interview seems to be a very good chance for her to express her suppressed feelings. She is talkative and is able to elaborate her points in details. Not much effort is needed to probe into her experience and she is able to expand her feelings

and thoughts very easily.

Jo Ching (Female) (pseudonym)

Jo Ching looks calm and self-confident in her appearance and is rational in her presentation style. Even when she mentions her frustrations, she looks stable. She is warm and gentle, approachable and polite. She has quite positive experience in her internship and supervision.

Her presentation is concrete and systematic and is able to express her experience quite clearly. Although she is not that satisfied with the supervisor grading, this does not bother her much on her overall experience. She is the compliant type person and is adaptive to the environmental changes.

4.6.4.4. Individual portraits of the participant's Counselling internship and supervision experience

An Wah (Male) (pseudonym)

He was allocated to a mental health service agency which matched his expectation.

No other cohort was assigned to the same agency. His work with both the agency supervisor and the university supervisor encountered some tension at the beginning due to unfamiliarity. The relationship was well-tuned after the adjustment period.

He reported that he understood their supervisory style and he tried to adjust accordingly. And the relationship worked out quite well till the end of the internship.

He mentioned that he had learned a lot from the university supervisor though her

supervisory style did not match his expectation. This was a totally new experience for him.

His working experience with the clients and other agency staff was rewarding. He felt proud of having a good connection with them.

Bik Kuen (Female) (pseudonym)

She was allocated to a primary school which was beyond her expectation. She finds it difficult facing the target clients. She needs to co-work with one cohort whose personality is extremely different from her. The cooperation has caused great conflicts in her.

The work with the both the agency and university supervisor was quite satisfactory at the beginning due to their approachable appearance. However, tension increased after the awareness of the hierarchical supervisory style. She tried to alter her performance to fulfil the demands of the agency supervisor after the first evaluation report. The tension became implicit since then. Tension with the university supervisor heightened due to the realization of the existence of the supervisory hierarchy. And it became more relaxed at the later stage of the supervision.

Bik Kuen encounters difficulties working with pathological students, their parents and the agency colleagues, especially the teachers; their expectations had created a lot of stress in her.

Can Ming (Male) (pseudonym)

His allocation did not fit his expectation. He had to work with the adolescents in a secondary school. He has to work with one female cohort. No obvious difficulties have been mentioned about the cooperation with his cohort, his clients and other agency staff.

There were tensions at the beginning due to the unfamiliarity with both agency and university supervisors. He claimed that he needed quite a long time to warm up in the relationship. The tension and distance increased due to his escape from closeness. Tension with the agency supervisor reduced after an open communication and genuine talk in the middle stage. Conflicts with the university supervisor were heightened by the university supervisor's direct confrontation. The conflicts were resolved when he decided to change. And recognition from the university supervisor made his improvement possible.

Dui Yin (Female) (pseudonym)

She needs to work in a secondary school which does not match her wishes. She has to co-work with one cohort and no difficulties were mentioned. She reported that she works quite well with the clients. She experiences much support from other agency staff.

Only a little tension was found with the agency supervisor due to an unethical

demand in her working with one client. The tension disappeared after the settlement of the client's issue.

Her relationship with the university supervisor is extremely bad. Tension increased due to the direct confrontation and repeated emphasis on her weaknesses. Conflicts were left unfinished and unresolved till the end of the supervision.

Eng Lin (Female) (pseudonym)

She was allocated to a District Council Community Service centre with three cohorts, which was totally beyond her expectation. She needs to face clients of different ages from the lower classes which is challenging for her. The cohorts work quite well together. They need to work with a few agency staff only.

The tension with the agency supervisor increased due to her own hierarchy sensitivity and lack of contact. The agency supervisor, who is not a trained counselling professional, is only responsible for their administrative arrangement.

The friendly and approachable characteristics of the university supervisor made her feel good. She has a lot of freedom to work on her own. However, tension existed due to the dissatisfaction over her supervision style and lack of directions from the university supervisor at the later stage.

Fung Chi (Female) (pseudonym)

She was assigned to work in a primary school with children, which matched her

expectation. She reported that she feels lonely since she has to work alone. The relationship with clients and agency staff is satisfactory.

The agency offered her a lot of support and that made her feel very comfortable.

The relationship with the university supervisor was good at the beginning due to the friendly and approachable character of the supervisor. However, ongoing negative feedback from the university supervisor increased her frustration. She became less and less motivated to undergo supervision. Tension remains unchanged and no significant improvement appears in the supervision process as reported.

Ga Lung (Male) (pseudonym)

He was allocated to a primary school which matched his choice. He can work independently. He works quite well with the clients and the agency staff.

There was a little tension at the beginning with both the agency and university supervisor. And the relationship became well-tuned after the adjustment period. He gained a lot of trust from both supervisors due to his adaptive behaviour and respectful attitude. The relationship worked really well till the end of the internship.

Hui Yung (Female) (pseudonym)

She was allocated to a Family Multiple Intelligences Centre which was beyond her expectation. She needed to work with children and that aroused a lot of frustration.

She is not comfortable working with children. She needed to co-work with a cohort

whose personality clashed with hers. She reported that she spent a lot of effort dealing with these two difficulties.

She developed a quite satisfactory working relationship with her agency and university supervisor. She got sufficient guidance and support from her university supervisor.

Ip Ting (Female) (pseudonym)

She was assigned to a secondary school which did not match her wish. She encountered great difficulty working with her cohort. However, the conflict was not explicitly expressed, as emphasized by her. No difficulties were mentioned in her working with clients.

She mentioned the frustration in facing both the agency supervisor and university supervisors. There was no big change in the relationship with the agency supervisor. And tension with the university supervisor reduced due to improvement in the supervision; more instructions and affirmation were offered at the later stage.

Jo Ching (Female) (pseudonym)

She was allocated to a primary school which was not her wish. She worked quite smoothly with her cohort and the agency staff. She described her experience with the clients as rewarding.

The relationship with the agency and university supervisors went smoothly. She

found it difficult to meet the high standard of required by the university supervisor.

Tension increased due to no affirmation and strict demands from the university supervisor. The learning spirit improved a bit due to the discovery of the university supervisor's openness.

4.6.5. Role of the researcher

Traditional research minimizes the impact of the researcher on those researched and passionate but disciplined involvement by the researcher is emphasized in qualitative approach (West, 1998). In qualitative research, the researchers are the major instrument for data collection. The researcher's values, biases and judgments are clearly stated in their reports (Creswell, 1994). Many authors stress the importance of theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Creswell, 1994).

Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data.[It] refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't.

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.42)

Theoretical sensitivity can be derived from a number of sources such as previous readings and professional and personal experiences related to the area under investigation. Some techniques will be executed such as questioning, comparisons of two or more phenomena to identify the differences, etc. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.

(Kvale, 1996, p.1)

Cooper (1993, p.253) emphasizes the importance of the interviewer's role for helping the interviewees "to express their views as lucidly as possible". For this purpose, techniques familiar to counselling professionals, such as active listening, paraphrasing and reflection can be employed.

The qualitative researcher reminds one of client-centered therapies, attempting to see life as does the client, to walk in his or her shoes and path, to achieve a deep level of human understanding and empathy.

(Ponterotto and Casas, 1991, pp.122-123)

In addition, three necessary qualities for a researcher in a qualitative study are always kept in mind all through the research process to allow for natural flow of the interviews, tolerance for ambiguity or flexibility; sensitivity or intuitiveness; and finally, good communication skills (Merriam 1998).

4.6.6. Data collection procedure and Management of risk

Following approval of the research proposal and statement of research ethics which was submitted to the Research Ethics Coordinators in the School of Education, the participants' recruitment process commenced. Participants who had fulfilled the said criteria were invited for the interview through emails first and followed up by phone call. The aims and objectives of the research were explained in detail and their

participation was highly valued and appreciated.

I set up an interview guide (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) before the interview with a list of topics to guide the interaction. This was to ensure that the information could be gathered on certain areas from each person. Spradley (1979) produced a useful guide, which facilitated my formulation of the questions, classifying four different types of questions: descriptive, structural, contrastive and evaluative.

In order to facilitate the understanding, questions, mostly open-ended and non-judgmental ones, were formulated for exploration of the following three areas as illustrated in Figure 4.5 : (1) the experience in internship, including their relationship with the agency staff, clients and the agency supervisors, their feelings and difficulties they encountered; (2) the experience in the supervision, including their learning and the relationship with the university supervisor; the above two areas of questions enabled the researcher to understand more thoroughly the participants' experience; (3) the dimension of culture, which plays a crucial role in shaping the person's experiences and responses. The cultural selves reflect a person's way of perception, attribution, coping and responses. The experience of a person is a product of influences mediated by the cultural meanings and practices. A list of these questions can be found in Appendix B.

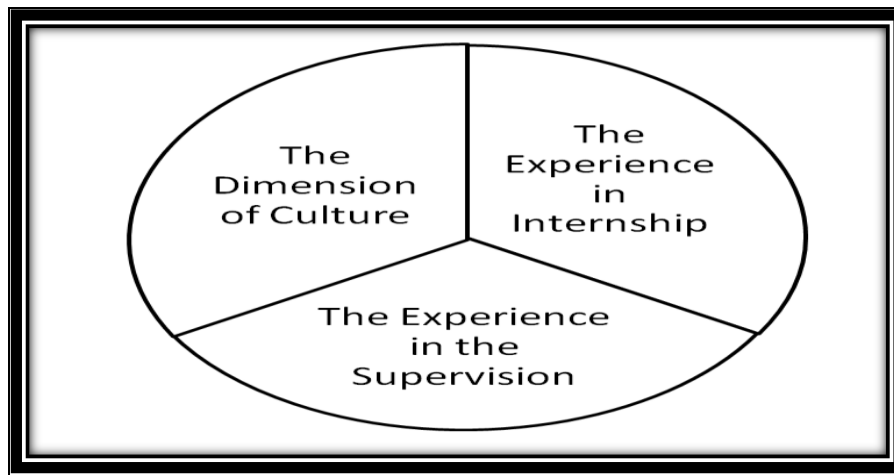


Figure 4.5 Three areas of questions for the interviews

Relevant literature reviews provide a more solid ground in the design of interview questions. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows modification over time of areas of particular importance. The researcher is free to probe and investigate information within these predetermined inquiry areas (Smith, 1995; Wengraf, 2001).

All the interviews were conducted by the researcher in Cantonese which was the mother tongue of both the participants and the researcher. A pilot interview was conducted using the original interview protocol with a participant who met the participation criteria. It assisted in screening the suitability of the questions to obtain particular information. The process facilitated the adjustment of the wordings to meet the language and understanding of the participants. This helped to determine how well the questions should be administered. The pilot was run smoothly. The awareness of the possibilities of similar answers to the two different questions attracted my attention to the needs for further probes to allow for more

in-depth exploration.

Interviews took place in a quiet office in the university at a convenient time for the participants. Before the start of the interview, the informed consent was signed. The written information sheet regarding the aim of the research was clearly explained. Final interview questions were ready for the ten undergraduate counselling and psychology undergraduate participants.

Patton (1990, p.348) reminds us that a tape recorder is "indispensable". The interviews took approximately 90 minutes and were audio taped and transcribed. The use of audiotapes helps to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of the data. Instead of hurriedly and busily writing down the words, recordings help the researcher to observe and monitor the verbal and non-verbal behaviour all through the interviewing process. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.241) "do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons". Their opinion is based on the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure. This weakness, in this research, could be solved by the high-quality audio device and well-prepared checking process. The recording process ran very smoothly.

Specific areas of questions were prepared prior to the interviews. During the interview, open questions were asked in order to elicit more responses from the participants. I listened to the participants' responses as much as possible, allowing

leeway in their reply. Questions may not necessarily follow the same order in the list depending on the flow of the conversation. Although this form of practice in the counselling room is quite frequent and usual in the "client-centred" approach in counselling, I mindfully made every effort to remain open and receptive and used concrete and unambiguous language. This was to make sure that I was able to hear the voices and stories of the participants with no bias and interference.

At the completion of the interviews, participants were given reminders that their needs or interests in any follow up as a result of the interviews was always welcome.

All were reminded that they would be invited to look at the transcripts which would be sent to them as soon as possible for amendment.

Following the semi-structured interview process, the labour-intensive transcription work was a very important process for me. I paid attention to the nuances of the recordings. I tried to note down the subtleties. The transcription process is actually part of the immersion process. It actually aroused a lot of emotions and thinking in me.

4.6.7. Data analysis procedure

An interview protocol with a list of questions acting as a systematic interviewing guide was developed in advance. These questions suggest some degree of structure and some degree of openness. The function of the protocol facilitates the good use

of limited interview time and allows the process to be carried out in a more systematic and comprehensive way.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher must be well-equipped with knowledge of the research topic and non-directive probing and interviewing skills allow the possibility of capturing as many differences among interviewees as possible. The counselling techniques of probing, listening, paraphrasing, attentiveness and clarification were executed so as to allow the participants to express their thoughts and experiences as much as possible. Details and additional perspectives or related information are welcome.

The transcripts of the interviews were read and reread many times in detail from the first individual transcript. During these readings, similar patterns were gathered. Preliminary thematic codes were developed. This was actually the beginning of the analysis process. At first, some of distinct themes were singled out first. Other interconnected themes were carefully studied and were differentiated from each other with their meanings, acts, thoughts or feelings.

I listened to the audiotape and took notes on what I heard and observed, adding information which I recalled from the interviews that were not captured on audio tape. This step emphasizes the contextual effect of the participants' experience and lowers the possibility of isolation of irrelevant themes. Prominent ideas, feelings and

potential topics were generated and noted on each transcript. The themes were grouped together in clusters. Comments and summaries were documented. I started to create a list of domains that emerged from familiarity with both the related literature and the interviews themselves. The attempt to conceptualize connections into domains was made using a summarized table. The process continued with the transcripts with the next participant. New themes were recorded and given titles. The process was cyclical. The essential quality of the themes was captured and conceptualized into domains.

The transcripts were read repeatedly in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the experience as articulated by the participants. This is done to distinguish the "surface appearances" and "depth realities" (Wengraf, 2001, p.6). This meaning for "depth" is useful to get more detailed knowledge and distinguish the facts from the multiple subjective realities of the participants.

Certain themes and patterns began to emerge more clearly. They were arranged into manageable units through a synthesizing process (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). The recognition of distinguished patterns is a very significant procedure which helps to identify the importance and the messages to be delivered.

Phenomenological themes are "like knots in the webs of our experiences," (van Manen, 1990, p.91). The various themes reflected in the interviews therefore

elucidated the "structure of experience' (van Manen1990, p.79) of the participants.

The goal of the theme analysis aimed at offering a rich description of the experience as a whole.

Coherence, Consensus and Instrumental Utility of the story (Eisner, 1991) were considered by researcher. This is done to make sense of the phenomena and give credence to the interpretation of the data source as well as its consistency and usefulness.

Immersion in the data is a crucial part of the in-depth understanding of materials in order to extract valuable meaning from the data. After the data were categorized, the sorting procedure was undertaken again and again.

4.7. Summary

The design of the study was qualitative, exploratory and descriptive. All of these ethical procedures, including the examination of the ethics in data collection, the issues of power, management of distressing information and languages guided me to generate a rich description of the data to answer the research questions of this research project. The researcher's social positioning and epistemology and the ontology of the qualitative research have been discussed. Knowledge is embedded and can be discovered in social interaction and personal experience. A relativistic, constructivist ontology which posits that there is no objective reality has been

addressed. Owing to the nature of this research allowing for an in-depth emersion into many facets of the contextualized experience of counselling and psychology participants, IPA was used as a means of data analysis and it helped to reflect individuals' life experiences, their commonalities and differences. The procedures including the exploration of the role of the researcher, the recruitment of the participants, data collection and data analysis have been outlined in this chapter as well.

The results of the qualitative inquiry into the supervisees' experience will be presented in a detailed and systematically organized form of themes and subthemes in the coming chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE ACCOUNT OF DATA

5.1 Overview

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section is an overview. The second is the result which summarizes the study findings. The last section is the description of themes and subthemes which were captured through a process of immersion into the interviews and transcripts. Salient themes and subthemes emerged from the data analysis.

5.2 Organization of the results

The analyses of interview data have been organized into five master themes. The master themes that resulted from the analysis of the interview transcripts reflect my interpretation of the participants' conceptualization of their counselling internship and supervision experiences. Each theme represents topic areas "used to group or cluster information or data about similar topics" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 546). Although the themes may be presented as discrete concepts, their meanings are connected with each other. Therefore through the patterns of their connections with other themes and subthemes, we can get a better picture of the phenomenon. Excerpts or quotations representative of the transcribed interviews are presented in order to allow the participants' voices to be heard.

5.3 Themes and Subthemes

Five overarching themes (see Figure 5.1) emerged from the analysis, which provided a cumulative account of the participants' experience. These themes will now be expanded upon with reference to participant quotes. The interview quotes have been edited to enhance clarity and comprehensibility. The five master themes are (1) The training experience of student counsellors in relation to *Guanxi*; (2) Idiosyncratic desires for professional competency of the student counsellors in the internship stage; (3) Expectation of the student counsellors in relation to the internship setting and the supervision environment; (4) Mental processing of the student counsellors in the learning; (5) *Guanxi* strategies used by the Chinese student counsellors in Hong Kong.

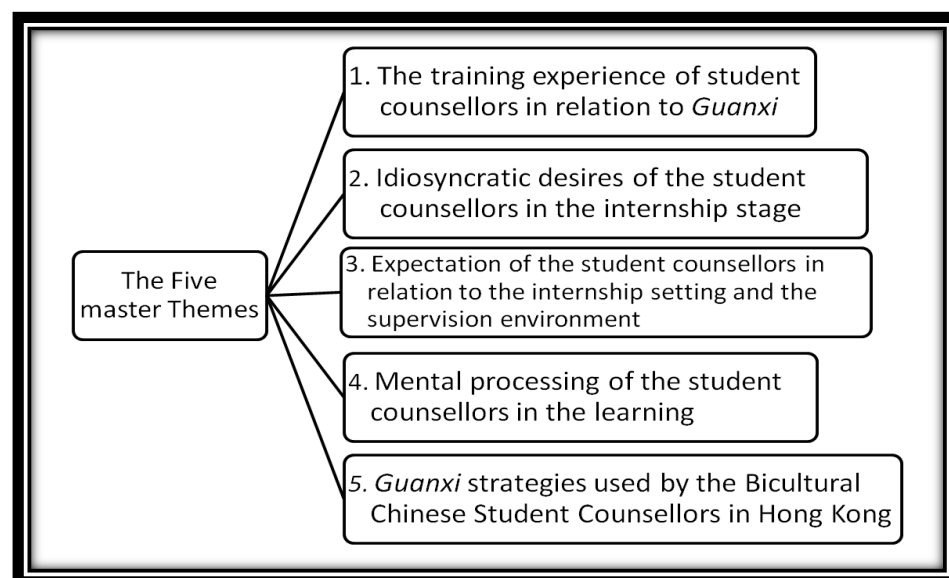


Figure 5.1 The five Master Themes of the student counsellors' experiences

5.3.1 Theme 1: The training experience of student counsellors in relation to Guanxi

Guanxi (Relationship) exists everywhere. One of the famous Chinese sayings is, "If you have *Guanxi*, then you don't have *Guanxi*; if you have no *Guanxi*, then you have *Guanxi*". (If you have good relationships, then you don't have any problems; if you don't have good relationships, then you will have great difficulties.) This is to remind us that building good *Guanxi* is extremely important, especially in Chinese culture. *Guanxi*, literally means "relationships", and stands for any type of relationship. The student counsellors reviewed their first-hand experience about *Guanxi* in the internship period. Two subthemes were identified as illustrated in Figure 5.2 below.

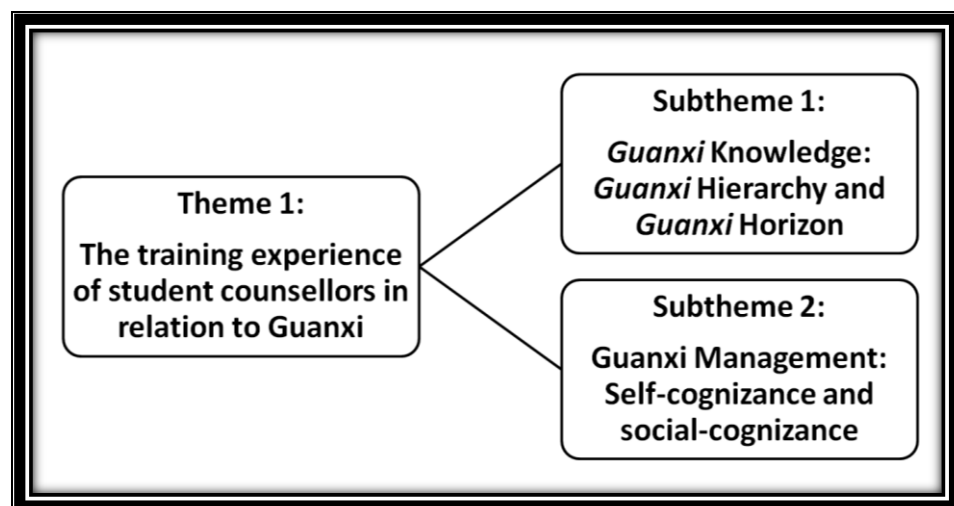


Figure 5.2 Theme 1: The training experience of student counsellors in relation to *Guanxi*

5.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: *Guanxi* Knowledge: *Guanxi* Hierarchy and *Guanxi* Horizon

Guanxi knowledge became one of the themes in the interviewing data in this research. *Guanxi* is translated into "special relationships" or "connections" (Davies et al., 1995). It is quite different from concepts of relationship or social network in

Western society. The concept of *Guanxi* is more sophisticated than social networks (Yang, 1993) and there are subtle differences between these two concepts (Fu et al., 2006). Hackley and Dong (2001) distinguished relationships as more visible and open but *Guanxi* is not; besides, Western relationships emphasize equality but *Guanxi* focuses on obligation and reciprocity. This is a very familiar concept in Chinese culture. We are acculturated in the *Guanxi* atmosphere ever since we are born.

Most of the student counsellors were very sensitive to the mechanism of *Guanxi* in the internship agency and supervisory relationship.

I expected that I would learn more about *Guanxi* and interaction.....
And the university supervisor also mentioned that I lack social skills and interpersonal skills. This would affect my making connections with people in the workplace.....Now I am aware that *Guanxi* is really very important.....

(Bik Kuen)

In dealing with *Guanxi* hierarchy, they found that, if they have good *Guanxi* with the supervisors, their supervisors will execute less power and less control over their work, and then more choices and freedom are guaranteed. If the *Guanxi* is not good, they will experience more power and control. The supervisor will exercise more censorship, challenges and they will receive orders instead of choices.

.....I try hard to adjust and match their (the agency staff's and supervisors') needs. After some time,.....they have more confidence in us. The *Guanxi* is built up. There is less tension between us. They allow us to work more freely. I could feel more relaxed and I felt that

they are relaxed too.

(Ip Ting)

When the *Guanxi* (relationship) with the supervisors is good, I know that I can have choices. However, when the *Guanxi* has not been well-established, I don't really have choices. I know pretty well that *Guanxi* really matters. The closeness with the supervisor is the most determining factor of the real choices. ...If the relationship is not good, this is an order, or indirect order, which is implicit.

(Ga Lung)

Once when *Guanxi* develops, ones' thoughts, perceptions and feelings will be disclosed more easily in people's interaction. One of the participants had a very surprising experience after he developed *Guanxi* (good relationship) with the agency supervisor who disclosed to him something strange and subtle, which was totally different from her distant, hierarchical and authoritative stance beforehand.

The agency supervisor revealed her thoughts to me near the end of the internship, "I have never seen a student who is so persistent in sticking to academic principles, the spirit of accuracy and precision, a very careful attitude in doing the paper work...You really have the potentials to be my boss in the future." Oh..... I really felt very uncomfortable when I heard this. This may have a lot of interpretations. I felt worried and at the same time happy. I told myself that I should not feel worried as the internship would be finished very soon. On the other hand, I was glad to hear this as this can be a form of recognition...

(An Wah)

Other participants experienced more disclosure from the clients with good *Guanxi*. It allowed them to use less time to search for more relevant information.

But after the *Guanxi* had been built up with the clients, we felt better. The clients are willing to tell us more about themselves and their

family, and their difficulties in parenting.

(Eng Lin)

.... It is because it is the first very important step in working with children (clients). If the *Guanxi* is poor, you cannot get any information from the client, no matter how hard you try. If I have a good *Guanxi* with the students (the ADHD student clients), though they may not show their attention to what I am talking about just from their facial expression, they are willing to listen to me afterwards.....

(Ga Lung)

In facing *Guanxi*, if people want to get more informal support, concern and appreciation or even recognition, one must not ignore the effort required to build good *Guanxi*. It can be viewed as a source of "embedded resources" (Lin, 1999).

Student counsellors mentioned their experience of support and concerns from agency staff, cohorts and supervisors with good *Guanxi*.

..... I open up myself and try very hard to relate to the staff there. After some time, I hear some positive feedback from the agency about me. They (the agency staff) appreciate what I have been doing in the agency.....

(Ga Lung)

..... (after a good *Guanxi* had developed) We are sitting in the staff office. The teachers and the staff become very helpful...

(Jo Ching)

The student counsellors start to taste the process in the interaction in their internship. They realize the importance of becoming an insider in their internship agencies.

5.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: *Guanxi* Management: Self-cognizance and social-cognizance

Counselling is a relationship profession. This profession focuses on enabling relationship management in clients. "The counselling profession focuses on enabling relationship enhancement in clients" (Tse, 2010:22). The counselling internship experience facilitates the novice to be more aware of the self and others, not only the counsellor-client relationship, but the *Guanxi* dynamic among people.

.....It facilitates me to build up more experience in working with the clients and other professionals. I would not be as blind to others' expectation as I was in the early stage.....

(Ip Ting)

..... Skills can be learned. But self-awareness cannot be learned. I can take time to learn skills through practice, but this is very difficult in self-awareness..... I was happy to know this at the very beginning. She (my supervisor) helps me to understand myself. She leads me to understand my own behaviour. I finally understand the phenomenon which I have been familiar with for many years.

(Dui Yin)

Student counsellors at this level of their life stage need to face a lot of changes and personal developmental issues. Developmental theories suggest that individuals need to journey through various stages of maturation in accordance with their current abilities (Barrett and Barber, 2005). They report their concern in achieving self-awareness in *Guanxi* management.

... the most important one is the personal understanding. Very often I get stuck in the counselling process. Through supervision, I then realize that the place I get stuck is mostly caused by my own issue

instead of the clients. If I can go through my own issues, the process moves on again very easily. This is very reflective for me.

(An Wah)

Leary (2006, p.232) claims, "Viewing the self as a psychological process without considering its interpersonal functions and origins may lead to an impoverished perspective on self processes". Internship promotes the student counsellors' personal awareness as well as social awareness through different sorts of relationship.

In the past, I would use the same way to relate with all people. I am very consistent in my expression. But now I know I cannot. I would be a complete failure if I used the same strategies. For example, I would be able to ask my university supervisor directly about my questions and bravely express my concerns, but it is impossible for me to practise this with my agency supervisor. For the agency supervisor, she is very skilful and would not reveal herself to me. I find difficulties in knowing her real feelings towards me. I needed to guess.

(Bik Kuen)

5.3.2 Theme 2: Idiosyncratic desires of the student counsellors in the internship stage

Five subthemes were categorised (see Figure 5.3) in theme 2. The students reviewed their personal needs and desires in their internship stage including their yearning for feedback, guidance, opportunity to learn new experience, skills in application and achievement needs.

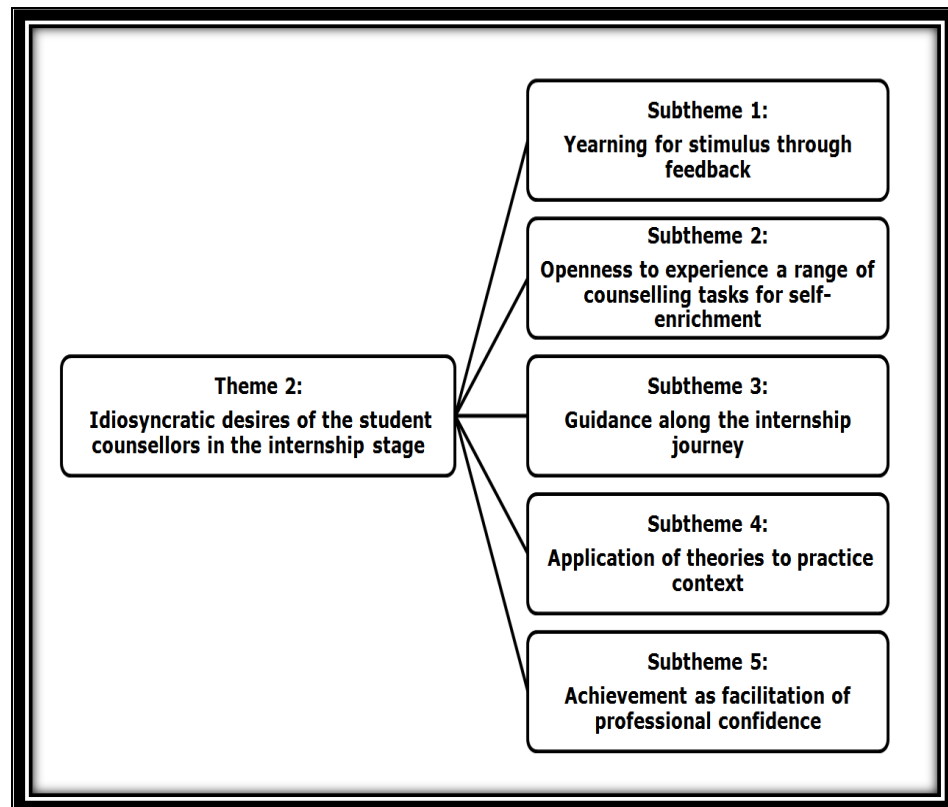


Figure 5.3 Theme 2: Idiosyncratic desires of the student counsellors in the internship stage

5.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Yearning for stimulus through feedback

The famous concept of the "looking glass self" (Cooley, 1998/1902, cited by Kendall, 2010) refers to the way in which a person's sense of self is derived from the perceptions of others. Feedback acts as a mirror for the participants to know how they had performed.

Supervisory feedback following staff training is generally considered to be an important variable in maintaining staff performance (Fleming and Sulzer-Azaroff, 1989). This is also true in the internship training with the responses from the student counsellors.

... Positive feedback is very important for me. It will actually make

me feel better. I know my self-esteem is very low.

(Fung Chi)

Actually I want her (university supervisor) to be able to give me feedback on my weaknesses and facilitate me to improve. It would be better if she could voice my weaknesses instead of my active disclosure. It is because I have already been trying very hard to be perfect. If she could tell me from another perspective, I would be benefited by her feedback.

(Ga Lung)

Feedback can be a powerful tool in training to enhance performance and learning.

This fosters the student counsellors' self-understanding. At the same time, it provides a wider perspective for their self-reflection. Besides, feedback can facilitate the student counsellors' motivation to achieve the learning goals. If the feedback always focuses on the mistakes and weaknesses, this will de-motivate the participants who are green and inexperienced.

My university supervisor gives me detailed and specific feedback in the case notes. She is quick to give me feedback. She does not criticize what I have done. She would point out things that I have missed. ... Actually I have not been paying attention to those points. This would help me to explore. She helps me to find my blind spot.

(Jo Ching)

I am feeling helpless over her (university supervisor's) criticism and negative feedback on me. I try to change. But she says I do not change. If I try to explain to her, she would conclude that it is my problem of being too superficial. Her criticism is just like swords, keep cutting my heart. I could not find out ways to improve. ...She keeps on repeating her criticism of me in every supervision session, I start to feel breathless. I feel very anxious.I lose confidence over my performance. My motivation is lost. I have no energy to move on.

I become more passive.

(Dui Yin)

Constructive feedback provides hope to change. Constructive feedback needs to be practical, specific, and facilitative, and able to enrich new perspectives.

5.3.2.2 Subtheme 2: Openness to experience a range of counselling tasks for self-enrichment

The new opportunities to practise the theories and techniques are very critical to the development of a counselling professional. Paisley and McMahon (2001) mention that it is not until the trainee enters their clinical training that the trainee begins to integrate self into the profession under the watchful eyes of an experienced counsellor supervisor.

The participants reported the valuable experience of having exposure to new practice and learning opportunities. As self-motivated learners, they want to learn as much as they can in their counselling internship. They have a big appetite for welcoming new chances and learning opportunities.

.....She (the university supervisor) ...offered me a new learning experience..... I expect my supervisor can offer me what I want to learn.She lets me taste all sorts of approaches. We need to have a broader exposure to different approaches.....

(An Wah)

..... I am allowed to make mistakes. I am glad that I had been offered many opportunities to learn.

(Ga Lung)

...., I really wanted to learn more from the internship. Now when I hear the possibilities to have cases, I have a strong urge to try. I want to gain more and more experience....

(Hui Yung)

5.3.2.3 Subtheme 3: Guidance along the internship journey

Concrete advice and guidance is a natural concern of the participants in the internship in their first taste of being a clinical practitioner. All participants emphasized their need to have concrete and systematic guidance from supervisors. Structured and didactic training, especially in this stage, is usually emphasized (Skovholt, Rønnestad and Jennings (1997)). All of them reported that they felt frustrated and experienced high levels of anxiety when they faced the new environment and the real clients. The functions of guidance acted as “tranquilizers” in the early stage of the counselling internship.

I was confused at the beginning. I didn't know what supervision is. It is different from what I have learned in school about supervision. If I am given another chance to start supervision again, I will tell my supervisor what I need. I need to be guided to look at things from various perspectives. I need to be encouraged and affirmed.....

(Can Ming)

I feel a bit helpless. I know my supervisor is good. I need more concrete instructions. However, when I want to have clear instructions, she is unable to offer me guidance. Then I need to do it on my own. I need to seek consultations and help from other sources.

(Eng Lin)

5.3.2.4 Subtheme 4: Application of theories to practice context

All the participants reported their concerns about integrating the theories with

practice. Most of the time the student counsellors are expected to work independently in the counselling room. They have stored up a lot of psychological knowledge about people but there is a lot of unpredictability where theories need to be adjusted, modified and integrated to suit different clients and cultures.

I need to integrate different aspects, such as the cognitive, cultural aspects, counselling theories and sexuality, and developmental aspects in the practices. I hope that it will enrich my perspectives in my learning...

(An Wah).

.....I need to digest the theories learned in class and apply them in the clinical setting. I have to consider that in the clinical setting. This is my experience.

(Bik Kuen)

The internship is really a very important process to me to integrate my learning..... it facilitates me to build up more experience in working with the clients and other professionals.

(Ip Ting)

5.3.2.5 Subtheme 5: Achievement as facilitation of professional confidence

Achievement is a strong energizer and driving force. It can be defined as the reaching of appointed goals and inclinations in our life. The more accomplishment the participants could attain, the more motivated they became. The achievers do not mind more workload. They find values in the achievement. It can affect the performance of a person in their tasks and indicate a desire for competence (Harackiewicz et al., 1997). The ability to offer help to the clients actually promoted

intrinsic motivation in the participants. It will generate excitement and encouragement if they find that they can master the assigned goals or tasks. They reported that they could not get satisfaction at the early stage of the internship. All the participants gained a certain level of achievement at the later stage.

The time when the parents of my clients called me and told me that there was improvement in their children after the counselling, I found that what I had done was meaningful and worthwhile.....

(Bik Kuen)

.....I started to understand their (my clients') problems. They were more willing to tell me their fears and worries. This really gave me a great sense of achievement in my internship.

(Can Ming)

A little bit of achievement! We feel that we can do something to help.

(Eng Lin)

5.3.3 Theme 3: Expectation of the student counsellors in relation to the internship setting and the supervision environment

There are altogether seven subthemes in this theme (see Figure 5.4). The expectations of the participants are classified into seven areas. These expectations explain their inner processes, presentation and behaviour.

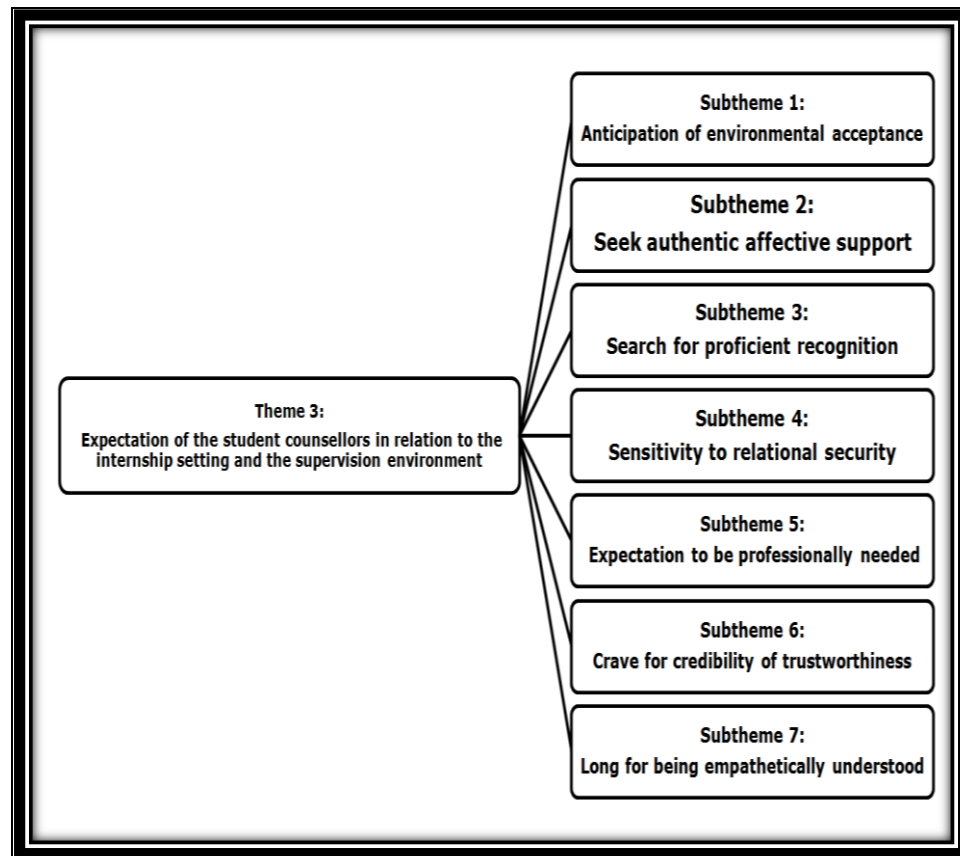


Figure 5.4 Theme 3: Expectation of the student counsellors in relation to the internship setting and the supervision environment

5.3.3.1 Subtheme 1: Anticipation of environmental acceptance

Human beings crave acceptance. The journey of a novice is challenging and arduous.

They have too much to learn due to their inadequacy. The anticipation of being accepted from their significant others, such as the supervisors, especially on their incompetence in practices, form the groundwork for self-disclosure of their deficiency. As in the training process, once the participants feel that their mistakes and weaknesses are accepted, they are willing to disclose them to the supervisors.

And this will facilitate their professional growth in the counselling internship and supervision.

.. I was afraid of disclosure of my weaknesses to others. This was my feeling at the beginning. At the later stage, she (the university supervisor) told me that she will accept my weaknesses. She feels it is Ok to make mistakes. The most important thing is how to improve. Change is the focus. Then, I began to disclose more..... I can feel her acceptance.

(Can Ming)

....It seemed that she would accept my wrongdoings. My supervisor makes me feel warm, supportive and with high acceptance.

.(Hui Yung)

Ga Lung pointed out one point about acceptance which is worth paying attention to.

Showing appreciation can be an indication that one does not want to look at others' weaknesses. Ga lung is talking about his perception and understanding of acceptance from a different perspective. Acceptance therefore is an agreeing attitude towards something which is true. Appreciation with no tangible and concrete experience is only hypothetical.

...When she always wants us to show appreciation to others' strengths to appreciate others' strengths, in this way, could be an indication that one does not want to look at others' weaknesses. This is my interpretation.....

(Ga Lung)

5.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: Seek authentic affective support

The participants reported that they expected emotional support from their supervisors in the internship. Emotional connections with people are fundamental to human beings. The participants mainly focus on the affective support in their internship performance.

I feel that encouragement and emotional support is very important....

(Hui Yung)

Sometimes, I email my supervisor when I am in a very stressful situation. She responds very fast. She is able to offer me emotional support immediately. I feel good that there is an authority that stands by me.

(Eng Lin)

One participant did not expect any emotional support from her supervisor. She was very angry with her. Her emotional cut-off from the supervisor is the main reason she does not reveal her affective needs. No more expectation of affective support from supervisor reflects her disappointment. Her frustration and the strong urge to separate indicate her unfulfilling emotional needs in the supervision process.

I rationalize this experience (the supervision) as a good one. My feelings do not feel the same way. I had a very difficult time in my supervision. I want this (the supervision) to end immediately. I do the countdown daily to comfort myself that it is going to end very soon

(Dui Yin).

5.3.3.3 Subtheme 3: Search for proficient recognition

Students in their internship stage face innumerable failures and self-threats, which include the failure to meet the requirements of supervisors and clients, frustrated goals, challenges, comparison and negative feedback. These can be factors affecting their building up of a professional identity. They need the supervisors to show recognition and affirmation on how much effort they have made. Recognition from authority figures is another magnificent incentive to them. And this affects their development of self-confidence. The case of Can Ming, is a good example, the three

magical words from the university supervisor, "You have improved" was so powerful and motivating to him.

.....she (the university supervisor) is very demanding. When she recognizes me, it means I have done something correctly and fit her demands. This is a concrete form of affirmation to me.....She speaks only a few words, "You have improved."

(Can Ming)

I am rarely aware of my strengths and good performance. I need others to tell me about this part. When my supervisors remind me that I have been doing quite well in a particular area, I then realize that my performance is satisfactory. I need others to inform me about my strengths....

(Ga Lung)

Fung Chi's experience reflects the deep impact of the supervisor's words on her. She was discouraged after the internship and the supervision. Although she reported that she had a good relationship with her clients, she is frustrated by her inadequacy and insufficient skills as unrecognized by her supervisor. She has no obvious conflicts with her supervisor; however, she has lost her motivation to undergo supervision.

I am interested in counselling and I want to develop my career in this profession..... However, I feel that I am not competent to be a counsellor after this internship. I am struggling between interests and capability. These two seem to be in great conflict.....Sorrow! (when she hears the criticism of her from the university supervisor). It has been almost a year in the internship! Maybe... that is my status. Perhaps...what he describes is right. I am sad to hear that I am still in this poor status.

(Fung Chi)

5.3.3.4 Subtheme 4: Sensitivity to relational security

The participants spoke about their feeling of insecurity. Ambiguity is one of those unspoken aspects of clinical training that arouses a lot of insecurity in students. They have to face many unfamiliar things in the internship. They are very sensitive to making mistakes. Friedlander et al., (1984: 190) state, "Students become hyper vigilant about making mistakes and retreat into the security of silence or low-risk interpretations". They are afraid of causing harm to the clients. The uncertainty of the detailed requirement of the agencies and the supervisors is the major cause of their insecurity. The availability of the supervisors and their support make them feel secure. They hope that there is someone to rely on in case of emergency.

I think supervision should be supportive. It gives us the feeling that the supervisor always stands by us. She will be there to save me. But in reality, it is not the case.....

(Hui Yung)

..... I just want to make sure that she (the university supervisor) really understands what I do. It will be OK if she vetoes my proposal. The most important thing is that she knows it and I have got her concrete approval instead of a vague allowance. This is to ensure that she takes her responsibility of this..... I feel very insecure.

(Ip Ting)

She (the university supervisor) tells me clearly about her plan, her available time and the ways I can access her easily. When I email her, she responds very quickly within one day. This gives me a very secure feeling.

(Ga Lung)

5.3.3.5 Subtheme 5: Expectation to be professionally needed

As counsellor confidence about building a firm alliance with clients increases, client

motivation to work on goals increases as well.

Two participants explicitly described their feelings of being needed. This helps them to build up their sense of importance in the workplace. This will add value to their work. Although the other participants have not obviously stated the needs of being needed, they mention that their work being valued by the clients of the agency staff is certainly important.

The teachers would come to me for the progress of the children. I began to have the sense of being needed. My motivation increased a lot. The need to be needed is a great motivation at work to me.

(Bik Kuen)

.....And I have the responsibility to take care of the clients. They need me to do something for them. I need to do something for them. I cannot just sit there....

(Dui Yin)

5.3.3.6 Subtheme 6: Crave for credibility of trustworthiness

The trust from the supervisors has contributed to the trainee's sense of ability and self-efficacy to work with clients. On the contrary, the mistrust from the authority has ended up as a discouragement to the development of self-efficacy and self-evaluation of the students. However, this is a dilemma. It is difficult for the supervisor to trust the students with little clinical experience. The students have to gain their trust by good performance.

Trust from their supervisors help to build up the self-confidence of the participants.

On the other hand, if the capability of the participants is queried and questioned, this

will increase their self-doubt. This is in fact not a linear but a circular causality.

..... She (the university supervisor) allows me to experience from the process and have a more impressive experience. She believes I can handle it.

(An Wah)

..... The agency supervisor responds with a query, "How come you have not learned how to handle this in your training?" Her question is an assault to me though I know that she does not mean to hurt me. Her question at once confirmed that I am not capable. My emotion was seriously affected.

(Ga Lung)

5.3.3.7 Subtheme 7: Long for being empathetically understood

The participants shared the strong desire to be understood. They wanted their supervisors to know their needs, characteristics and learning style. If the supervisors are able to demonstrate their understanding about them or the effort they have made, their openness to self-disclosure and willingness to follow guidance and teaching will definitely increase. Though the understanding is only to a certain degree, if the students can feel it, it will act as a catalyst for the learning and teaching process.

.....Her (the university supervisor's) suggestions and advice are no use to me if she does not understand my needs....

(Can Ming)

..... The most impressive one is, I remember in a supervision session; she seemed to understand my pattern of reflection. This makes me feel that I am being understood.

(Ip Ting)

5.3.4 Theme 4: Mental processing of the student counsellors in the learning

This theme reflects the mental struggles in response to the participants' perception of their reality and their experience. Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003, p.54) state, "The struggles and stressors of professional work often combine to form a sense of bewilderment and confusion for the novice".

This theme encompasses nine subthemes of novice mental struggles reported by the participants (see Figure 5.5): (1) Striving for competency in clinical practice; (2) Wrestling in a twilight zone between disclosure and non-disclosure; (3) Continual battles of mind and heart; (4) Defending counselling professionalism; (5) Scrambling for the efficient management of time and tasks; (6) Combating the practice of compliance and idiosyncrasy; (7) Adapting to cultural diversity in clinical settings; (8) Tackling the discrepancies in the supervision; (9) Accommodating counselling practice with a variety of clients.

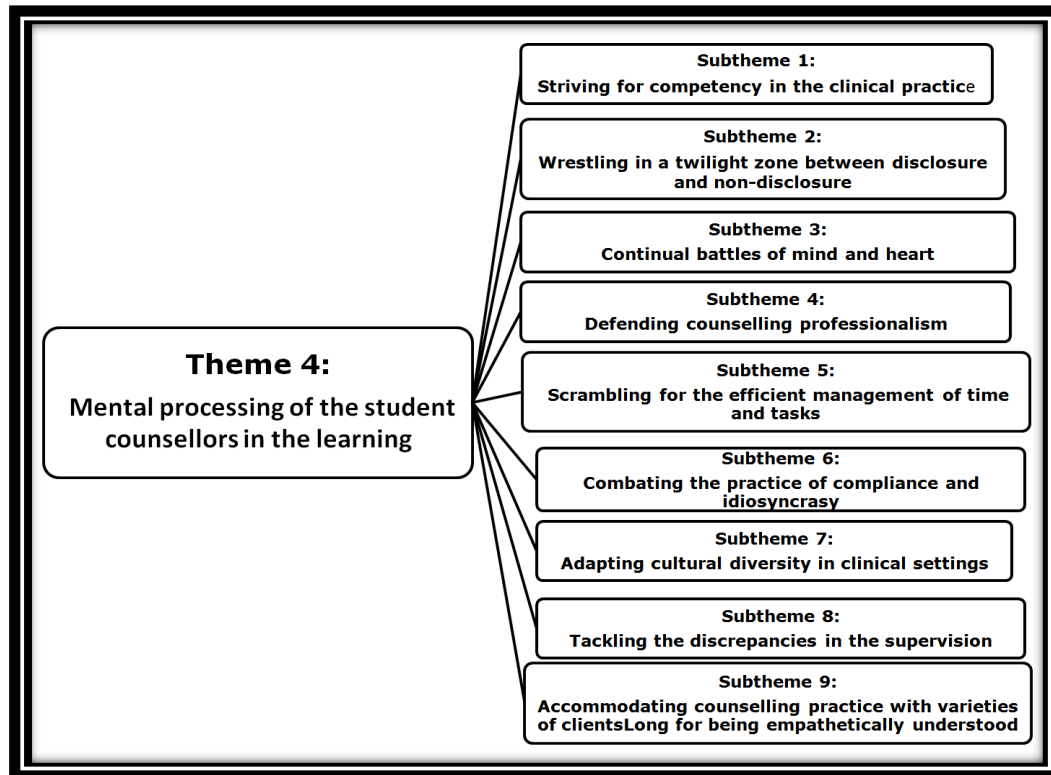


Figure 5.5 Theme 4: Mental processing of the student counsellors in the learning

5.3.4.1 Subtheme 1: Striving for competency in clinical practice

All the participants talked about their feelings of inadequacy regarding their clinical skills. This created tension and anxiety in the internship. They have struggles in implementing appropriate skills in their repertoires. The inadequacy makes them feel confused and frustrated. It is exhausting and challenging for them to integrate and synthesize the information with the skills they learn so as to process therapeutic effects.

At the very beginning,I did not take up the role as a counsellor. I was very insensitive to my role and responsibility. I just talked casually with the client. This lasted for one whole month. I started to realize my inappropriate practice. This is not good for the

clients.

(Can Ming)

.....Those students (her clients), are just like wild beasts, are very naughty, running all around in the classroom. I spent much energy on class discipline management instead of running the counselling group. I was very frustrated and angry. I was not able to perform the role as counsellor. I had to become a discipline executor.... I was forced to use a very strong tone to shut them up. I did not want to scold them but the scenario was so difficult.....

(Jo Ching)

Sometimes the feelings of incompetency originated from the challenges or the cohort comparison was either from self or supervisors.

All the participants expressed their struggles between competency and incapability.

The self-doubts originate specifically from their skills management.

..... And there is unavoidable comparison with the past student counsellors. I was worried that I cannot perform better than them..... At the very beginning, I had no confidence in myself. The relationship with the agency was not working so well. I didn't have much confidence in dealing with cases. I was not strong enough to stand firm for my own ideas. I struggled between perspectives, hers and mine...

(An Wah)

.... for individual cases: the ADHD, Autism, the Asperger syndrome, etc., those pathological cases, I really found them very challenging. I did not really have much confidence in dealing with them. I was anxious about these. The general skills we have learned in counselling class, I find, are insufficient.I need to well-equip myself for all these types of questions.I need to have more relevant knowledge. My professional image will be poor if I fail to recognize these.

(Bik Kuen)

.... The unhappy experience mainly comes from my inadequacy, such

as not having enough skills to run the groups. And I cannot achieve the goals..... I have a bad influence on my client. And this is due to my inadequacy.

(Fung Chi)

5.3.4.2 Subtheme 2: Wrestling in a twilight zone between disclosure and non-disclosure

The effectiveness of supervision relies heavily on supervisees being able to disclose information about the counselling. All the participants reported wrestling between disclosure and non-disclosure in the interviews. They know that the more they reveal their incapability, the more they will learn from the supervisors. The fear of being labelled and poorly evaluated has great impacts on their disclosing behaviour. When the supervisory relationship was well-established, their struggles decreased. The evaluation of the supervisors is another determining factor that affects the disclosure.

.....Normally we will not express our real feelings and incapability before the supervisors because it will affect our grading. We only selectively review the cases so as to gain a better impression from the supervisor. My supervisor is able to make me feel safe to reveal my weakness.

(An Wah)

... I need help and guidance from my supervisor. However, I am scared that my grading will be affected by my disclosure of incapability..... I want my supervisor to understand our needs.....

(Eng Lin)

I was worried about her responses towards my inadequacies at the beginning. But when my university supervisor told me that she does not focus on my inadequacies but my attitude, I felt more relaxed to

speak about them. But honestly speaking, I am afraid to reveal my inadequacies...I am afraid to disclose my weaknesses.....

(Ga Lung)

5.3.4.3 Subtheme 3: Continual battles of mind and heart

“Reason is the slave of passions” is the famous saying of David Hume. It reminds us about the two forces within a person, the motivating and the rational forces. The “should” or “should not” in the mind always in conflict with one’s gut feelings. The mind-heart battles were commonly raised by the participants.

The voice in the participants’ mind is very often contradicting with that in the heart. Their wants may not be practical and socially accepted. The “should” originates from the internal as well as external standards, such as authority figures.

At the peak time of my conflict with the supervisor, I didn't want to go to the supervision though I should report to her. I had a very strong feeling of disgust towards my university supervisor. The negative feelings of frustration and helplessness increased after each individual supervision session.....

(Can Ming)

I rationalize this (supervision) experience as a good one. My feelings do not feel the same way. I had a very difficult time in my supervision. I wanted it to end immediately. I do the countdown daily to comfort myself that the counselling internship is going to end very soon.

(Dui Yin)

I remember once when I was asked to demonstrate how I handled the cases, I was very scared (Cognitively speaking, it is a good way to learn). I was afraid that I would not do well. Well,I was not concerned about the grades. So I do not really know why I was so scared. I felt very embarrassed.

(Hui Yung)

5.3.4.4 Subtheme 4: Defending counselling professionalism

Role identity is one of the greatest challenges facing the counselling profession (Paisley and McMahon, 2001). Once the student enters the internship programme, they start the process of understanding one's professional identity.

The role expectations from clients, supervisors and cohorts, sometimes, themselves, are other sources of their professional frustrations. The participants felt the heavy demands and expectation from the agency over their performance. The participants feel the social expectation when they enter into the field. This agency expectation creates stress for the participants while their skills are still crude.

..... The teachers are very anxious about the results of the counselling. This can be viewed from two sides. The positive side is that they care about the students and they respect us as professionals. The negative side is that it can create stress in us. The teachers have not much understanding about counselling. They may think that this is just like "instant noodle" and "fast food" production. This fast-food nature reflects the fact that many people still hold a false belief of what counselling is. It makes me feel very tense when I face their expectation. They feel that we should be able to deal with these difficult cases..... The agency supervisor has great expectations of me...

(Bik Kuen)

..... Normally they (the agency staff) want to see an immediate effect of what we have done. Just like "fast food", "ready-made". We need to be sharp and clear about the goal settings. They will not allow us to make mistakes. They will not prefer trial and error learning.....

(Ip Ting)

A professional identity includes a composite of internal characteristics and external factors which melded all training and experience (Studer, 2007). The personality of the participants becomes a source of conflict. For instance, the participants are expected to have more initiative. The introvert participants have more difficulties than the extrovert participants. The participants are easily disturbed by role schemas. They have to twist their personality to fit the social expectations.

The first conflict is related to my personality. I am not that kind of person who wants to show off (as I always believe that action is more important than words). I can be very focused on doing different tasks. However, I have to adjust to the agency culture. I do not work alone. I need to relate to people.....

(Bik Kuen)

..... I am strict and I will scold the children if they do something wrong. I am very serious. The children call me "Sister Police". I had a big intrapersonal struggle. As a counsellor, should I present such image to the children? They will not like to approach me. Should I be lenient on the wrongdoings? Should I allow them to break the rules? If I do not stop the children, my permissiveness will not be good for them either.

(Hui Yung)

Besides, the issues arising from personal, family or developmental challenges which affect their professional performance becomes other sources of inner conflicts. They need a certain level of support and guidance from the supervisors to mentor them through these struggles regarding personal issues.

...I have just split up with my girlfriend. It is a low point in my life. I am overwhelmed by the experience. I am not sure whether this is a professional response. I tell my clients that I am unable to see them

that week.

(Ga Lung)

..... In the middle of the internship, my parents divorced and the family was in a great mess. I am helpless and very frustrated. I have lost all of my energy in the internship.....

(Hui Yung)

The student counsellors encountered struggles related to their professional roles and responsibilities. They feel frustrations in defending their professionalism. The public's mix-up of the counsellor professional identity as a social worker makes the student counsellors very confused. They have to carry out non-clinical work. Sometimes, they are assigned tasks or some kinds of responsibilities that clash with the role as a counsellor and the counselling professional ethics in the internship.

.....I am expected to perform a role which I do not think is appropriate. It is some kind of "spy". The school expects to extract information, which they cannot get directly from my client, through the counselling. They want me to inform them of the content of the counselling session afterwards. I don't know how to reject them. The agency supervisor wants to know where my client has gone. And the family has a great urge to know where she has been. I reported to my agency supervisors for two weeks and I started to question myself, "What am I doing? Am I a spy?"

(Dui Yin)

Our agency supervisor is a District Council member. He (the agency supervisor) may have to promote himself. We are sometimes asked to help to distribute the leaflets for him to promote his views. We seem to be his assistants. My conflict is that he is our agency supervisor. We cannot reject what he asks us to do...

(Eng Lin)

People look upon the counsellor as a social worker..... They are also

unclear about our roles and responsibilities. Our university supervisor has advised us to have a clear role in the agency. Actually the students are not certain about what counselling is..... I did not expect such role confusion in the Counselling internship. I feel frustrated by this experience.

(Jo Ching)

5.3.4.5 Subtheme 5: Scrambling for the efficient management of time and tasks

The participants were very sensitive to the tasks they were required to accomplish.

However, they had to scramble to manage all sorts of course work and paper work

aside from the clinical practice in the internship period. They were highly conscious

of the time limitation. This somehow became one of the sources of their stress.

I was very sensitive to the time at the early stage. I felt tense as time passed with no progress..... I told myself that a lot of issues related to cases and groups need to be handled. Time is too limited for emotional support.

(An Wah)

..... Actually we have limited time to see the student clients. ... We can see the clients for around twenty minutes for each session because they need to have classes. But the teachers expect that we should make great progress after one month's time..... We cannot have much progress within a short period of time. Their expectation caused a heavy burden on me. The teachers were very anxious about the results of the counselling process...

(Bik Kuen)

5.3.4.6 Subtheme 6: Combating the practice of compliance and idiosyncrasy

The participants reported that they had a tendency to establish a harmonious

relationship and avoid being distinctive in the groups. This made them feel secure.

It is dangerous to be outstanding and unique. This phenomenon reflects a famous Chinese saying, "The big tree attracts attention", which means it is dangerous to be brilliant. Compliance with the group or the authority, which is sometimes contradictory to their idiosyncratic wish, is appreciated in a collective culture. They are very sensitive to embarrassment and social disapproval.

... At the very beginning, she (university supervisor) said that I was only concerned with my own agendas and not about others. I did not agree with her. After that, she started to make her evaluation of me, which was very negative. I realized her perception of me only after the first term evaluation.....This was strange and very uneasy for me. I struggled for a month whether I should accept her opinions or reject her accusation of me. I listened to her advice. She began to show appreciation for me. I found that this strategy was workable. I have kept on using this strategy up to now. My supervisor told me later that she wanted to twist my head to see something, but I refused. At the beginning, the more she pushed me, the more defensive I became.

(Can Ming)

.....the one who leaves the office early will be afraid of being too noticeable if the other three are still working in the office. It is very complicated. We feel very distressed over these issues. All of us therefore stay very late.

(Eng Lin)

5.3.4.7 Subtheme 7: Adapting to cultural diversity in clinical settings

Cultural knowledge is another important element in the internship. Liddle (1991, p.665, cited by Gurman and Kniskern, 1991) states, "Clinicians are increasingly conscious of the need to have a cultural and ethnic template in their clinical work".

The identification of difference enhances the student counsellors to be more sensitive to the culture of the agencies and the clients' needs. Culturally skilled counsellors are able to select appropriate skills to face clients from different cultures. The awareness of cultural differences is an important task for the student counsellors.

Internship is a golden opportunity for student counsellors to have their first taste of different cultural settings in the counselling professional training.

The internship is really a very important learning opportunity for me.....I gained a lot of experience about the operation and dynamics in the working process from the clinical setting....

(Ip Ting)

.....Internship is the first concrete clinical setting for us to face the clients..... There are many different clients, a lot of changes and unpredictability in the internship.....

(Jo Ching)

Thus the cultural sensitivity of the student counsellors will be enhanced when they are placed to work in different cultural settings and need to face various cultural needs and practices.

Besides, they need to adapt to the policy of the agency, such as the school policy and social work agency policy, which may not possess the counselling values.

The general atmosphere.....the social service environment does not recognize the identity of counselling. The social work value is dominant in the social service fields. We have to do a lot of social work elements but only a little counselling. This is my struggle..... ... A lot of time is spent on doing peripheral work. But at the latest stage of

the counselling, I started to have more clients, and I could counsel more easily. I find that we needed more patience to implement the elements of counselling in the social service setting. We should not give up so easily. We need to keep on working hard. After some time, the relationship with the clients was built, and the clients accepted the counselling more easily.

(An Wah)

..... we are aware that our agency is very different from that of our classmates.There may be some political involvement since this is a community social service run by the district council. Our agency supervisor is a District Council member.....

(Eng Lin)

5.3.4.8 Subtheme 8: Tackling the discrepancies in the supervision

Each participant has to work under the supervision of two supervisors, one from the agency, who is responsible for administrative issues in the counselling internship; and one from university, who is responsible for clinical issues.

All the participants experienced a certain level of friction with their supervisors. They went through a relationship process. They experienced changes in the relationship.

Two participants experienced major conflicts with their university supervisors. One resolved the conflict before the termination of the internship and it was a very fruitful experience for his personal growth. The other one had unfinished conflicts with the supervisor and she ended her supervision with bitterness and anger.

Seven areas of supervisory relationship struggles emerged from the interviews after the data analysis (see Figure 5.6).

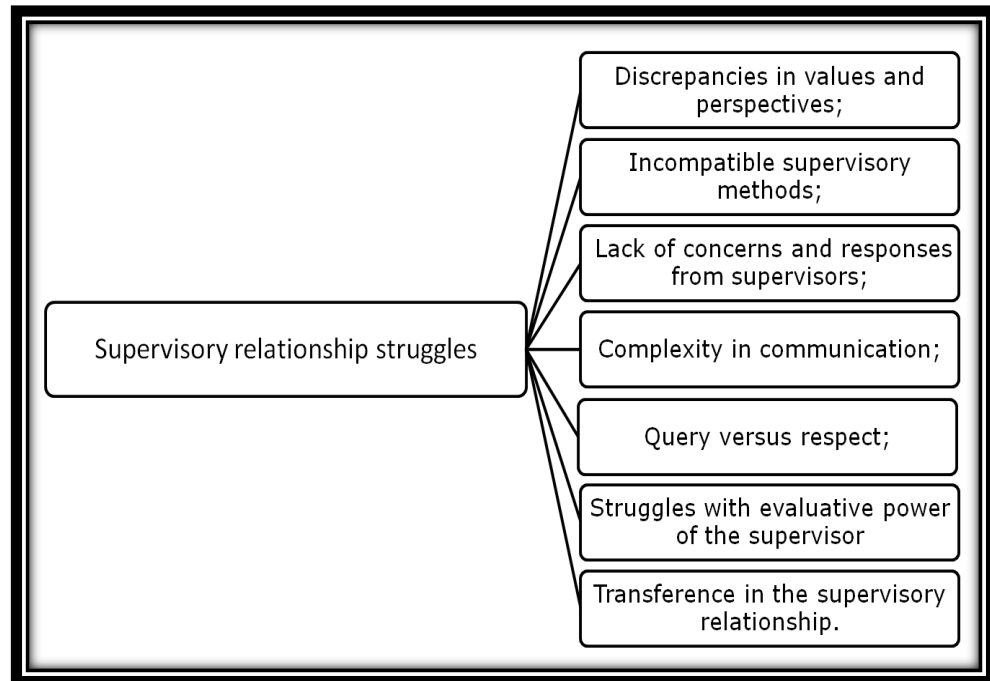


Figure 5.6 Seven areas of supervisory relationship struggles

(1) Discrepancies in values and perspectives

Discrepancies may be one of the possibilities to elicit conflicts. Conflicts are unavoidable when people are genuine. The strengthening of supervisory relationship is a process. The relational harmony will be attained if a better understanding of what cause the conflicts. The participants encountered difficulties and struggles due to the discrepancies in values and perspectives with the supervisors. The unavoidable differences affect their interaction and supervision. The difference comes from two major sources: inter-disciplinary (among different disciplines) and intra-disciplinary (different approaches within the counselling discipline) approaches. Diversity may not lead to conflicts. It is the way people to deal with diversity that counts. In Chinese, when the *Guanxi* is not well-established,

the differences come into effect in the interaction. The discrepancies in values and perspectives can become conflicts.

...We have different perspectives. We have different ways of looking at things.....I cannot say much which is in opposition to her (the agency supervisor's) points of view. This is my internal conflict; I cannot do what I think is appropriate. At the early stage, I expected much from her supervision. However, I discovered that their (the social work approach) supervision was different from ours. I realized that their practice of supervision was just like a case conference, with not much to learn. I found that I could not say much from the counselling and psychological dimensions. I struggled between perspectives, hers and mine. And sometimes I disagreed with her views. Even though she knew that my argument was sound, she would put herself in a higher position. She agreed with me superficially but it turned out that she would reject my ideas....

(An Wah)

..... My assumptions are welcome to be challenged. But hers (the university supervisor's) were not. She emphasized theoretical points of view. She is certain that her theory-based knowledge is right... She requested us to have strong theory-based practice. But I am not sure whether she has theory-based practice or not. We view things from different perspectives. I think there are a lot of possibilities and varieties in daily life. Her assumptions, the theories only represent part and not all.

(Can Ming)

It seems that my every diagnosis of the client's problems is challenged by my university supervisor. She said that my understanding of the client's issues is not concrete enough. I think it is because of the different expectation and requirement of the different supervisors. I still am not quite sure what she wants. My perception of the clients' problems is quite different from hers. It is a big problem for me.

(Jo Ching)

(2) Incompatible supervisory methods

There are multiple models in supervision. Different approaches have different focuses of attention. Supervisors vary their emphases in supervision. Some supervisors choose their own approaches based on their own competencies without consideration of the learning styles, needs, and developmental stages of the supervisees, so conflicts and frustration develop.

Participants report struggles in facing the supervision sessions. The supervisory methods practised by the supervisors are not compatible with their developmental needs. The learning process is then blocked.

..... I am used to the direct way of instruction from teachers, lecturers or supervisors. I will follow the steps very obediently. But this is totally different from the approach of my university supervisor. She seldom tells me directly what to do. She wants me to experience first and then we will discuss afterward.....

(An Wah)

...Usually the focus in the supervision is on what I have not done well, and the problems I face..... I feel uncomfortable and discouraged after seeing the supervisor. It is a hard time in each supervision session, I don't know why; it is very exhausting!

(Fung Chi)

The most difficult moment (in the supervision) is when she (the university supervisor) drives me to the corner of the wall. And there is nothing I can do. (the Intern's eyes turned red)

(Ip Ting)

Besides, overemphasis on the exploration of personal issues in the early stages of supervision at best delays the building of a positive working alliance and may even

damage the relationship (Chen and Bersstein, 2000). Dui Yin's experience resonates this finding. Her supervisor has put a lot of emphasis on working on her self-awareness of her personal issues. The continuous emphasis on her personal issues makes her feel labelled and uneasy.

When she (the university supervisor) discovered my depression and low motivation, she asked me about it. I told her that I feel very stressed when she keeps telling me that I am so superficial. She said, "I appreciate you being so honest." Then she kept saying, "You should know that you need to face yourself. You should have self-awareness. this is a supervision session, I will not give you time to process. I know you are very stressed, but I need you to have awareness within a very short time. Now, that means I am successful in making you aware of your own problems." Then she turned to me with a superior and sarcastic laugh. She was so proud of what she had said and done. I felt so helpless. I had no other choice. I had nothing to say..... She said I am defensive. However she herself is also defensive. She wants us have self-awareness. However, she does not have self-awareness either. It is very difficult to change her criticism of me. I feel this is a strong label on me.....

(Dui Yin)

(3) Lack of concern and responses from supervisors

The participants experienced a period of loss and frustration due to the lack of concern and responses from their supervisors. The unavailability and lack of contact with the supervisors very often causes anxiety in the novices. Responses, by all means, act as a psychological relaxant for the participants. Nelson and Friedlander (2001) discovered that one of the most frequent patterns of a poor supervisory experience occurred with supervisors who are seen as remote or too busy to take

care of the needs of trainees. This causes dissatisfaction in the trainees. The participants needed the supervisors to be available, supportive, positive, and helpful in their expected ways. Their absence will create "orphan distress" (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003) in the participants.

.....At the beginning stage, the supervisor made no responses and I sent her emails and she did not reply. I have done something and she does not discuss it with me. I don't know whether my decision and perception of the cases are in the right direction. She made no response.....The most difficult time in the supervision is when my supervisor does not give me feedback and does not offer me solutions to the problems.

(An Wah)

..... I find that my agency supervisor is so busy. And I do not want to disturb her work too much.....

(Bik Kuen)

..... (At the beginning) She (the university supervisor) is oblivious to my needs. She pays little effort to teaching me skills. Some of my classmates have similar feelings. She is not concerned much about our work plan and needs.....

(Ga Lung).

(4) Complexity in communication

The participants addressed the issue of having difficulties and complexities in communications with their supervisors. The messages cannot be heard and communicated clearly. The poor communication increased the burden in the relationship. The participants, like Dui Ying, who faced frequent confrontation with the supervisor but did not have the courage to reflect her stressful supervisory style,

reported difficulties in communicating with the supervisors who had an authoritarian stance. The ambivalence mixed with fear and respectful feelings towards authority (Bond, 1991) becomes obstacles in the supervision communicating process.

In the cases of Eng Lin and Dui Yin, they felt that the supervisor was unable to understand their message. They were confused by the supervisors' advice. They dare not openly challenge the inapplicable suggestions from the authority figure and express their feelings honestly.

I expressed my points of views and my feelings at the very beginning. I will show my disagreement. However, I found that it was useless. She will not listen to me..... Then I stopped expressing any ideas which were against hers. ...I remember one incident about my session plan. She challenged my concepts. I thought I am not OK. However, after some digestion of the concepts, I found that my points were applicable. She then said, "It is OK for you to do so." I was really confused by her comments. What should I do? All in all, she is too confident with her own viewpoints. If she says "yes", you should say "yes". If you object to her ideas or show disagreement, then she would say that my self-awareness is low and I will be labelled as defensive and in denial.....

(Dui Yin)

She often gives us irrelevant answers... It seems that the supervisor is unable to give us answers which match the questions we asked. For example, when I ask questions like "What should I do if I face such kind of situation?" My supervisor would say "You've done a good job." Perhaps she is just trying to give me a positive response. If that is the case, does it mean I am not doing right? She is only giving me affirmation. I am very confused.....She seldom gives suggestions. Sometimes, she does, but this is even more confusing to me.....Maybe my supervisor has her own creative approaches, but this is not practical to me. This suggestion is strange. I don't think that her

suggestions are workable on my clients.

(Eng Lin)

(5) Query versus respect

The participants reported their clashed feelings between respect and queries towards their supervisors who are professionals in the fields. Their struggles mainly came from the basic belief, "The authority should be respected and cannot be challenged". Challenge is equated to disrespect. Chinese culture and society are deeply affected by Confucianism (King, 1991). *Li* (Propriety) is an important concept of Confucianism that guides people on what, when, where and how to act appropriately. To respect authority has been taught ever since we are young.

I try to persuade myself to think that we are from different training backgrounds and carry different philosophies. However, I don't think she (the agency supervisor) is competent in her area. And I am aware that it is very important to maintain the *Guanxi* (relationship). She will feel more comfortable and I am not that threatening to her. If she feels happier to be in a higher position, why do I not satisfy her? Then I can concentrate on my own work and she will not try to use her power to cause barriers and frustrations to me. She will release her control over me when she feels more relaxed. That is why at the later stage of the internship, I have more freedom to work on our own. When she trusts me, she will allow me to take charge of the cases.

(An Wah)

I struggled for a month whether I should accept her (the university supervisor's) opinions or reject her accusations about me. Then she started to remind me about my being "not humble". I listened to her advice. She began to show appreciation for me. I found that this strategy is workable....

(Can Ming)

I am a person who highly respects authority. Even though I am so confirmed that her opinions are inappropriate or incorrect, I will not challenge her non-verbally.

(Hui Yung)

(6) Struggles with evaluative power of the supervisor

Supervision is an evaluative relationship in which a more experienced member of the profession oversees the professional activities of junior members of the counselling profession (Stoltenberg and Grus, 2004). All the participants addressed their major concern on the evaluative power of the supervisor. They are very sensitive and display a very cautious, tentative style of relating to their supervisors. Some will respond by failing to take the initiative in reporting to the supervisors. The supervisor's legitimate power to grade their performance becomes a key factor affecting their disclosure of incapability.

.....At the very beginning, she said that I was only concerned with my own agenda and not others'. I did not agree with her. After that, she started to do her evaluation of me, which was very negative. I realized her perception of me only after the first term evaluation..... I was ignorant about this. This was strange and very uneasy for me.....

(Can Ming)

.... It is very difficult to change her criticism of me. I feel this is a strong label on me. Our group mates are afraid that our reflection will affect our grading.

(Dui Yin)

...I feel very frustrated and negative about the supervision. It is because she is my supervisor. She has the evaluative power. We cannot ignore her power. We have to know her demands and her

expectations. We cannot give up interacting with her...

(Ip Ting)

.....We are afraid the university supervisor would have a poor impression of our performance. After the first semester, we knew that our university supervisor is very strict and careful in the grading. It is very difficult to get a good grading from her.

(Jo Ching)

(7) Transference in the supervisory relationship

Gelso and Carter (1994) describe three components of the relationship: real relationship, working alliance and transference. Transference is a famous concept introduced by Freud. It refers to the phenomenon characterized by people's projection of their feelings, expectation and perception from their past transaction experience onto the present interaction with another person. According to Lagache (1953), transference is a relational repetition in daily life of various emotional attitudes developed during childhood towards their parents, and is especially present in the relationship with the therapist.

Can Ming's experience obviously resonates with the above definition. He describes the image of the supervisor somehow resembling his accusing and bossy mother and that makes him feel unapproachable.

Like a mother (the university supervisor) he is a bit bossy, and not approachable. I cannot feel her caring spirit..... (Interviewer: Normally, mother gives us an image of being approachable and caring.) My mother is not. She is bossy and troublesome, hierarchical and is not able to understand me and my feelings.

(Can Ming)

5.3.4.9 Accommodating counselling practice with varieties of clients

The participants needed to face different clients whom they had not encountered before. The arrangement of the types of clients and agencies are assigned by the university. They find them very energy demanding. They have to counsel children with learning difficulties, emotional pathologies, mentally disabled adults and clients with trauma; sometimes, they have to face the demanding parents of the clients from various backgrounds. This adds to their struggles in the internship.

The parents of the clients are mainly middle class. Most of them are professionals and they are very rich. I have to be very careful with my presentation as they would challenge my professional role. If I say anything wrong they will take it very seriously....

(Bik Kuen)

Our internship agency is a Community social service centre. At the very beginning, we felt very frustrated and didn't know what to do and what would happen in the internship..... We needed to practise grief counselling. We then realized that we needed to reach out and visit the clients. We did not know too much about grief counselling.....

(Eng Lin).

There are other clients who have biological problems. These clients are very impulsive and they had difficulties in self-control. I was once bullied by a client whose emotions suddenly went out of control. He kicked me with his foot. I was very uncomfortable after that experience. ...

(Ga Lung)

Besides, Bik Kuen and Hui Yung also reported that they needed to work with children whom they felt unequipped to face. These were not their preferred clients. They felt uncomfortable facing these target groups before the internship. This became the

source of their struggles. However, both of them overcame their adversity and got satisfaction from working with these clients. The participants' anxiety and fear can be a hindrance for novice counsellors. Perseverance may possibly enable them to overcome their anxiety so that they can get through the perceived difficulties.

To be honest, it was not my first choice to do counselling with primary school children. I am not very accustomed to working with kids. I have difficulties in knowing how to interact with children. I am the youngest in my own family; I really don't know how to relate to children.....

(Bik Kuen)

The most challenging task is facing children. It is a taboo area for me. I feel handicapped working with children. I will lose control if I face children. This internship offered a very good chance to learn how to overcome this. I had never thought about this.

(Hui Yung)

Besides, the participants reported on the existence of transference experience in the counselling. Jo Ching knew that she was overinvolved. She felt that her own emotions were affected by the issues of her clients. The counselling practice may evoke feelings in the counsellor, some of which are likely to be manifestations of unresolved, personal conflicts (Friedlander et al., 1984).

I found that I was very involved with two cases..... I do not know why..... they touched me very much. I find I easily get emotionally affected by clients. I have discussed this with my supervisor. Some of the clients' issues, I can let go of very easily after I have left the counselling room. I want to help these two clients very earnestly. I am urged to do something for them...The feelings are quite strong.

(Jo Ching)

5.3.5 Theme 5: *Guanxi* strategies used by the Chinese Student Counsellors in Hong Kong

In *Guanxi*, there are many interaction strategies inherited from the family. Two people can feel like friends as soon as they discover a common topic, identity, connections or interests within a short time of their interaction. These interaction strategies are reflected in how the participants' participation and adaptation unfold in the agencies during their internship. Seven subthemes of *Guanxi* strategies under this theme emerged. These *Guanxi* strategies were frequently practised by the participants (see Figure 5.7). I was really surprised to find that these young adults were so familiar with their practice and some of them skilfully used them in their internship and supervision. I was astonished by the detailed descriptions of these strategies. Those, who are not skillful enough, still were very familiar with these strategies. Once they are alerted to them, they can put them into practice very easily. Bik Kuen is an example. She started to practise these *Guanxi* strategies once she discovered the cultural reality of her workplace.

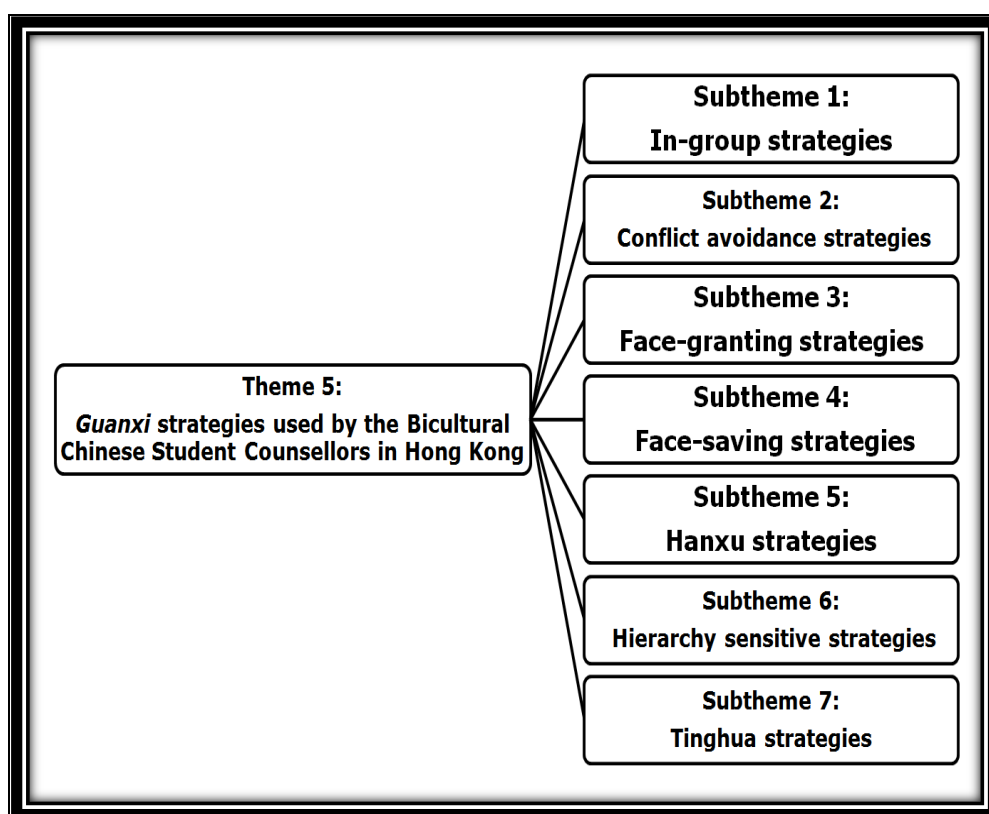


Figure 5.7 Theme 5: *Guanxi* strategies used by the Chinese student counsellors in Hong Kong

5.3.5.1 Subtheme 1: In-group strategies

The in-group (insiders) vs. out-group (outsiders) distinction is of great importance in collectivistic society. There is enormous difficulty in interacting with strangers and outsiders. There are two different sets of behaviour in relation to insiders and outsiders. Sun (2008, p.127) added, "Favors or resources are allocated in accordance with whether one is an insider or an outsider". And very often, the outsiders are treated in a more polite way than the insiders.

All the participants needed to adjust to the new environment within a short period of time. They tried various methods to build up relationship with the clients, the agency staff, and the supervisors. They were obviously sensitive to the need to become an

"insider". Work can be done more fluently if they become an insider. They will grasp the opportunity to become "insiders" by joining casual chats about common topics with the staff or participate in unofficial contact, such as foods gathering together. One of them even mentions that if he can be added to their "Facebook", to become an "insider", that means the *Guanxi* is good.

My relationship with the agency staff is quite good now. They will add me to their Facebook. There are more and more unofficial contacts now.

(An Wah)

I remember that the first day I was in the agency; she gave me a water bottle and said, "There is no need for you to bring a water bottle. Just use this." She takes care of every detail of my needs. I do not feel very comfortable as this is treatment of an "outsider". Her being so concerned was kind of treating me like an "outsider". After some time, I felt warmer and more natural. I felt like an "insider" later.

(Ga Lung)

5.3.5.2 Subtheme 2: Conflict avoidance strategies

The following conflict avoidance strategies were found in the interview scripts (see Figure 5.8). The participants reported that they would keep a distance and be passive when they smelt the possibility of conflicts in the relationship.

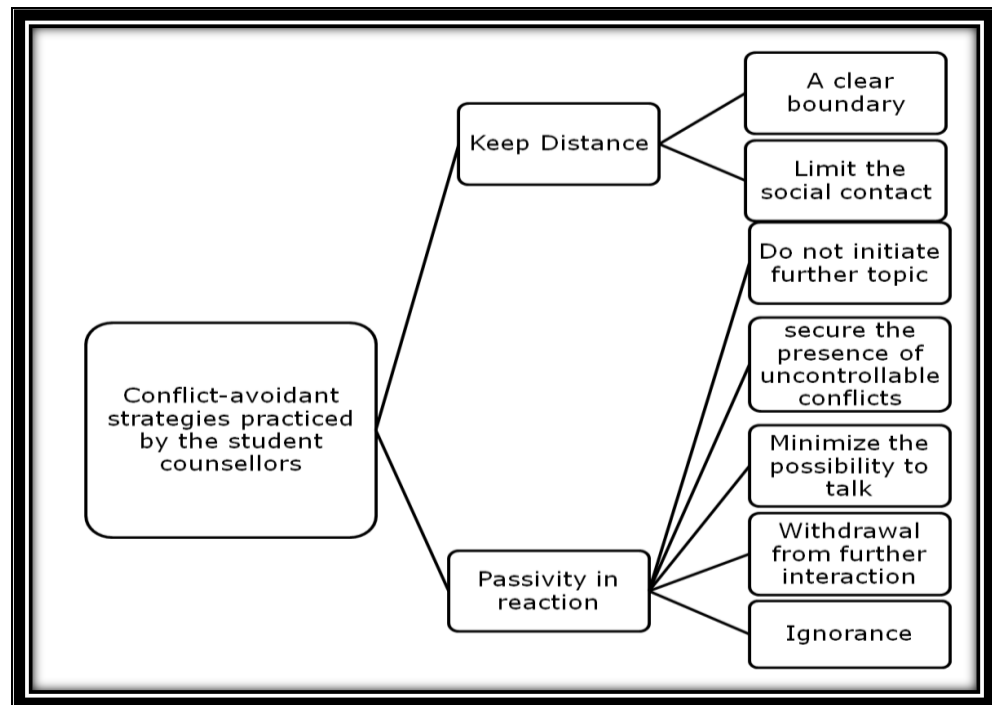


Figure 5.8 Conflict avoidance strategies practiced by the student counsellors

(1) Keeping a Distance

Distance can refer to the proximity between people in social interactions. This is an important element in human interaction. Liberman et al., (2007) defined four types of psychological distance: time distance, spatial, social and hypothetical. Psychological distance mediates a number of types of behaviour, feelings and cognitions. It deals with interpersonal intimacy. The participants chose to keep a secure distance from the authority figures, a clear boundary, a safe distance and a limited frequency of direct social contact so as to avoid conflicts or uncomfortable transactions. These relationships can be either personal or public in nature. The participants are aware that the stress originated from closeness. They need to adjust the distance according to the social expectation.

.....I know I need to set up a clear boundary with the agency supervisor. Therefore I choose to keep a safe distance from her. I know that she is my boss. I dare not cross the boundary.....

(Bik Kuen)

It is because I have no motivation to challenge her. I don't even want to talk to her.....I will not confront them (the supervisors) directly. I will stop reacting. I will not look at her. I will not say goodbye to her.

(Dui Yin)

Last semester I consulted the supervisor less frequently. I think that I need to get myself well-prepared before I go to see the supervisor.....

(Fung Chi)

(2) Passivity in reaction

Quite a no. of the participants mentioned the functions of passivity. Seven of them described their use of passivity to avoid conflicts. They will not initiate further topics or suppress conflicting issues to secure the presence of uncontrollable conflicts. To minimize the possibility of talking is a form of passiveness and withdrawal from further interaction. Although passivity is a form of ineffective communication, it carries the function of conflict avoidance. When they feel that the atmosphere is unfavourable for expression, as Can Ming said, passivity will be a way to reduce dissonance.

.....I will not initiate other conversation topics other than the tasks I need to accomplish.....

(Bik Kuen)

..... we have not talked about any other personal issues.....

(Ga Lung)

.....I don't consider it as a place (the supervision) for expressing my opinion or my standpoint freely. I am becoming more passive or in the supervisor's words "carefully calculating each step"....

(Can Ming)

..... Then I prefer not to do anything which is controversial. It will then be safe.

(Ip Ting)

The participants also mentioned that they were alert to the alliance among her clients. Eng Lin described her strategy to deal with this kind of tension by being "ignorant".

There are not many people in the office: the agency supervisor, his assistant, and some elderly volunteers. There may be some conflicts among the elderly volunteers. There is gossip going on behind. We hear their complaints and dissatisfaction. There are alliances among these volunteers. If we take sides with one party, the other side will feel unhappy. This is a very difficult situation for us. We need to get on well with them. However, we have to be very careful about the alliance. Sometimes we have to pretend that we do not know the existence of their conflicts.

(Eng Lin)

5.3.5.3 Subtheme 3: Face-granting strategies

From the interviews with the participants, 14 types of face-granting strategies, which are divided into eight types of "doing strategy" (see Figure 5.9) and five types of "being strategy" (see Figure 5.10), have been practised in the internship. Doing strategies involve participants doing something to grant face to others. "Being strategy" refers to the attitudes, manner or expression in the interaction.

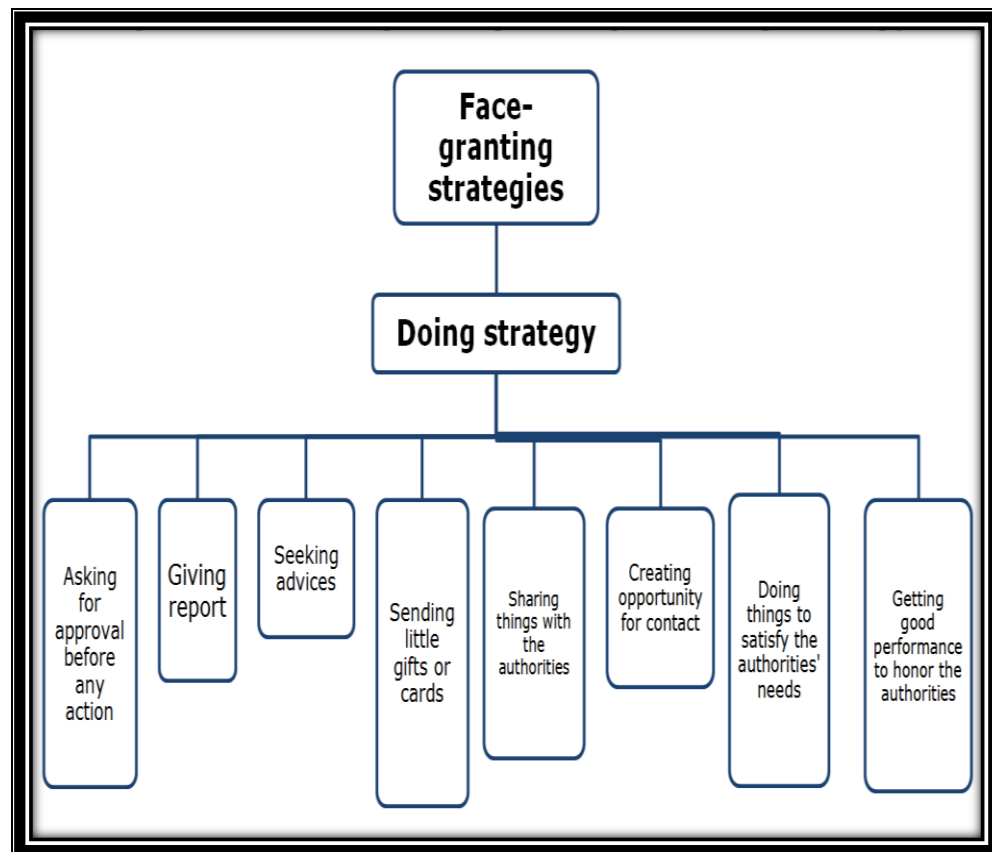


Figure 5.9 Face-granting strategies: Doing strategy

(1) Doing Strategies: Asking for approval before any action

Participants reported that they knew that it is important and secure to ask for approval from authority figures before any action. This will grant face to the supervisors.

Can I say anything which might interrupt your order of questions?
(the intern shows his respect by asking for approval from the researcher)

(Ga Lung)

If there are any problems, I want her to inform us earlier before we have started working. I will rather seek her approval and follow what she instructs me to do.

(Ip Ting)

(2) Doing Strategies: Giving report

Participants mentioned that it is important to take the initiative to report to the authority. This will convey the message of giving face to the supervisor, acknowledging their authority, social position and esteem.

..... I gave her a poor impression. After the reminder by the agency supervisor... I beganreporting the case progress to her.

(Bik Kuen)

I will try to report everything to make her alert of what I have been trying to do.

(Ip Ting)

(3) Doing Strategies: Seeking advice

Participants think that seeking advice from their supervisors will enhance the face-granting interaction. Some of them seek advice out of pleasing the supervisor instead of their real needs.

I begin to explore more opportunities seeking her advice, reporting the case progress to her.

(Bik Kuen)

The way she behaves is very "Chinese"...Authoritarian and hierarchical. She puts herself in a very high position. She is high and you are low. You need to bow down and beg for her advice.

(Dui Yin)

(4)Doing Strategies: Sending little gifts or cards

Gift sending is a frequent practice in Chinese culture. The participants mentioned that they seldom directly verbalize their thanks to their supervisors. Instead of verbal appreciation, they will prefer using some relational currency (Galvin and Bylund, 2008), such as sending cards or little gifts.

Yes. I use a different strategy so as to adjust to her style.If I send a festive card or gift to her, she will react very nicely. She will become very friendly. This is an 180 degree change. She changes from a distant posture to a very approachable and caring posture. The main function of the little gifts is an indicator of my respect to her, my acknowledgement of her higher position.....

(An Wah)

I know I must have used the face enhancing strategies. But not very consciously.I like to show our thanks to her. My cohort and I have written a Christmas card to her. I remember one supervision session around Christmas when I saw that some of her other supervisees had left her a chocolate box for Christmas. Well... many of us were doing similar things. My partner and I also bought some chocolates for the agency staff. We know that the school principal likes this kind of expression...

(Jo Ching)

(5) Doing Strategies: Sharing things with the authority figures

Eng Lin said that the willingness to share things with the supervisor is a form of granting face to her supervisor.

I will show my respect towards her. Sometimes, when I find something useful, I will share it with her. This is a form of appreciation.

(Eng Lin)

(6) Doing Strategies: Creating opportunity for contact

The participants reported that they would try to create more contact opportunities and this will add face to the authority figures. This means that they are in a highly esteemed position.

After the reminder by the university supervisor, I began to explore more opportunities to interact with her (the agency supervisor).....

(Bik Kuen)

I need to open up myself to build up a good relationship with other people before we start working. I need to spend time and effort in using the strategies for *Guanxi* (relationship), such as casual talking and having food together. These kinds of activities will help us to know each other. This will facilitate the work getting done smoothly.

(Ip Ting)

(6) Doing Strategies: Doing things to satisfy the authority figures' needs

The participants reported the frequent practice of this strategy in the supervision process. Once they knew the supervisors' patterns, needs and style, they would try to please them.

.....It is especially difficult for our male cohorts. They have to help with strenuous work, such as moving the bulky stuff. He (agency supervisor) expects us to help him. And we just try to match his expectation and fit his needs.

(Eng Lin)

..... I know her (the supervisor) pattern; she focuses on my personal problem. Then I talk about myself totally. This seems to be what the supervisor wants.....

(Dui Yin)

..... I will behave myself in front of her. I try to fulfil her requirement as much as possible. I know that she has expectations on us. I try to meet her needs and criteria.

(Jo Ching)

(8) Doing Strategies: Achieving good performance to honour the authority figures

Ga Lung mentioned that being productive and achieving good performance will grant face to the responsible supervisor. She will be proud of him because he is under her guidance.

But the most important thing is to be able to achieve assigned goals

and be productive. I will add face to the supervisor if I perform well under her supervision. She will be proud of me in front of the others.

(Ga Lung)

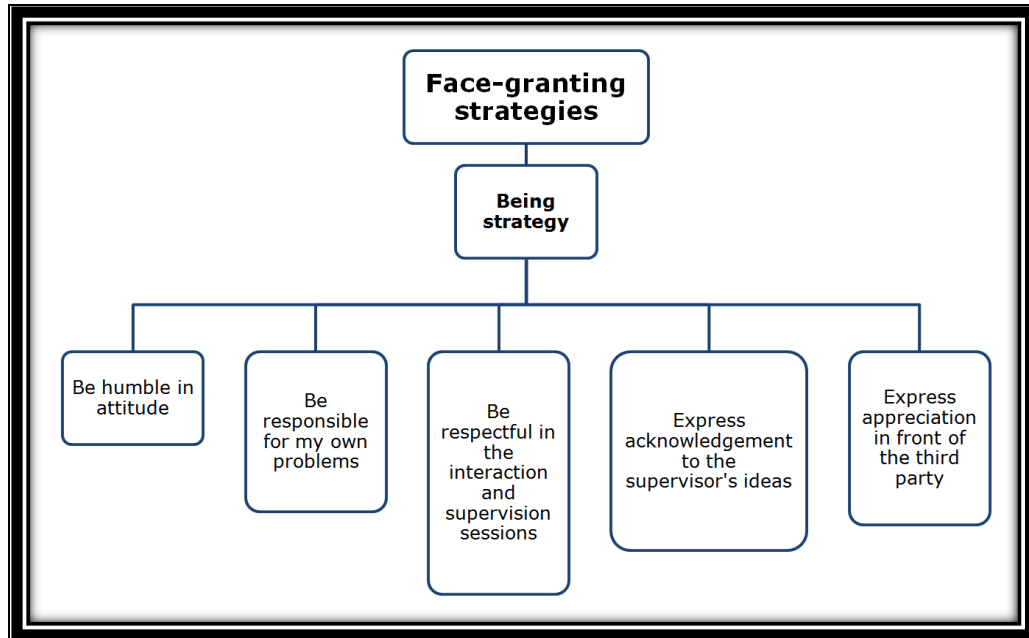


Figure 5.10 Face-granting strategies: Being strategy

(1) Being strategies: Be humble in attitude

5 types of "Being strategy" (see Figure 5.10) were found in the participants' report.

The participants understood the importance of being humble when facing their supervisors. They remind themselves that they must not attempt to reach a higher position. It is safe to remain inferior before authority figures.

Very often I will tell her my mistakes (be humble) and then she will tell me not to worry about my mistakes and she encourages me to try it again next time. and she seldom gives me verbal comments.

(Hui Yung)

I must not make myself higher than her or equal to her. I should be below her.

(Ip Ting)

(2) Being strategies: Be responsible for my own problems

Ip Ting suggested that to be responsible for one's own responsibility is a way to grant face to the supervisors. This is again the Confucian teaching.

I am responsible for my own problems. I will not judge her (the university supervisor) with regard to anything. I will respect her as an authority figure.

(Ip Ting)

(3) Being strategies: Be respectful in the interaction and supervision sessions

Showing respect was a more common practice among the participants. Ga Lung reported that being punctual in the supervision session is a way to please and respect the supervisor, again, a facework.

The way I speak to them and the attitude I use when talking to them. I behave very respectfully and I will say thanks frequently.

(Bik Kuen)

....punctuality is my other strategy. I know that this is very important to build up a good image in the agency.

(Ga Lung)

To say "thank you" and "goodbye" are examples of showing respect to authority figures. Two participants put emphasis on the manner in which they spoke to the supervisor. A soft voice in a friendly manner will grant face to authority figures.

.....I will be very polite to them. I will say "thank you" very often, especially at the beginning of the counselling internship. They will respond by telling me, "there is no need to say thank you". I will keep on saying "thank you". She is very good to me. ...

(Ga Lung)

I will speak softly so as to make her feel better.....

(Ip Ting)

(4) Being strategies: Express acknowledgement of the supervisor's ideas

Two participants stated that to grant face to their supervisors, they will directly show acknowledgment of their opinions and points of view.

I start to use a softer way to voice my own opinion and at the same time acknowledge hers. This indeed will reduce the tensions.....
(An Wah)

I will not show appreciation directly. But I will comply and appreciate their points of view and their suggestions.
(Ga Lung)

(5) Being strategies: Showing appreciation in front of a third party

The participants reported that in order to show more effective appreciation, they would do so in front of a third party. When the appreciation is reported back to the first person, the effect has a higher value than directly expressing it in front of the person.

..... In front of the agency supervisor, I will appreciate the university supervisor and vice versa. I know that this is a very indirect way of showing appreciation. I know that this will make them feel good.....
(Ga Lung)

I will speak about her and praise her in front of others. This is because some of my classmates had not good feelings towards her..... I have not thought of showing my appreciation to her directly. It is because I am afraid that she will feel embarrassed if I show my gratitude in front of her.
(Hui Yung)

5.3.5.4 Subtheme 4: Face-saving strategies

The notion of face-saving strategies permeates every aspect of interpersonal relationships. It is a major consideration in interpersonal interaction. These are

other tactics to take care of people's face; lots of effort and strategies have been emphasized in the avoidance of "Loss of face" in human interaction.

All the participants were very sensitive to face saving issues. They understood how essential it is to maintain the existing role of relationships and preserve interpersonal harmony. Three major types emerged: (1) Emotion management strategies; (2) Disagreement management strategies; and (3) Information management strategies (see Figure 5.11).

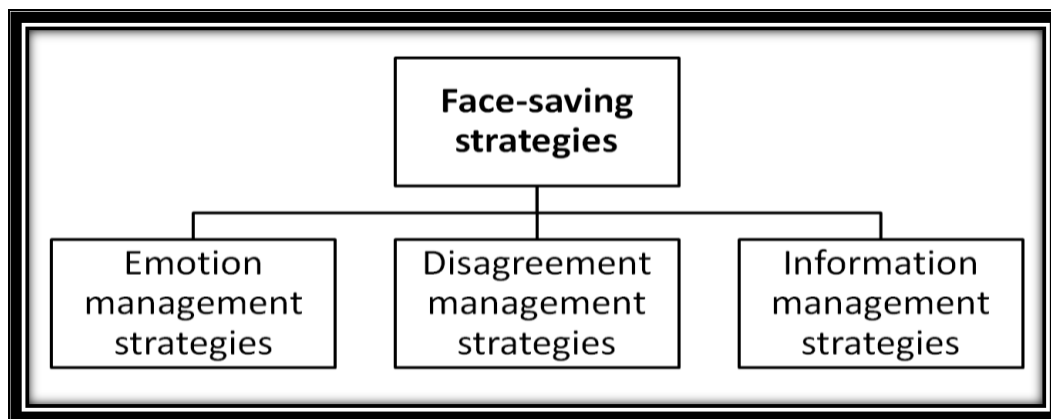


Figure 5.11 Three types of face-saving strategies

(1) Emotion Management Strategies

The expression of emotions is cultural. Three types of emotion management strategies emerged (see Figure 5.12). Negative emotions are heavy burdens in human relationships. Visible emotional behaviour may affect the good image of the person. Concealment of negative emotions is also a form of face-saving. The purpose of face-saving strategies is to maintain and enhance the person's self-esteem.

All the participants preferred to hide their negative emotions when in front of the supervisors. Emotional words are threatening and embarrassing in our culture. They would screen away the emotional elements in the message to avoid confrontation and conflicts. Saying negative feelings in front of a third party helps to save the face of the persons involved. This is to release their tensions and frustrations. It is too dangerous to express negative feelings before authority.

I cannot express all my feelings and perceptions freely to the authority figures. ...group mates will share things among ourselves and release our frustrations and anger if we cannot directly express our views.....

(Can Ming)

..... I will not directly state my feelings. I will not...use emotional words.

(Fung Chi)

...If I really have negative feelings towards her, I will tell her at the end of the internship but not in an offensive way. I will not tell her during the internship. I think to reveal negative feelings to the supervisor will do no good to me.

(Hui Yung)

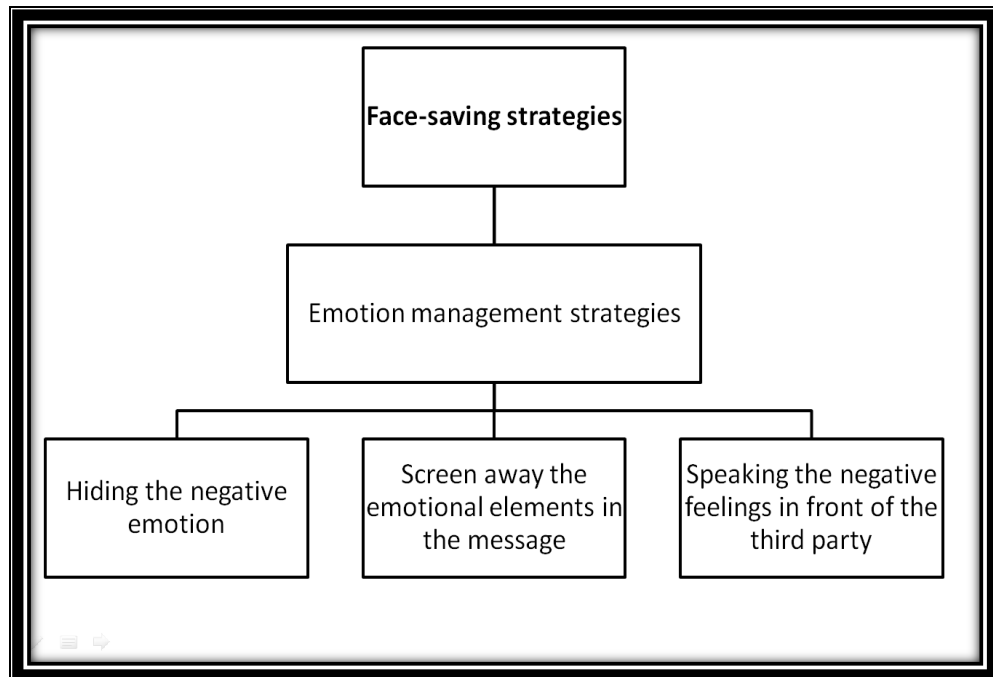


Figure 5.12 Face-saving strategies: Emotional management strategies

(2) Disagreement Management Strategies

All the participants reported that they dare not challenge their supervisors. Six forms of expression disagreement towards authority figures emerged (see Figure 5.13). Disagreement was shown in the form of asking for elaboration; asking more questions; body language; offering counter-opinions instead of disagreement; querying oneself rather than the authority figure and finally obeying superficially but disobeying behind the authority figure's back.

Two participants described the moment when they did not really agree with the supervisors' advice or suggestions; they presented the disagreement in a very indirect way by asking for more elaboration.

.....I just asked her to give me some examples of her suggestions.

(Eng Lin).

..... I remember once when she asked me a question and I said, "Can you narrow down your question? The question is too broad." This was a very smooth way to tell her the problems. I will ask her to explain more concretely.

(Ip Ting)

The more common practice of showing disagreement is in the form of asking more questions. These practices help to save face in order to maintain a harmonious relationship.

If I disagree with my supervisors, I will talk to the supervisors, but in a humble way. I will not challenge the supervisors and make them lose face. In fact, I will turn the disagreement into questions and ask indirectly.

(Bik Kuen)

I will not confront the supervisor. I will not challenge him. I may ask questions instead.....

(Fung Chi)

..... I will use questioning in order to enhance her face. ...I challenge my younger sister only. I will not challenge my friends, Cohorts or authority figures.

(Ip Ting)

The participants reported using body language in clusters of signals, facial expressions and postures to indicate their disagreement with their supervisors.

..... I will react with a perfunctory nod and go back home and think how to explain it to her next time.

(Can Ming)

.... I will stop reacting. I will not look at them. I will not say goodbye to them (the authority figures).

(Dui Yin)

Sometimes I may show them through my facial expression. Not sure if she recognizes this or not. Actually, I respect her. I don't want her to feel bad. I don't want her to lose face.....

(Eng Lin)

An Wah uses another more positive way to express his disagreement. He will offer a counter opinion in a very polite way.

Due to my personality, definitely I will not challenge the agency supervisor.... But I am able to offer a counter-opinion if I do not quite agree with hers. I will say, "Is it (my way of doing this) workable in this situation?" And she said, "It is OK. Then you try your own ways, and we can discuss afterwards.".....

(An Wah)

Fung Chi would use a passive way: instead of showing disagreement towards the supervisor, she would query herself. The disagreement would turn inward.

.....Sometimes I will query myself instead of showing disagreement with the supervisor.

(Fung Chi)

This is another more frequent practice. The participants preferred to show their obedience superficially but will disobey the authority figure behind their back. They will comply in public or in front of the authority figure but oppose them in private.

I listen but I will not follow her opinion, unless she is by my side, when I need to show her my obedience immediately. From the superficial level, both supervisors do not force me to follow them, but they express their strong wills. I sense their deep-down meanings, so I know that they want me to follow their instructions so as to make things go smoothly. I will choose to act accordingly but actually they do not know that I am unwilling to do so. I will not follow behind their back. I only follow in front of them.

(Ga Lung)

..... I prefer not to follow her opinion when I take action. It is me

who interprets the information of the clients to her. Her perception may be wrong. I know I share the characteristics of being Chinese. I prefer harmony. And I do not want her to lose face. She also needs to maintain face. Therefore, instead of challenging her, I just forget about her opinion as if I have not heard it.

(Hui Yung)

I just listen to their advice but I will not follow it. They will not come and check what we do.

(Jo Ching)

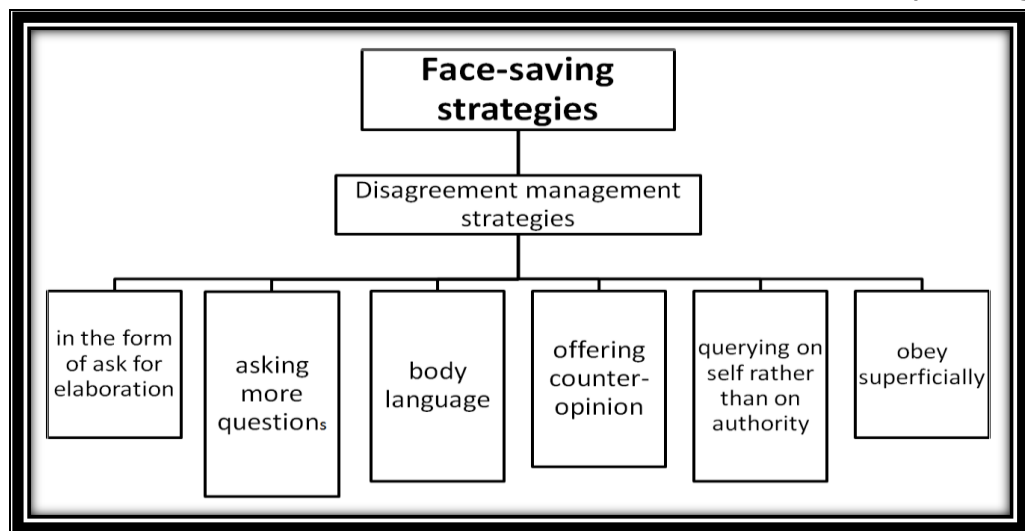


Figure 5.13 Face-saving strategies: Disagreement management strategies

(3) Information Management Strategies

The participants used different ways to report things. Seven types of information management strategies are found (see Figure 5.14). In order to save face, they can cover up others' embarrassment, inadequacy or wrongdoing. They will not release any related information that can result in loss of face in authority figures. The participants voiced that no investigation of others' wrongdoings is a form of face-saving.

I need to present this in a very skilful way, making sure that my performance should not be too salient to contrast or reflect her (the

agency supervisor) incompetency.....And one thing I feel very uneasy about is that during the supervision, she (the university supervisor) has a lot of mobile calls. I can understand that these calls may be urgent. I do not express these kinds of feelings openly and honestly to her about her inappropriate supervisory behaviour.

(An Wah)

She is the authority figure, I know. It would be OK to voice any opinions which do not relate to her fame and esteem; I could be free to speak. But I must not comment on her authority.....

(Ip Ting)

The agency supervisor asks me to follow her suggestions but I find that they are not applicable. She suggests that I play certain games with the children. However, her aims do not fit with mine. My focus is not just to let the children play happily. There are some other goals I want to achieve. I would say, "That will be a good game; I will try afterwards." After that, she knows that I do not use her suggestions, as she would ask, "Why don't you use that game?" Then I said, "There are some other activities I need to carry out." I will not directly reject her opinions.

(Ga Lung)

Sometimes, they choose to describe selected facts, not to reveal the whole picture.

Bik Kuen mentioned a scenario reflecting her triangular relationship with the teachers and parents. If the whole picture is revealed to persons involved, the relationship among them would be affected. Their feelings would be hurt. To them, to be selective in reporting would protect each other's face.

....There is one phenomenon I think which I find quite strange. It is about the relational dynamic. The parents express their feelings to me very openly. ...They are very honest about their negative feelings towards the school and some teachers. After they talk to me, they ask me to keep it confidential. Of course I will. However, the social

workers ask me about the content of the conversation with the parents. And I need to wrap things up in an appropriate way. And the social workers also tell me their negative feelings towards the parents..... And sometimes the teachers would ask me as well. I am torn among different parties. I have to be very cautious and careful about conversations with people (including all parties in the school).

(Bik Kuen)

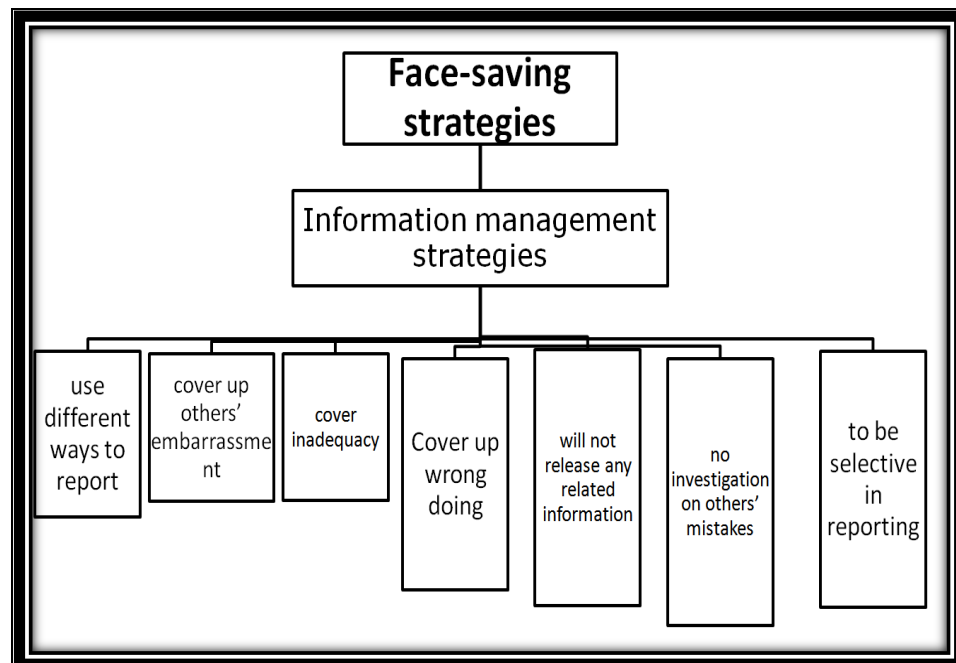


Figure 5.14 Face-saving strategies: Information management strategies

5.3.5.5 Subtheme 5: Hanxu strategies

Hanxu (implicit communication) is one of the characteristics that dictate Chinese communication behaviour. Information is often communicated implicitly and much goes unsaid in collectivistic society. You cannot rely on what has been said explicitly.

People in collectivistic culture know pretty well that one must be able to read messages behind the words. Indirectness is valued and face-saving is a major consideration in human interaction. Berne (1966) identified three rules of communications: (1) complementary transaction; (2) crossed transaction, where a

message sent from one ego state gets an unexpected response, which is often negative and critical; and (3) ulterior transaction, which is a complicated type of transaction which involves two levels of communication, the overt and the covert level, which easily lead to confusion and communication difficulties. The third rule of transaction is perhaps a good framework to understand the communication patterns mostly found in Chinese culture.

All participants respond that it is important to read the unspoken messages.

They share the similar experience that there are often two levels of communication, the implicit versus the explicit.

...She (the agency supervisor) may show appreciation in her verbal communication with us. But I find that she had given me a very low grade which was totally contradictory to her verbal recognition. She says "OK" in her words but actually it does not really mean that. Therefore if I reinforce my conclusion that there seemed to be two levels of meanings behind the verbal messages, implicit and explicit, I need to be alert and heighten my watchfulness when I talk to her. This kind of interaction made me exhausted during the whole internship process.

(Bik Kuen)

I know that her suggestions are not applicable, but I have to show my acceptance. This is my hardest time. Sometimes, they say, "I do not force you to follow." This kind of statement is meaningless. I understand that they prefer my obedience. They will not appreciate my objection. This is rebellious against them. They had already expressed their preference. I do not really have a choice. This is my interpretation.

(Ga Lung)

... She (agency supervisor) says that we have freedom to do anything. But these freedoms only increase our feeling of loss. I know that this is not true. The freedom is actually dangerous. If I follow the literal meanings of her words, then I will be in complete danger.

(Ip Ting)

5.3.5.6 Subtheme 6: Hierarchy sensitive strategies

In a collectivistic society, people are sensitive to the contextual communication. The contextual factors, such as the *Guanxi* (relationship), the family background, the social position of a person, and not the content of the message, determines the meanings and the effectiveness of messages sent. All the participants have realized that they need to be sensitive to the situational and relational factors instead of the dispositional factors of the single event. Confucianism emphasizes the importance of obedience and hierarchy, and uses them for maintaining the peace and order of the family and society. Most of the relationships in Chinese society are vertical relationships, between superiors and inferiors, but friends are in the horizontal relationship.

All participants are hierarchy sensitive. Those who have poor *Guanxi* with their supervisors are extremely sensitive. The hierarchy sensitive phenomenon is also found in the interviewing script. They are highly sensitive to hierarchical relationships and people's position in the agency.

As an intern, no matter how capable you are, my status is a student. If I need to gain recognition from the supervisors and authority figures, I need to prove myself through my performance,

achievement and maturity. She will then trust and allow me to be in a better position.

(An Wah)

uh....is he (the supervisor) an authority figure?.....I think, it doesn't matter whether he acts as an authority figure. I treat him as an authority figure.

(Fung Chi)

She (the supervisor) is the authority figure, I know. It will be OK to voice any opinions which do not relate to her fame and esteem; I can be free to speak. But I must not comment on her authority. I can say anything about myself. I can raise up myself but I must not make myself higher than her or equal to her. I should be below her.

(Ip Ting)

5.3.5.7 Subtheme 7: Tinghua strategies

Tinghua (Listen-centredness) was familiar to all the participants. Sun (2008, p.76)

points out, "The Chinese are taught at an early age never to betray their tradition,

and never to forget their origin and resources". She explains that the concept of

filial piety ensures that the authority of parents and teachers remains absolute.

Chinese communication in hierarchy and role relationships where

listening-centredness is stressed and communication is deferential is to maintain

harmony (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998).

All the participants knew its significance when they faced their supervisors. Listening

skills, instead of speaking skills, are reinforced and encouraged. By showing

deference and self-restraint, listening is important in gaining social acceptance.

..... She (the agency supervisor) always said, "...but I don't want this to

happen ...” She always tells me that “You need to be very careful.” She keeps reminding me repeatedly that I should be very alert when I talk to the parents of my clients. She is scared of problems being aroused. I can feel her worries.....I should listen to her and respond very carefully.

(Ga Lung)

I practise the use of a learning attitude in the communication. The teacher cannot be challenged. I need to listen and obey.

(Can Ming)

He is the agency supervisor and we need to listen to him....

(Eng Lin).

5.4 Summary of the five themes

Taken together regarding how these ten student counsellors conceptualize internship and supervision, five themes were developed from the result of the interviewing data which encompassed the major internship and supervisory experience of the participants: (1) The training experience of student counsellors in relation to *Guanxi*; (2) Idiosyncratic desires for the student counsellors in the internship stage; (3) Expectation of the student counsellors in relation to the internship setting and the supervision environment; (4) Mental processing of the student counsellors in the learning; and (5) *Guanxi* strategies used by the Chinese student counsellors in Hong Kong. To capture the significance of the results of this research finding, in the coming discussion chapter, I will focus on a more in-depth analysis based on these findings.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS: THREE CONSIDERATIONS IN THE INTERNSHIP AND SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE

6.1 Overview

The research thesis starts off with the concerns of what enables student counsellors to learn effectively in the supervision in a HK university environment. The dimension of cultural and its impacts on the professional learning, training and supervisory relationship is another major concern in this research. Few studies have been conducted which examine the internship experience of undergraduates of counselling and psychology student counsellors in a Hong Kong Chinese setting. This research attempted to conduct an in-depth study so as to hear the voice of the novice student counsellors. The goal of the research was to use a qualitative methodology to investigate the inner experience related to their internship and clinical supervision of the student counsellors. In this chapter I will provide interpretations of the research findings and closely examine their significance in the larger context. I will briefly summarize the themes and provide a further discussion of the novice journey in the professional trajectory.

Here I try to use a conceptual map to organize the data gathered from the research with the relationship of the concepts derived from the study to represent the supervisees' experience as emerged from the findings. This chart illustrates how

ideas are modified and reorganized (see Figure 6.1).

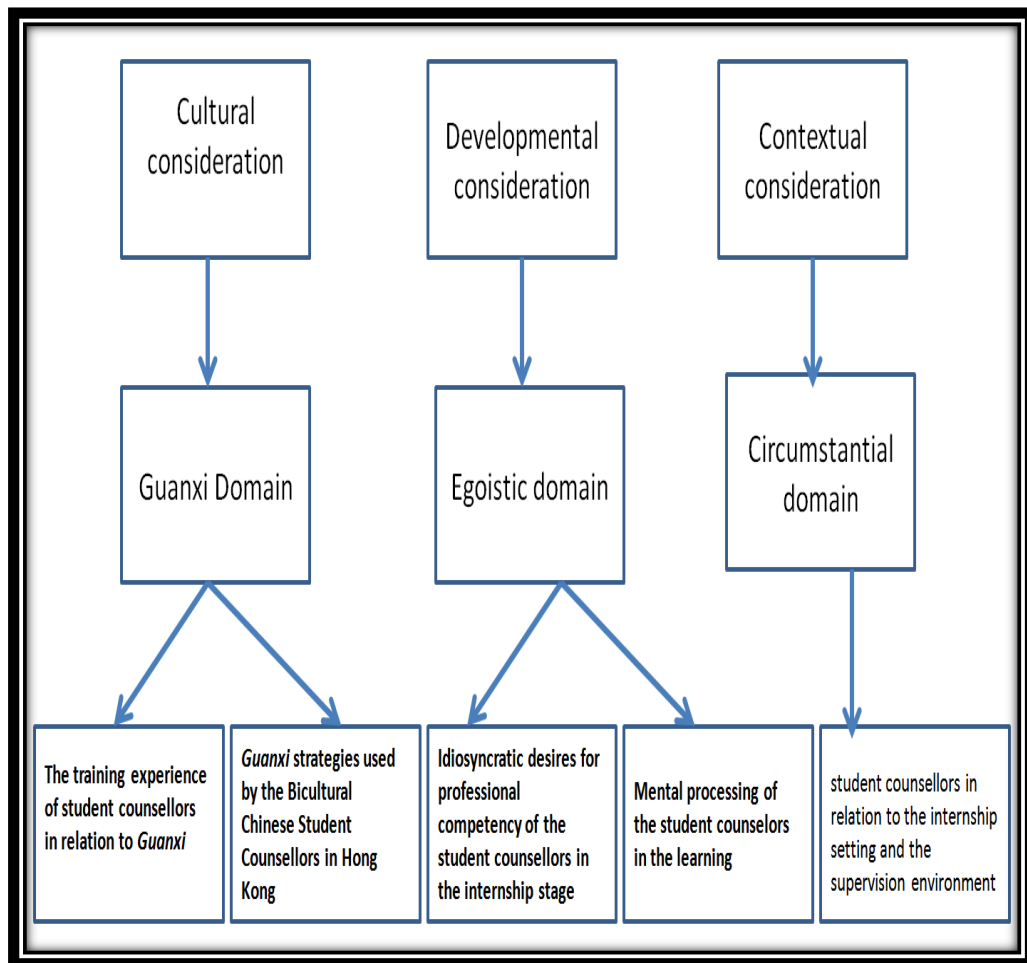


Figure 6.1 Three considerations that emerged from the research with regard to the counselling supervision

Five striking themes related to the participants' experience from the individual interviews emerged. They are analyzed and reanalyzed through a dynamic evolving process to capture the authentic experience of the participants. The experience of the researcher cannot be put aside in the process of analysis. Three domains, the *Guanxi*, Egoistic and Circumstantial, are categorized and finally three considerations are formulated in this discussion: the Cultural, Developmental and Contextual consideration.

They will be explained in more detail in the latter part of this chapter.

6.2 Interpretation of key findings of the literature related to the experience of student counsellors

Three pertinent considerations emerged in the current research in the provision of counselling training for student counsellors. Cultural consideration is another thought-provoking dimension that aids counselling educators' in the implementation of professional training. All professionals must move through a series of developmental stages. The developmental consideration was applicable in this research. Internship and supervision is especially important for student counsellors to assist their professional growth. Contextual consideration, which is reality-based, acts as a motivator and encourager for student counsellors to utilize their professional knowledge to serve the community. There is a significant reciprocal relationship between the context and the interns in their learning. Skovholt, Rønnestad, and Jennings (1997, p.363) suggest that expertise is like a three-legged expertise stool, with the cognitive domain, the relational domain and the emotional domain as the three legs; "all three legs are needed for a solid base in order to perform as an expert in therapy/ counselling".

With the reference of Skovholt, Rønnestad, and Jennings' three-legged expertise stool, here, to facilitate the interpretation of the results, I use another three-legged

stool for novice counselling professionals in Hong Kong Chinese culture (see Figure 6.2), which is derived from the research findings, with *Guanxi* domain, Egoistic domain, Circumstantial domain as the three legs for the beginners to stand firm on in their early stage of professional development.

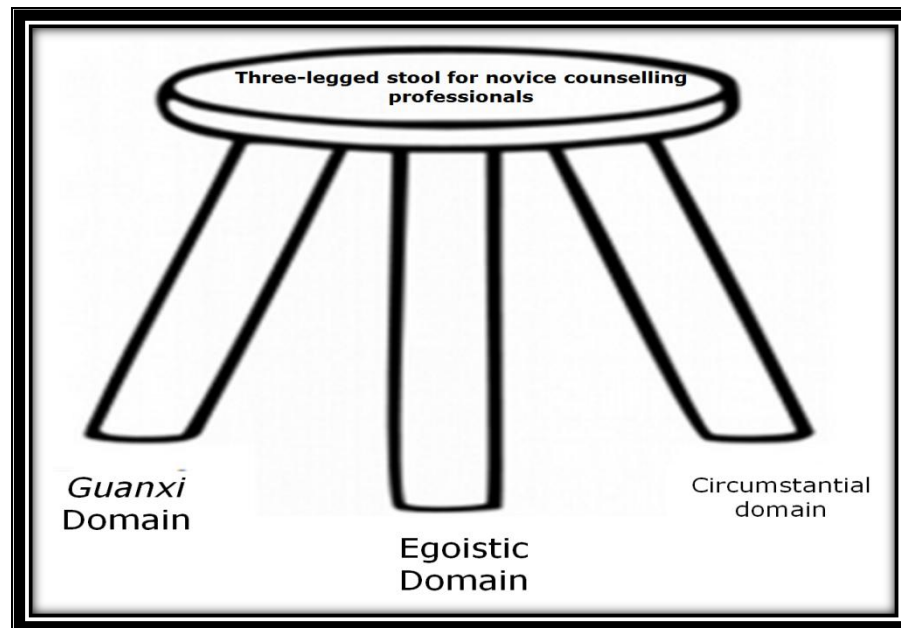


Figure 6.2: Three-legged stool for novice counselling professionals

In response to what Barrett and Barber say, it is important to understand the significant aspects of internship and supervision so as to make them the most beneficial to the growing counselling professionals.

Supervision is considered essential to therapeutic effectiveness yet trainees frequently report negative supervisory experiences. Although such experiences may be due to inadequate or poor supervision, more often they result from differing needs or expectations among trainees.

(Barrett and Barber, 2005, p.169)

Challenges have been reported from the educators' perspectives in facing the passivity and silent learning behaviour of Chinese students (Dougherty and Wall,

1991; Yang, 1993; Hwang, Ang, Francesco, 2002). This perception of Chinese students is common in classroom learning (Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Flowerdew and Miller, 1995; Pierson, 1996). Few studies have been conducted on individual personal supervisor-supervisor contact in Hong Kong Chinese culture with respect to the counselling profession. This investigation, instead of adopting the educators' perspective, chooses to look into the intensive personal supervisory contact and explore the participants' internship experience with an aim to understand the inner voice behind their learning behaviour from the supervisees' perspective.

All of the participants in this study reported high levels of anxiety and frustration in the early stage of the internship and supervision process. Some of them reported that their anxiety became lower after the early adjustment period. Still, the tension in the supervisory relationship existed all through the internship year. Two of the participants reported having poor relationships with their supervisors.

The most outstanding subject matter that emerged in the study is the *Guanxi* phenomenon.

6.2.1 Cultural Consideration: *Guanxi* domain as rudiments of the culture

Guanxi is the first dominating issue that the participants faced all through the counselling internship and supervision process. Through the participants' responses,

and described experiences, it is acknowledged that their cultural experience shapes their perception, worldviews and coping mechanism. The internship enhances the student counsellors to face the hierarchical as well as horizontal *Guanxi* dynamics with supervisors, clients, colleagues and working partners. This will provide them opportunity to address some complicated issues related to these different kinds of relationships. The counselling supervisors should bear in mind that it is insufficient for the student counsellors to achieve their relational competence in the counselling profession solely focused on a general understanding of relationship skills without addressing the cultural concepts of *Guanxi*.

Their cultural bringing up regarding hierarchy has left its *Guanxi* imprint on the students' management of relationships with clients and supervisors, especially in the encounter with authority in Chinese culture.

The importance of *Guanxi* in Chinese communities has been supported by many findings (Buttery and Wong, 1999; Dunfee and Warren, 2001) in other disciplines, especially in business management. Few are directly found in the counselling supervision field in our culture. The *Guanxi* domain emerged from the findings in this study is crystal clear in the participants' supervisory experience.

6.2.1.1 *Guanxi* rules as invisible cultural connection clues in social contact

The participants simultaneously accentuated the significance of their *Guanxi* experience in the supervision and internship in their professional learning. From the responses of the participants in this research, they all agreed that it was imperative for them to build up strong *Guanxi* for the formation of good supervisory alliances with supervisors, counsellor-counselee alliance as well as the working alliance with the agency staff. *Guanxi* plays a very conspicuous role to help them to develop the image of reliability and trustworthiness in the internship agencies, in front of their supervisors and clients. The meanings and implications of *Guanxi* are determinative in Chinese interactions. *Guanxi* usually refers to one specific linkage between two persons, whereas network refers to numerous conjunctions and multiple connections among people (Fu et al., 2006). The notion of *Guanxi* is significant in expansion and promotion and misunderstanding of it will result in mismanagement of relationships with partners or between superior and supervisees (Hui and Graen, 1997; Park and Luo, 2001). The concept of *Guanxi* is silently deep-seated within the Confucius philosophy and it subtly construes the Chinese moral code (Fock and Woo, 1998). Davies et al., (1995, p.212) emphasized, "Without *Guanxi*, one simply cannot get anything done". *Guanxi* is much more dynamic and culturally sophisticated and its effects may vary over space and time.

Chinese and cultural heritage is deeply imprinted in the Chinese mind. In the

Chinese community, *Guanxi* exists everywhere. From this finding, *Guanxi* is the prerequisite for successful performance and determines the positioning of all sorts of relationships. The *Guanxi* clues invisibly determine the interactive and connection rules among people in Chinese contact. Both ignorance and misinterpretation of *Guanxi* clues will likely create relational distress. Good *Guanxi* facilitates working stress management in the internship.

The participants, before the internship, were already cognizant of the *Guanxi* importance. However, they reported facing a hard time due to their innocence of the details of the *Guanxi* rules both in the agency settings and in the supervisor-supervisee relationship in the beginning stage of the internship. Some of them confirmed the powerful implication and the operation complexity of *Guanxi* in the internship and the supervision. They acknowledged the value of the notion of *Guanxi* knowledge with numerous intangible rules which facilitate their self-awareness as well as social awareness. It is beneficial to find that the student counsellors' narrative of the hierarchical nature of relationship with their supervisors was their focus of their attention. They spend a lot of energy in dealing with this hierarchy. However, it is noticeable that the hierarchical nature of the counselling students' counselling relationship with clients is hardly mentioned. And this area deserves further research. This also implies that the student counsellors' own

professional needs occupy the major part of their mind. And their self-awareness is egoistic and centred on their own experience and the appropriateness of their professional performance. I will regard this phenomenon as “novice-professional-egocentrism”, which is a characteristic of the novice, which is worth looking into in more depth as developmental characteristics.

6.2.1.2 Guanxi Strategies as cultural coping

Guanxi strategies are a form of cultural coping. Confucianism has no favour for individuation or personal success and self-gratification is discouraged (Huang and Charter, 1996). There is a high level of collectivism Hong Kong Chinese culture, a strong sense of belonging to a social group and a preference for working together in groups to solve problems (Trompanaars, 1993).

These participants who have been acculturated in Hong Kong Chinese culture reflected their collectivistic characteristics in their interaction with their supervisors in the internship. Disregarding their little working experience, their familiarity with *Guanxi* tensions is commonly found. Although they are not quite skilful with those obscure *Guanxi* rules as reported, they are somehow sensitive to the existence of implicit *Guanxi* dynamics. They are sensitive to the group atmosphere and group practice once they enter into the internship agencies.

To work on *Guanxi*, “*gua guanxi*” is a very familiar term to all Chinese. This is a form

of collection of human capital in a workplace and there is no exception in the counselling field.

Coping is one of the most important topics in health psychology and a crucial concept in understanding adaptation when people are confronted with stressful circumstances.

(Wu, Chen, Yao, 2008, p.104)

It refers to all the activities and practices to manage, tolerate, reduce, or minimize all sorts of environmental or intrapersonal demands that are perceived to produce potential threats, losses and hurts (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

The richness of *Guanxi* management mechanisms was found in the student counsellors' social-psychological functioning in this study. The seven types of *Guanxi* strategies from the interviews are illustrated in Figure 6.3.

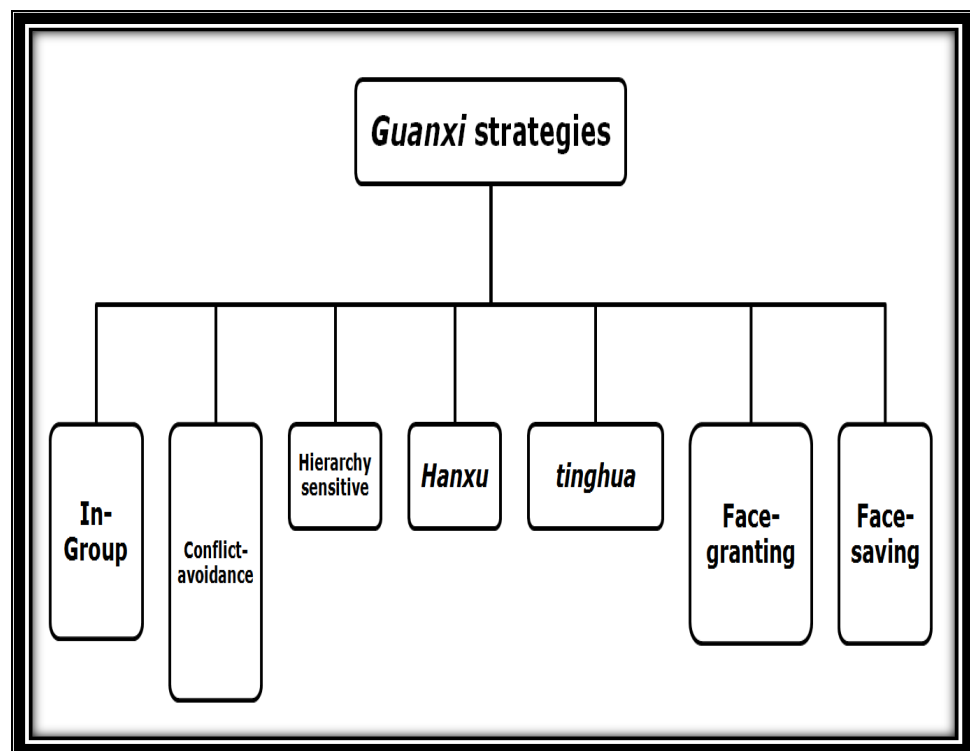


Figure 6.3 The *Guanxi* domain: The seven type of *Guanxi* strategies

Different types of *Guanxi* have different social psychological meanings to different people and are guided by different sets of *Guanxi* rules for the people involved (Tsui and Farh, 1997). Four orientations represent the four directions of social-psychological functioning of *Guanxi* strategies, which the student counsellors normally practiced, are classified: (1) the vertical; (2) horizontal; (3) inward and (4) outward (see Figure 6.4).

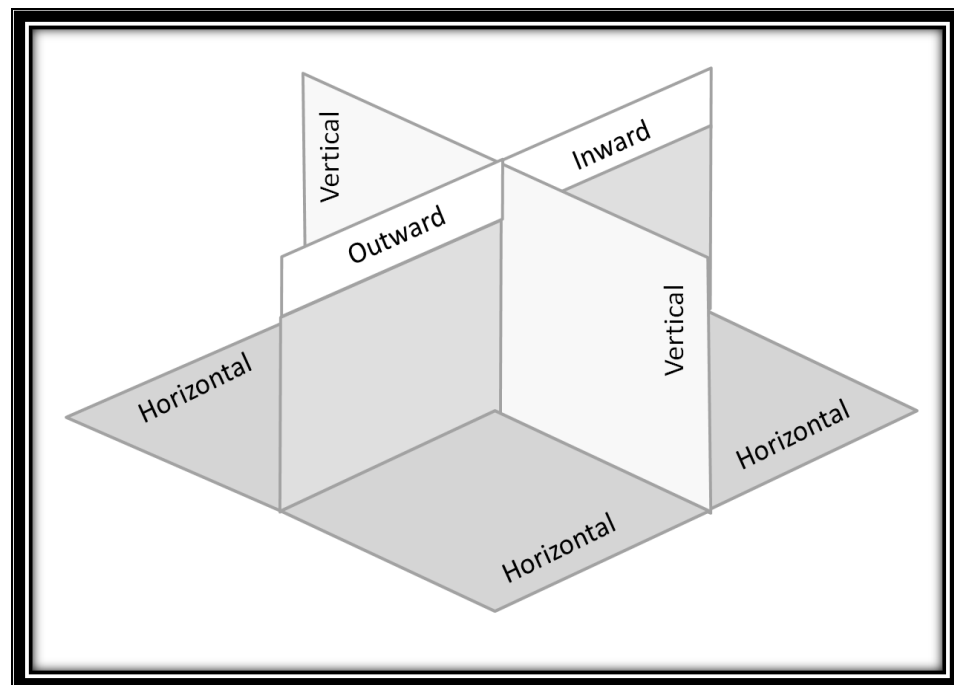


Figure 6.4 The *Guanxi* domain: Orientations of the *Guanxi* Strategies

From the finding, at the beginning of the internship, the participants' ignorance indicates their low sensitivities to the existence of collectivism. They are not sensitive to the implicit *Guanxi* rules which govern the daily interaction among people. The awareness of the *Guanxi* rules will facilitate the student counsellors to manage the *Guanxi* easier. Once the internship starts, they start to pay attention to

the execution of the *Guanxi* strategies horizontally with the colleagues and cohorts, vertically with supervisors and their coping strategies in their inward journey with self and outward journey with the social world. The four orientations enhance the student counsellors to have a better picture on their potential struggles.

The participants reported their frustration over how to become insiders (*zijiren*) at the early stage when they enter into the internship agency. They were uncomfortable with special treatment concerning which they guessed what rules were behind the favours, mutual benefits and reciprocity. One of the most common rules is the subtle distinction between insider (*zijiren*) and outsider (*wairen*).

Gabrenya and Hwang (1996) have described the concept of relational personalism which suggested a clear distinction between insiders (*zijiren*) and outsiders (*wairen*) in Chinese culture. Insiders (*zijiren*) will be treated differently than outsiders (*wairen*) such as gaining protection and sharing more fringe benefits in the same community. Dunfee and Warren (2001) also think that *Guanxi* ties are not sufficient for building strong *Guanxi*; they must work together for a while, frequently interacting and exchanging favours, and then they can build and maintain *Guanxi*.

To become insiders (*zijiren*) they needed to be tested in a very subtle way to discover whether they were trustworthy. The participants stated that they were checked frequently at the early stage. *Guanxi* facilitates trust. Trust is a vital

supplement to contractual arrangements in oriental cultures and the establishment of trust frequently takes more time than Western executives are used to investing (Thorelli, 1990).

The participants reported sometimes the “respect” from the agency staff made them feel uncomfortable and unusual. They felt that they seemed to be treated as an outsider. And they had difficulties reading the messages in the indirect communication. At the beginning stage of the internship, the student counsellors reported that they needed to spend a lot of energy on grasping the delicate “getting to be insiders (*zijiren*) rules” so as to cope and adapt. After a period of adaptation, the acculturation process became obvious. The participants, knowing that they needed to engage with the clients and the agency staff as well as the supervisors in a very short time, started to “*la Guanxi*” (to “pull”), i.e., to get on well with people by using the in-group strategies.

How to approach authority is another vertical *Guanxi* rule which the participants found the most stressful. The cultural characteristics of Chinese are collectivistic, hierarchical and power-sensitive (Sun, 2008). Chinese children are taught in their early years to show respect to parents, elders and ancestors with strong pressure to conform, restraints on personal drives and the maintenance of harmonious relationships being major elements in parenting in most Hong Kong Chinese families

(Bond, 1991; Sun, 2008). These cultural teachings are embedded in the minds of the Chinese and are ready for use when they are activated in the internship process.

Holmes (2008, p.106) states, "Listening, by showing deference and restraint, is important in maintaining relational harmony".

According to Pan (2000, p.78), the term hierarchy, however, should be understood in its cultural context here. In the Chinese context, hierarchy does not hold a win-or-lose connotation. In the Chinese mind, every individual exists in a paired relation to others, like yin and yang (the moon and the sun). This paired relation calls for a harmonious coexistence and strong unity among individuals. Group harmony and unity became the basic face needs for the Chinese. In order to achieve these, every individual should acknowledge the relative hierarchical order in the pair and follow the Confucian behavior code of *zun zhang ai you* (Be respectful to the old and benevolent to the young). Under this influence of Hierarchy, the Chinese are sensitive to social position and level of power. "Authority sensitization" (Sun, 2008) refers to sensitivity, obedience and acquiescence to authority of all sorts. To be sensitive to the status of authority also means the capability to identify one's own status. This forms the criteria of appropriateness of the behaviour.

The student counsellors, not surprisingly, elaborated spontaneously a range of coping mechanisms to handle their "Authority Anxiety" in the internship. They

recounted incidents related to their *Guanxi* strategies in hierarchical relationships with their supervisors. They have developed sets of *Guanxi* strategies to cope with the anxiety and fear. Some of these were learned from their past experience. Chinese students have been socialized and trained to execute asymmetrical and deferential patterns of communication when they are in front of authority figures (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998; Hammond and Gao, 2002). They need to modify some of the strategies which fit the characteristics of the supervisors. From the responses of participants, it was found that those who could execute *Guanxi* strategies faced fewer conflicts with their supervisors. But this does not mean that they had less anxiety. Actually, the more sensitive they were to the *Guanxi* strategies, the more social awareness they developed and the more alert they were in practising the *Guanxi* skills.

From the research, it is noted that if the supervisor took on a more authoritarian role when the student counsellors sought more of a collaborative relationship, conflict or difficulties seemed to occur. Role difficulties were also reported when the participants viewed the responsibility of the supervisor as ambiguous. The "open" and "approachable" attitudes plus guiding hand of the supervisors encouraged the supervisees to take the initiative in learning as reported by the supervisees.

Conflict avoidance, which falls into two major categories: (1) keeping a distance and

(2) passivity in reaction, is another important *Guanxi* rule. The participants claimed that they will not reject the supervisors openly; they choose either to accept superficially or disregard the suggestions behind the back of supervisors. Besides, to avoid conflicts and confrontation in the supervision, instead of approaching the supervisor for help, the supervisees will search for resources from books and journal articles. This is a form of keeping a distance, lessening the possibility to have contact. Passivity is commonly found among Chinese students in learning.

.....socio-cultural attitudes promote conformity and reinforce passive, compliant roles in class..... It seems that 'Chinese learning styles' are more subtle and complex than they appear to be in some (Western) misrepresentations of them.

(Kennedy, 2002, pp.432-434)

Passivity reflects the sensitivity to the power of authority. The sensitivity to collectivism and face issues are major considerations for student counsellors in their relationship with their supervisors or agency staff.

Hanxu (implicit communication) and *Tingua* (Listen attentively) form the frequently practised Chinese communication style and are major emphases in Chinese parenting. Moralistic rather than psychological emphasis in parenting is found in most Chinese families and children are not encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts. They are taught to speak politely and indirectly. The Chinese internalize these types of attitudes. *Hanxu* (implicit communication) and *Tingua* (Listen attentively) become a usual practice. This was found in the responses of the

participants.

When Chinese communicate, they have to make adjustments to one another, matching and synchronizing interacting behaviour with hierarchy sensitivity. The frequent *Hanxu* strategies used in Chinese culture somehow amplify the embellishment of the true feelings and experience of the participants when facing authority figures mainly due to the fear of criticism and poor evaluation. If they have any unpleasant or unsatisfactory feelings towards their supervisors, they will not express these directly. *Hanxu* strategies made them feel more secure. If they speak out their true feelings, they themselves feel guilty about impoliteness by being “offensive” and “immature”.

There are multiple functions in Chinese communication. In a social dimension, direct communication is not appreciated in Chinese communities. Indirectness is valued.

The function of self-expression in communication is least emphasized while great effort has been made to maintain relationship harmony. To gain understanding from communication is seldom the priority in human transactions. Communication serves as surface tools of relationship building which can never be used to achieve intimacy.

Chinese are trained to read the messages behind words. The spoken words, which are the superficial level of *Guanxi*, are exchanges of sincerity and politeness.

Information exchanges in communication must be contextual. *Guanxi* strategies

contribute parts of the contextual frame.

The student counsellors practised a number of face-enhancing strategies so as to build up a good *Guanxi* in the agencies. This made things proceed more easily and smoothly. Good *Guanxi* does not equate to intimate relationships. Yang [楊宜音](1999) holds the same viewpoint that having *Guanxi* ties doesn't mean that there must exist real affections. Davies et al., (1995, p.213) conclude from their research, "*Guanxi* smoothens transactions, provides information and resources". They categorize the perceived benefits of *Guanxi* into two major areas: the first concerns sources of information, which indicate that *Guanxi* networks can be an important source of information; the second concerns the sources of resources, which facilitate sorting, mapping, and locating facilities. Davies et al., (1995, p.213) delineated, "Once good *Guanxi* has been established, a number of benefits will accrue". *Guanxi* is functional in collective society.

Face (*Mian Zi*) is a very common concept which is widely applied amongst the Chinese. "Face", used as a metaphor for our self-image vis-à-vis the public in Western writings, has to do with our concept of ourselves, our position in society, our status, and our credibility, and how we perceive that others see our position, status, and credibility (Cupach and Metts, 1994). van Ginkel (2004, p.477) states, "Managing Relationships is facework". Face-giving, or granting, refers to the

strategic moves of one person in support of another's image or identity claims (Folger, Pooles, and Stutman, 2001). van Ginkel (2004, p.481) states, "Collectivist cultures focus primarily on preserving the social status of the in-group and rely on face-giving to support the members of the group".

The participants reported that their greatest concern was maintaining the authority figure's face while they identified themselves as having subordinate status. They did not mention much about how they took care of their clients' face from their professional position. Again, their social awareness was biased towards authority. They disregarded their own professional status at the early stage of the training.

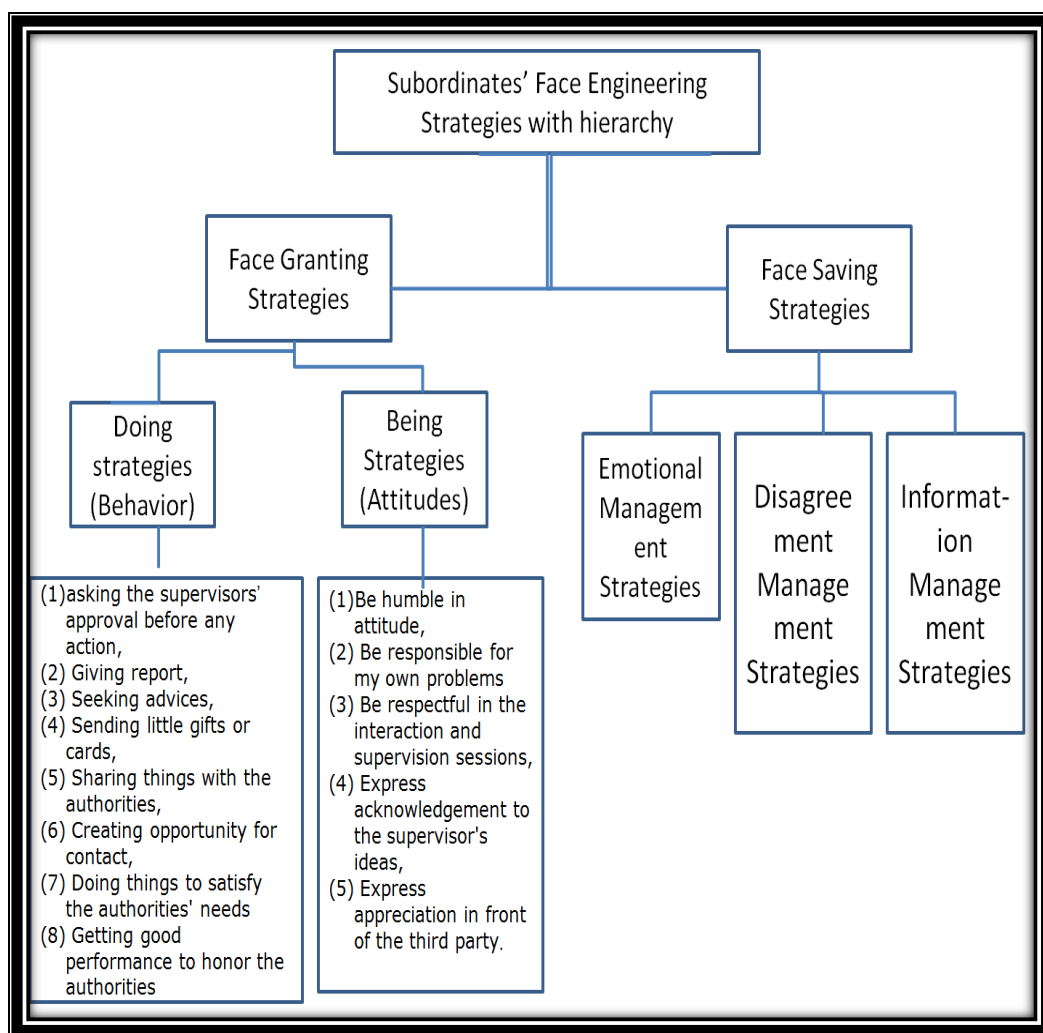


Figure 6.5 The *Guanxi* domain: Subordinate's face engineering strategies with hierarchy executed by the student counsellors as subordinates in supervision

I would like to conceptualize the cultural coping mechanism which is executed by student counsellors as subordinates' face engineering strategies regarding hierarchy (see Figure 6.5).

The participants, positioning themselves as subordinates in the supervisory relationship, focused mainly on other-face concerns and executed frequently the face-granting strategies, which include doing and being strategies. There are eight categories, which are active behavioural responses, in doing strategies: (1) Asking

for the supervisors' approval before any action, (2) Giving a report, (3) Seeking advice, (4) Sending little gifts or cards, (5) Sharing things with the authorities, (6) Creating opportunity for contact, (7) Doing things to satisfy the authority figures' needs and (8) Achieving good performance to honour the authority figures.

Five categories of being strategies which are passive attitudes are: (1) Be humble in attitude, (2) Be responsible for my own problems, (3) Be respectful in the interaction and supervision sessions, (4) Express acknowledgement of the supervisor's ideas, and (5) Express appreciation in front of third parties.

Regarding face-saving strategies, these include: (1) Emotion management strategies, (2) Disagreement management strategies, and (3) Information management strategies.

By doing things such as avoiding conflicts, showing respect to others and maintaining social harmony, face strategies like enhancing group reputation, self-esteem, honour and dignity, status and power, networking, and sense of vanity (Lin, 2001) are so familiar among the student counsellors. Seeking suggestions and advice from authority figures is encouraged and reinforced.

Hong Kong students display an almost unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher . . . may be a transfer of the Confucian ethic of filial piety, coupled with an emphasis on strictness of discipline and proper behavior.

(Murphy, 1987, p. 43)

Chinese learners are more reflective than impulsive, that is, they prefer a slow, accurate, systematic approach and are less comfortable with guessing or predicting. They feel the need for rapid and constant correction and have a low level of tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty.

(Kennedy, 2002, p. 433)

In everyday experience we find that communication is something which makes connections of ideas, beliefs, opinions and pieces of information, which are made between one person and another, or between one group of people and another (Dimbleby, 1998). In Chinese communication, we have to adapt and synchronize one another's interaction styles through the exchanges of messages. Chen (2001, p.57) argues that the ultimate goal of Chinese communication is "to pursue a conflict-free interpersonal and social relationship". To maintain a harmonious society is the key parenting theme in the family. Bond (1991) mentions that direct confrontation in communication is, most likely, inappropriate in Chinese population. To become a competent communicator in Chinese societies is a totally different concept when compared with Western societies (Yeh, 2010). Harmony without facing the existence of conflicts is not real harmony. This is perhaps another critical issue to be addressed in Chinese community nowadays.

From the responses of the participants, to maintain harmony with the clients, supervisors and agency staff reflect their common concerns. The participants reported that they become more sensitive to high-context messages with invisible

rules that need to be contextually decoded during the internship and they feel the need to practise indirect and implicit communication in order to maintain good *Guanxi* with their supervisors as well as other colleagues.

The below Figure 6.6 concludes the practice of *Guanxi* of the student counsellors in the internship. Cultural understanding of *Guanxi* plays a significant role as guidelines for the student counsellors' coping strategies while facing relational struggles especially with authority figures.

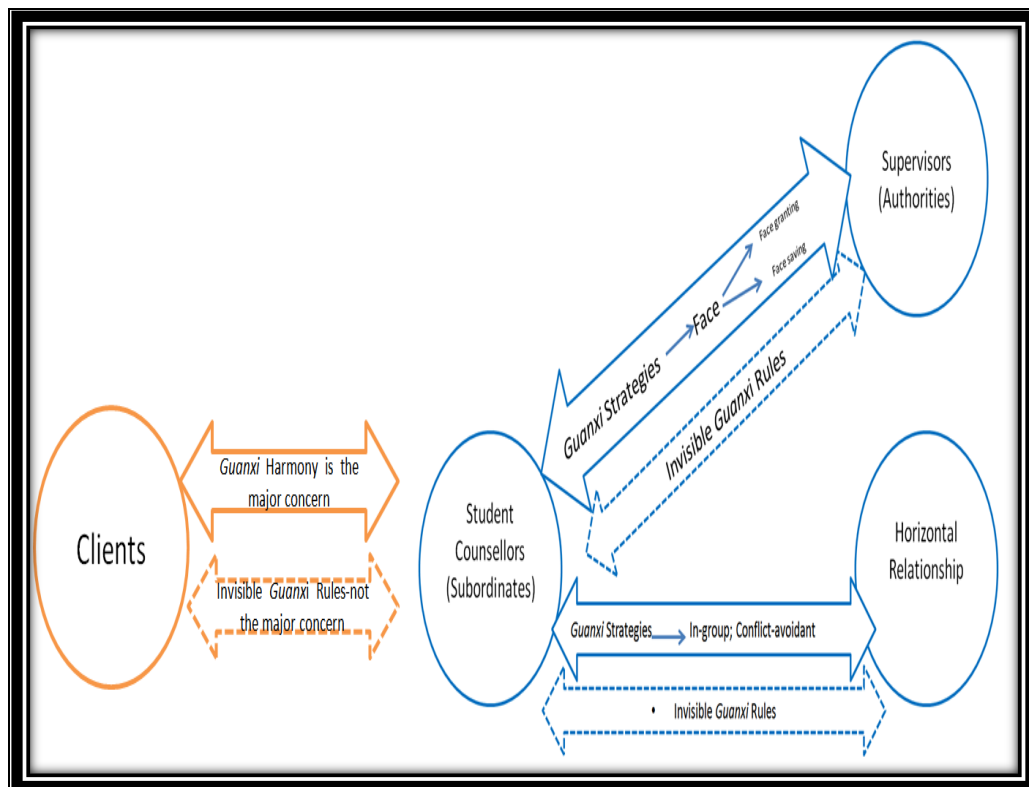


Figure 6.6 The *Guanxi* domain: The practice of *Guanxi* by student counsellors in internship

6.2.2 Developmental consideration: Egoistic domain as fundament of development

The "self" domain" is of vital importance to a person's professional development.

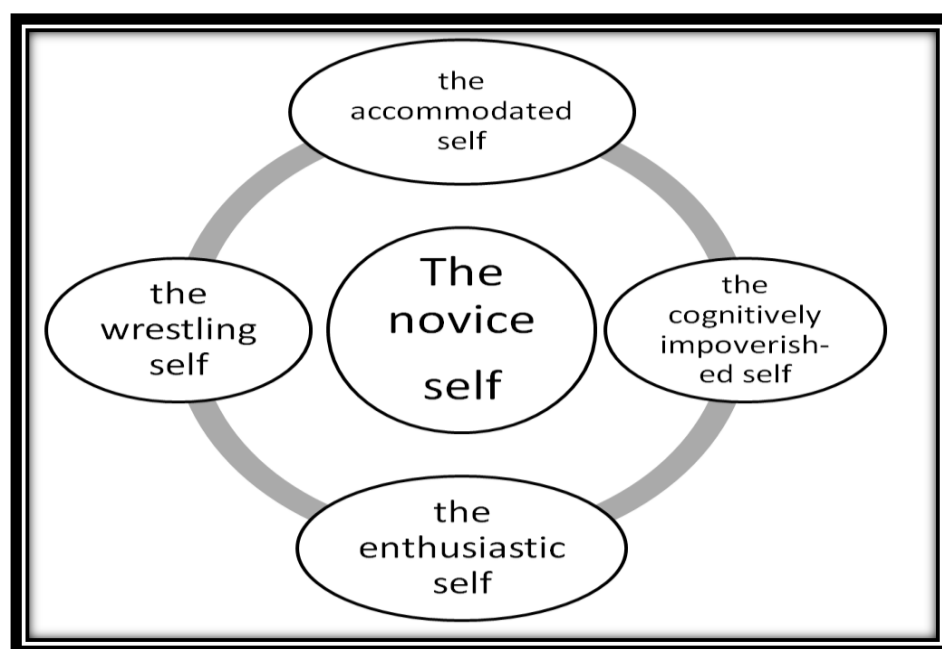


Figure 6.7 The egoistic domain: Four areas of self-formation in the novice counsellors

Four areas of novice self (see Figure 6.7) can be categorized from the responses of the student participants in this research: (1) the accommodated self which is obliging and compliant. Participants, at the internship stage, need to adapt quite a number of new things in the agencies, the clients, the agency cultural practice. They have a tendency to establish harmonious relationship with the supervisors by being compliant. (2) The cognitively impoverished self which always feels inadequate and incompetent, hunger for instructions and recognition. Participants at the internship stage have strong feelings of anxiety and insufficiency. They have great needs for guidance and recognition from supervisors on their performance. (3) The wrestling self which always indulges in internal struggles and conflicts needing support and understanding. Participants reported facing a number of struggles, such as, striving

for efficacy in clinical practice, wrestling between disclosure and non-disclosure of their real feelings and needs before their supervisors; scrambling for the efficiency in tasks management within a limited time. (4) The enthusiastic self which is full of passion and energy, devoted, and generates fuel to mobilize one's motivation. Most of them were enthusiastic to take up the roles and challenges. They treasured the new learning opportunity the agencies have given them. These four areas of self-formation provide information about the characteristics of the novice counselors. The self-formation enables the novice to have a better self-awareness, self-evaluation and a wider perspective on oneself. The development of "professional self" is the fundamental and major developmental task of the novice. And this is why the student counsellors are so sensitive to their "self" and "performance".

The stage model assumes a universal chronological sequence of development, delineates why and how changes occur in the professionals, provides a supervision structure, and formulates expectations, ways to communicate directives, and a supervision environment that matches the developmental needs and capabilities of the supervisees (Holloway, 1987; Barrett and Barber, 2005; Skovholt and Ronnestad, 1995; Friedlander et al., 1984; Chagnon and Russell, 1995). Each developmental stage represents specific developmental issues and concerns that

the supervisees and supervisors must face (Watkins, 1995).

6.2.2.1 Idiosyncratic desires as prime motives

The development from Novice egocentrism to counselling self-efficacy requires the student counsellors to move towards the following stages with regard to the transformation of self (see Figure 6.8) : (1) novice egocentrism denotes the novice counsellors who are unable to see from others' points of view and suppose that others will see the same as they do; (2) self as focus indicates the ability to know the differences between self and others but still oneself is the focus of the world. Novice counsellors are self-focused and their self-awareness is objective which is learned from outside sources (Stoltenberg, 1981); (3) idiosyncratic desires as prime motives, which implies the ability to identify personal desires which are different from others. They are anxious about their performance. Even if they offer altruistic practice, serving their clients, "self" is the main concern; (4) the strong incentives to grow delineates their further understanding of their inadequacy and urges them to grow; (5) counselling self-efficacy which is the competence to conduct counselling (Larson et al., 1992; Larson, 1998; Barnes, 2004) will be enhanced with the growing incentives.

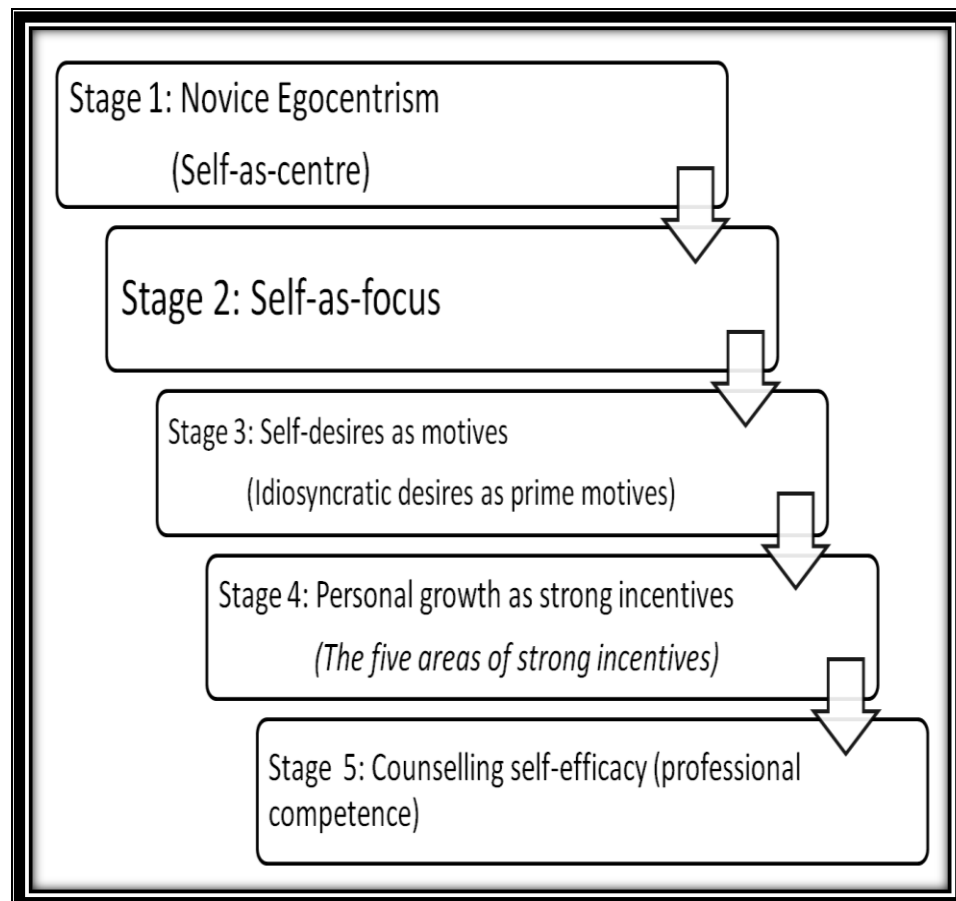


Figure 6.8 The egoistic domain: Stage of self-development-From novice egocentrism to counselling self-efficacy

The participants reported their strong wish to manage their counselling tasks professionally. From the beginning counsellors' new responsibilities and challenges can be very stimulating and motivating. These are chances to facilitate them to move towards their counselling self-efficacy.

Counselling competence (Lauver and Harvey, 1997) develops from the merging of three elements: (1) the person (who the counsellor is), (2) counselling knowledge (what the counsellor knows), (3) counselling skills (what the counsellor can do).

Beginning counsellors progress through stages which are similar to every professional counsellor.

In this research, the notion of professional growth is obviously addressed by the participants. Their urge to grow up as mature professional counsellors, which reflects their stage motivation, was commonly found in the participants. This became a strong catalyst for their learning attitudes and their striving for excellence in the performance. Their strong incentive to grow was found in five areas (see Figure 6.9): (1) the yearning for supervisors' feedback; (2) their willingness to be open to a variety of counselling tasks so as to enrich their professional experience; (3) guidance seeking from the supervisors is anticipated for the betterment of the clinical practice; (4) their emphasis on the attempt for contextual practice of theories and (5) their striving to perform better for clinical achievement in the internship.

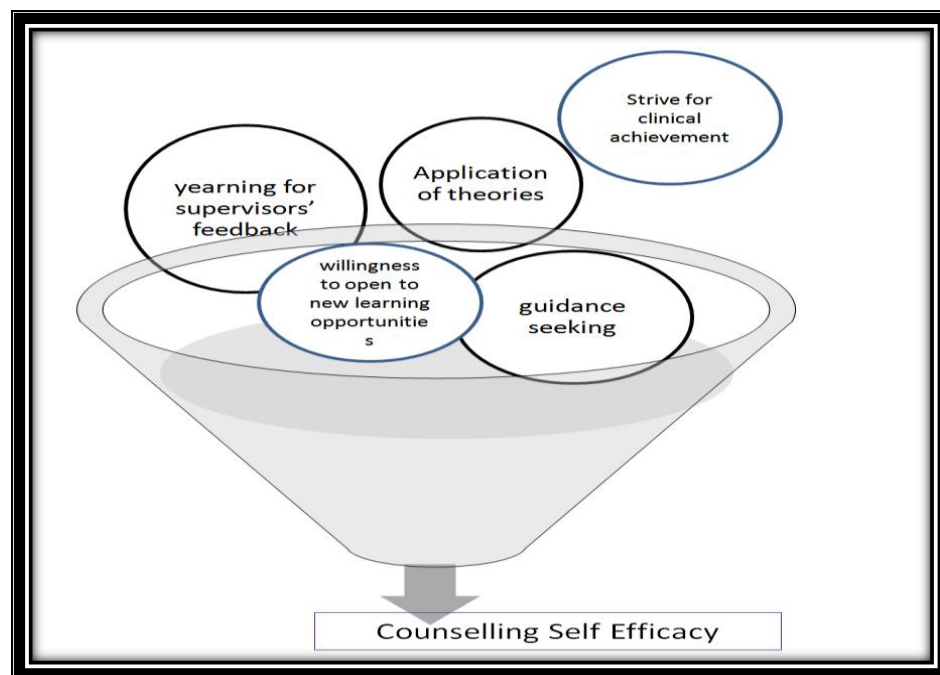


Figure 6.9 The egoistic domain: The strong incentives and their relevancy to the growth of self-efficacy

The participants reported that they wanted comments which were understandable and constructive from their supervisors, and not which just told them that what they had done was not appropriate and incorrect. Smith's (1984) study finds that students grade receiving supervisor observation and feedback as the most effective factor contributing to their skill development. Feedback stimulates trainees' reflection and performance. Studies have shown the effectiveness of constructive feedback as a powerful means to learning (Westberg and Jason, 1993). The participants mentioned that constructive and positive feedback is a powerful motivator in professional learning. How to give constructive feedback is a form of art in the supervision. There are various styles of giving feedback from supervisors. Apart from the teaching and supervising styles of the supervisors, the learning and reaction style of the supervisees is also one of contributing factors affecting the feedback giving process in the supervision. Hoffman et al., (2005) delineates that feedback varies in terms of the level of directiveness. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2004), supervisees' reflection on their supervision depends most often is the quality and quantity of the feedback they received. Freeman (1985) recommends that feedback should be timely, frequent, objective, consistent, clear, specific, credible, balanced and reciprocal. The participants reflected that they were frustrated and overwhelmed by repeated negative feedback on the same area of

weaknesses, especially when the trusting relationship had broken down. This form of feedback is destructive and threatening to the student counsellors. It is important to foster a balanced amount of constructive feedback in the supervision process so as to enhance the professional learning. Many authors emphasize a supportive and trusting relationship as a basis for feedback to be provided (e.g., Farnill et al., 1997; Gould and Bradley, 2001). And the implication of matching feedback and evaluation to the developmental stage of supervisees has been stressed by many studies (Stoltenberg, McNeill, and Delworth, 1998; Worthington and Roehlke, 1979; Gandolfo and Brown, 1987).

From the participants' responses, they enjoyed having the opportunities to explore new things and did not mind engaging in new tasks. But at the same time, they were insecure and nervous for fear of making mistakes. Some participants reported that they were scared of making mistakes after ongoing negative feedback from the supervisors. If supervisors are not able to recognize the actual tender and vulnerable position of the supervisee, the autonomy of the supervisees will be discouraged (Chessick, 1971; Havens, 1971).

6.2.2.2 Dilemmas and struggles as the catalysts of growth

The training process has always been identified as a chronically painful process (Chessick, 1971) in which the supervisees have to suffer tension, worries and

struggles both intrapersonally and interpersonally. Researchers have claimed that beginners are thought to be insecure, neurosis bound and uninsightful (Hogan, 1964). Their anxiety level is comparatively higher than more experienced counsellors (Friedlander, Keller, Peca-Baker, and Olk, 1986; Nielsen, Vøllestad, Schanche, and Nielsen, 2009, cited Jacobsen and Tanggaard, 2009).

Feelings of self-doubt and insecurity about one's effectiveness are frequently reported by mental health professionals, regardless of their experience level. In novice therapists, feelings of incompetence are a central feature in the development of their professional identity.

(Thériault et al., 2009, p.105)

Once novice counsellors enter into the clinical world, they may feel overwhelmed by the varieties of clients' issues and this certainly creates a major source of stress to them. They are required to speedily engage with the agency staff, supervisors and clients within a constricted time slot with the clients. This process can be very energy consuming and stressful. At the same time they need to go through the theories culturally and integrate them contextually. They need to sort out appropriate ways to incorporate them into their intervention. Skovholt and Ronnestad (2003, p. 46) describe, "The novice's loss of professional innocence is most intensely felt when interacting with clients". What they have learned in the academic setting may not be sufficient and adequate in clinical settings. The participants in this research mentioned that they spent considerable mental energy

on dealing with their clinical competency. Supervision can evoke a fear of being inadequate (Eckler-Hart, 1987) in the student counsellors.

Nine areas of novice struggles are included: (1) Striving for competency in the clinical practice; (2) Wrestling in a twilight zone between disclosure and non-disclosure; (3) Continual battles of mind and heart; (4) The mission to defend the professionalism in their workplace; (5) Scrambling for time and task management; (6) Combating the practice of being compliant or idiosyncratic; (7) Adapting cultural diversity in clinical settings; (8) Tackling the discrepancies in the supervision, and finally, (9) The struggles in accommodating varieties of clients and different clinical issues which are beyond their present capabilities. These nine areas of novice struggles can be re-categorized into three major chunks: the one-to-self struggles, one-to-one struggles and one-to-all group level of struggles (see Figure 6.10).

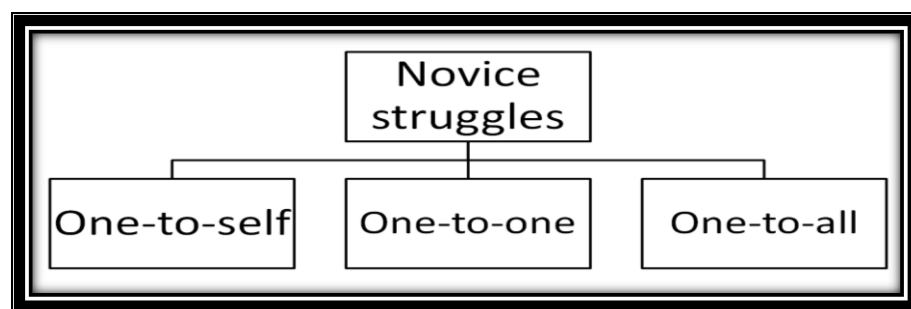


Figure 6.10 The egoistic domain: The three areas of novice struggles

The one-to-self struggles (see Figure 6.11) resemble the self-internal struggles.

Internal struggles can impact a person's performance and responses. This type of

struggle, which occurs within the student counsellor, will surface when his or her own values are tested or in times of stress. Different people will have different sources of internal struggles. To the participants, they need to have requirements and tasks to be fulfilled within restricted time slots with limited knowledge and experience. They encountered more and more struggles between feelings and thoughts. What they feel like doing may not be the same as the realistic world. These internal struggles easily create stress and anxiety.

The participants' account was that they had constant struggles between the mind and the heart. In their mind there are many "shoulds" and "should nots" such as they should treasure the opportunity to learn from supervisors, which clashed with their feelings. Supervision very often evokes fears (Eckler-Hart, 1987) and a sense of failure when they are evaluated as inadequate. They therefore faced struggles in seeing the supervisors.

For the one-to-self struggles, it is helpful and therapeutic for the student counsellor to be able to talk about the situation and share their inner conflict.

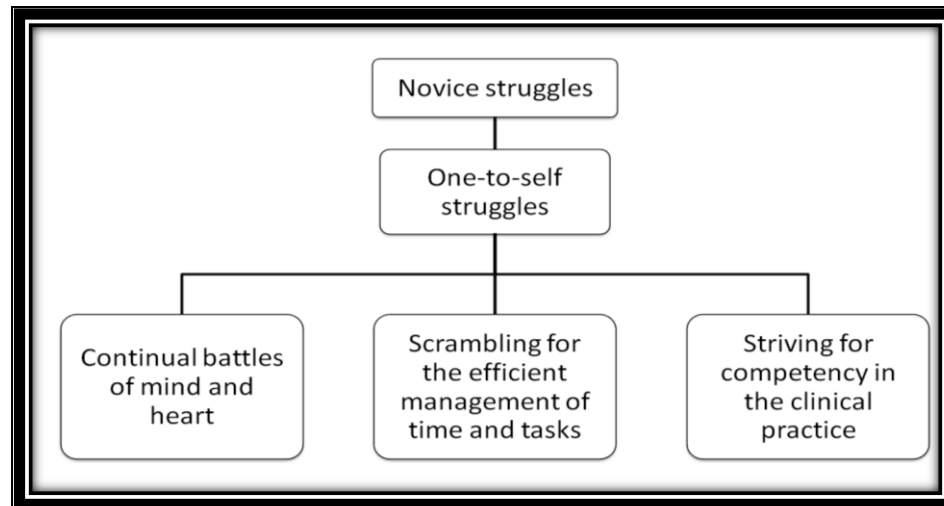


Figure 6.11 The egoistic domain: The one-to-self struggles

The one-to-one personal struggles (see Figure 6.12) are interpersonal in nature. Student counsellors have a lot of chances to work face to face with their supervisor and clients in the individual sessions. One-to-one conflict usually occurs when two individuals must work together closely but they do not share the same views and interests.

The participants reported that they had spent a lot of energy on combating the practice of compliance and idiosyncrasy, i.e. whether to comply and give in or not. Friedlander et al., (1984) state that the challenge from supervisors can be met with overt defiance but more commonly elicits passive-aggressive reactions which can sabotage the therapy and the educational process. Covert defiance was commonly found in the participants. Only one participant reacted aggressively towards the supervisor's challenges and one reacted in a passive-aggressive way. The rest chose to behave well in front of the supervisors. Instead of being passive-aggressive,

keeping silent and ignorance were their frequent reactions when facing this struggle.

If the supervisors are insensitive to these responding styles, they will not be able to recognize the invisible blocks found in the supervisory relationship.

Disclosure or non-disclosure of one's inadequacies was another relational struggle found in the student counsellors. Barrett and Barber point out,

Given that the supervisors are in a position of greater authority, the ability of a trainee to discuss her needs may be hindered, particularly if the supervisor fails to ask for such input.

(Barrett and Barber, 2005, p.170)

Webb and Wheeler (1998, p.509) state, "The process of supervision relies upon counsellors being able to disclose everything and anything which relates to the relationship with the client". They conducted a study to investigate the issue of willingness to disclose sensitive issues in supervision. Results from 96 counsellors' responses showed that supervisees are likely to disclose to supervisor whom they had chosen themselves, and when they are supervised independently of the setting in which they counsel rather than in-house. Besides, a positive correlation between the quality of the supervisory working alliance as experienced by the supervisee and the extent of his or her disclosure was found.

The participants in this study shared the similar struggles as reported in the above research. They know the necessity to disclose before their supervisors in order to have a better learning, but on the other hand, they know pretty well the evaluative

power of the supervisors. They are frustrated when they disclose their incapability to the supervisors and the fear of being labelled for their weaknesses which resulted in their silence or selecting disclosure in front of their supervisors.

the beginning student's vulnerability and anxiety make it important for the supervisor at this introductory level to create a relationship that is characterized by support and understanding.

(Rønnestad and Skovholt, 1993, p.399)

Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) identified three styles of disclosure in reacting to intense data: (1) premature disclosure, which is a maladaptive, pre- and unconscious, inappropriate defensive manoeuvre (Rønnestad and Skovholt, 1993) that counsellors may use when overwhelmed by the professional challenge; (2) insufficient disclosure, which refers to the inability to stop processing the intense data from the counselling or therapy session; and (3) functional disclosure, which consists of attending to the rich data from work with clients in a way that propels the competence level of the therapist.

A strong supervisory-supervisee relationship is the sine qua non of effective counselling supervision (Holloway, 1992) and contributing factor to honest disclosure. The supervisory relationship itself is a core element in the professional development of counsellors (Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003). Most participants in this research reported that they were willing to disclose their incapability before the supervisors if they felt the support and acceptance from the supervisors. They had

more struggles in how much they should disclose and became more reserved after negative responses from supervisors.

Nelson and Friedlander (2001) argue that having a negative interaction in supervision does not necessarily mean that positive benefit cannot result from the experience. In this study, participants who experienced a negative interaction with their supervisors reported the value of negative experience only when the conflicts were resolved and there were platforms to communicate with the supervisors. They emphasized that if the supervisors were too dominant and closed-minded, the communication immediately stopped. They chose silent strategies or passive reaction in the supervisory contact including disclosure of their needs and difficulties. This issue of disclosure cannot be neglected in the supervision process. A healthy supervisory relationship sets the stage for the resolution of supervisees' interpersonal struggles.

The student counsellors reported struggles in tackling discrepancies. The discrepancies fell mainly on values and perspectives, teaching and learning and communication styles. Discrepancies were obviously found in the supervision as reported by the participants. Frequent conflicts or ambiguities were reported when the expectations for supervision differed between supervisors and trainees (Olk and Friedlander, 1992). Supervisory style is the manner through which supervisors

exhibit attractiveness, task orientation, and interpersonal sensitivity within the supervision dyad (Friedlander and Ward, 1984). Efstation, Patton, and Kardash (1990) discovered a significant relationship between supervisory style and the supervision working alliance, i.e. the supervisor-supervisee relationship in which supervisors act purposefully to influence trainees through the use of technical knowledge and skill. Discrepancies are not necessarily the causes of interpersonal struggles. It is the way the discrepancies are presented that matters.

With regards to the one-to-one struggles, relational and communication skills and interpersonal understanding can help to release the tension tremendously.

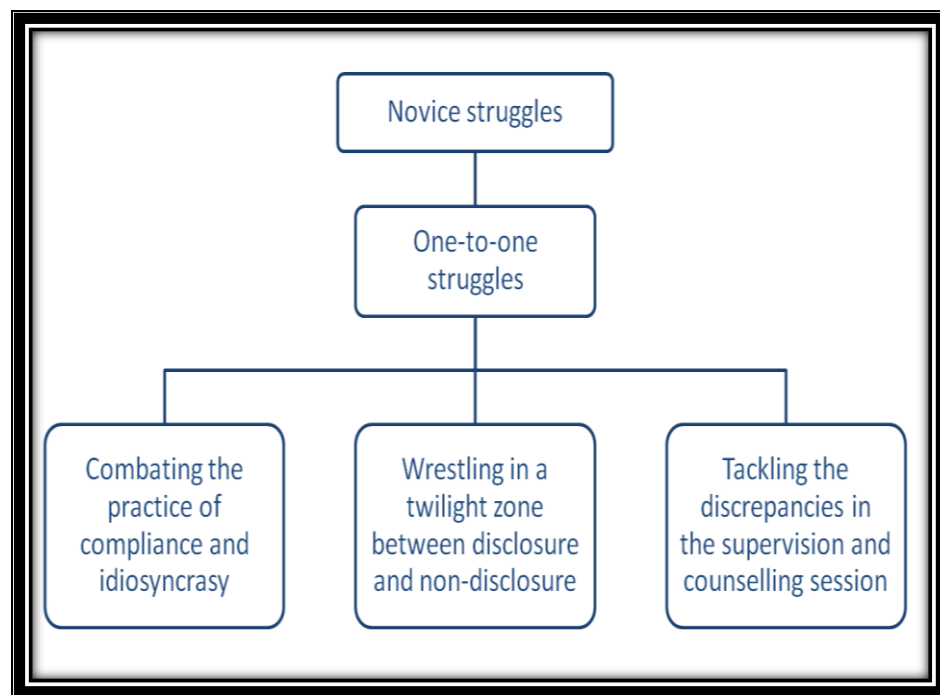


Figure 6.12 The egoistic domain: The one-to-one struggles

The third one is the one-to-all struggles (see Figure 6.13) which fall into the group identity level. Once students perform the role of counsellor, they need to defend

their counselling professionalism, sharing the professional values, which may not be understood by other people or professions. How to stand up for the counselling professional values without violating the relationship could be a source of tension in the internship agencies.

Hazler and Kottler (1994) suggest that once a student counsellor has graduated, his or her clients see them as a counsellor, an expert in counselling. Other counsellors recognize that the person is a novice with a great deal to learn, but those outside the profession believe the beginning counsellor to be a professional. This phenomenon was evident in the participants' report of their internship experience. The interns perceived that people from outside the profession, such as the teachers in the agencies, other agencies staff and clients had expectations of them. This creates stress and anxiety. This deviation in the points of view from the outside world is a source of their struggles. However, this can, at the same time, be a catalyst to drive them to work hard and behave like a real professional.

Pica (1998, p.361) expresses, "Struggling with ambiguity is one of those unspoken aspects of clinical training that students do not comprehend until they begin their graduate program". Role conflict and role ambiguity can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction with supervision and with clinical work in general (Olk and Friedlander, 1992). This was reported by the participants. The conflicts between

defending the counselling profession on one hand and the needs to work collaboratively with the agencies' staff or other professionals became another major source of struggle. Some of the student counsellors who worked in a school were expected to play the role of disciplinarians like teachers. This became a big struggle for the student counsellors.

Besides, they had to adjust to various working cultures and different groups of clients. These struggles were frequently reported by the participants. There is a great proportion of learning in the achieving of cultural competencies. Acculturative stress originates directly from the process of acculturation (Berry et al., 1988).

Through exposure to different cultures, bicultural individuals acquire different cultural knowledge systems, and switch between cultural mindsets depending on the contextual cues.

(Chao and Hong, 2007, p.153)

Student counsellors carry with them their personal beliefs, but entering into different cultural worlds certainly enriches their intercultural experiences. This process certainly creates a lot of stress especially at the beginning stage of an internship. It appears that the investigation and understanding of different cultures are currently center stage for social, developmental, and organizational psychologists

(Tomasulo, 2000, p.52)

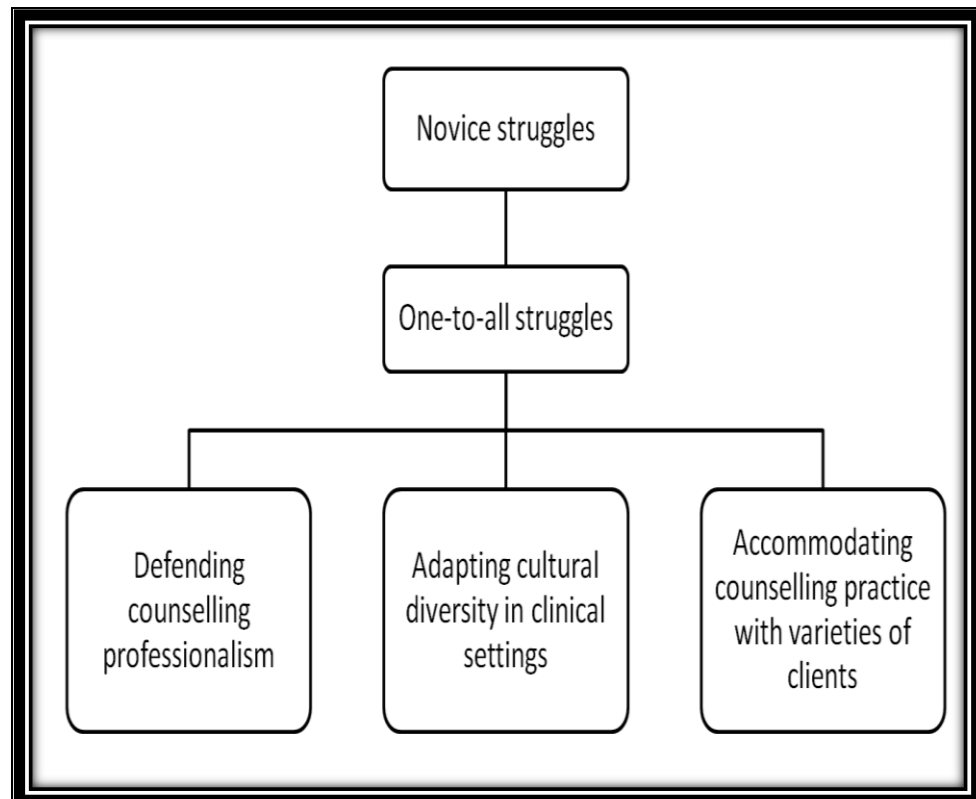


Figure 6.13 The egoistic domain: The one-to-all struggles

Professional struggles appear to be unavoidable in the training process and can arise at any time. They can be very destructive to the training process. Distinguishing the types of struggles actually facilitates the supervisors or the student counsellors to properly handle the struggles. These struggles can be viewed positively as catalysts for the professional growth of the student counsellors if they are well managed.

The process of maturing as a counselling professional is very difficult. The training process is both physically and mentally agonizing. Student counsellors spend a lot of energy on dealing with inner struggles and dilemmas. The capabilities to overcome these struggles are signposts of the development of professional competencies.

To summarize, the egoistic proficient desires for the professional competency of the student counsellors in the internship stage reflect the intrinsic motivation toward their growth. This can be expedited by the supervisory process formulated by the supervisor's sensitivities to the developmental needs of the student counsellors. It is of crucial importance for supervisors to demonstrate the attributes they claim in relationships rather than just issue verbal instructions.

6.2.3 Contextual consideration: Circumstantial domain as a dynamo of growth

During the interviews, a common phenomenon appeared. The student counsellors faced difficulties in identifying their specific concerns unless they were given space to think about their own needs. They were too busily occupied by the instructions and the tasks. Seven prospective environmental concerns were found in the participants in the supervision and internship when they were provided the opportunities to express them: (1) the desire for acceptance; (2) the seeking for affective support; (3) the search for recognition; (4) the sensitivity to security; (5) their expectation to be needed; (6) the craving to be trusted; and (7) the longing to be understood. These seven concerns can be classified into three major categories of circumstantial domains for their professional growth as illustrated in Figure 6.14.

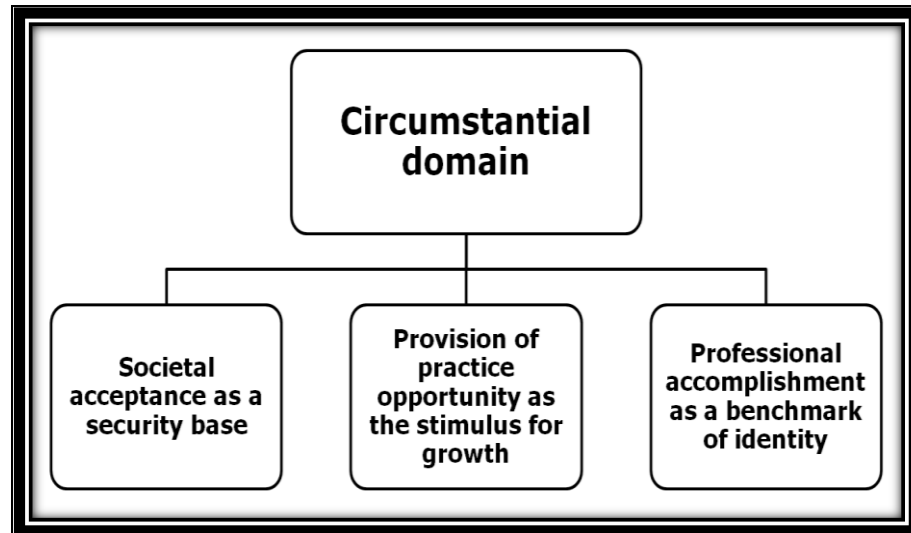


Figure 6.14 The circumstantial domain: three major categories of circumstantial domain for their professional growth

6.2.3.1 Societal acceptance as a security base

People in different stages reflect different value systems and areas of needs. Novice counsellors need to advance through various stages of professional maturation corresponding to their current abilities. The participants' unique ways of constructing meanings shaped their environmental anticipation and their personal preference.

....a beginning therapist may be unaware of what is needed, either technically or emotionally, to foster her development as a therapist.... Such a situation may lead to frustration for the supervisor and poor guidance and direction for the trainee.

(Barrett and Barber, 2005, pp.170-171)

It has also been suggested that trainees do not adequately convey their needs to supervisors (Reising and Daniels, 1983). This may be due to their overly concern regarding the accomplishment of the assigned tasks or their supervisor-centred

performance. Barrett and Barber (2005, p.171) add, "...supervisors vary their approach in response to the perceived needs of therapists". The supervisors preferred approaches became a major cause of frustration for the student counsellors.

Rønnestad and Skovholt (1993) reviewed the literature on the supervision with novice therapists and contrasted the findings with those of more advanced therapists. They found that beginning-level supervision is most effective when geared toward teaching, feedback, support, directives and skills, while implemented in a trusting supervisory relationship. Comparatively, they found more advanced supervision to be most successful when delivered within a frame of correcting, clarifying, confronting, reflecting, and consulting within a supervisory relationship that offers the functions of structuring and mediating.

Trainees have great autonomy to learn. However, if they face hindrances or criticism from supervisors, they will feel shame and doubt (Studer, 2007). Acceptance of their mistakes, weakness and limitation from others pave the way for their courage and confidence for further exploration in professional learning.

Green and Campbell (2000) point out that close relationships also serve as a secure base from which people can confidently explore their environment and develop autonomous, integrated personalities. Kreiser et al., (1991) use the analogy of a

family to conceptualize how counsellors develop. They suggest that counsellors move from being like children, who require support and care from more experienced counsellors, to older siblings, who are able to be supportive and collaborative with newer counsellors. Affective support, empathetic understanding as well as recognition from professional others allows beginners to feel valued.

The social expectation works as the main contribution to the participants' formation of their professional identity as individuals' self-concepts are defined and refined by the people around them (Fein and Spencer, 1997). Heppner et al., (1998) discovered a positive relationship between counsellor self-efficacy and client motivation. A trusting relationship, trust and being trusted, with supervisors, as well as clients, can become a resource for security in the professional developmental trajectory. Supervisees' accurate self-evaluation of work with clients has been identified as an important outcome of successful counselling supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 2004; Borders et al., 1991). The expectation to be needed by their clients acted as a gratifier which mobilized the growing movement in the participants. Capps (2004) states that a well-guided, secure environment allows trainees to build up their confidence and self-esteem. Studer emphasizes that,

A supportive, genuine supervisory atmosphere facilitates trainee task development. When the trainee first enters the clinical experiences, a 'working relationship' is formed based on genuine communication and trust.

(Studer, 2007, p.170)

A trusting environment will facilitate a person's feeling of trustworthiness and develop basic confidence in the future.

6.2.3.2 Provision of practice opportunity as the stimulus for growth

All the participants had a positive opinion on the design of having an internship in the training programme. They emphasized the more positive and successful experience they had, the more confidence they would have in their future practice.

Previous researchers have benchmarked the benefits of the design of internships or experiential learning in training programmes which facilitate trainees' understanding of organizations and agencies (Lee, 2007), and of course it is important for student counsellors to have a more realistic view of the clinical setting.

As Kolb (1984, p. 56) puts it, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Holloway and Roehlke describe that an internship,

serves as the linchpin between academic preparation and entry into professional employment as a counselling psychologist and, thus, serves the critical role of 'gatekeeper' for professional quality control.

(Holloway and Roehlke 1987, p. 21)

Supervised internship experience is becoming more widely used as a learning tool to bridge the gap between the theories learned in academic settings and clinical

practice. Internship is a time for very intensive training.

The popularity of the counselling profession is rising here in Hong Kong. The absence of clear evidence of the impacts of internship and supervision, especially in Hong Kong's cultural setting, is worth paying attention to. From this research, after student counsellors have gone through the internship stage, there is a rapid growth spurt in their professionalism.

The contrast in the professional confidence of students is significantly found at the end of the internship. Besides, the more confidence they have, the more their desire to continue their professional practice. The value of the internship and supervision experience was emphasized by all of the participants in this research. There was a consensus among the student counsellors regarding the areas of significance of internship in their professional development which included relational growth, clinical practice, cultural adaptation and personal growth. This experience enhanced their ability to face the hierarchical as well as horizontal relationship with supervisors, clients, colleagues and working partners. This will provide them opportunity to address some complicated issues related to relationships. The students, after completion of the internship, will have more confidence to work independently as clinicians.

6.2.3.3 Professional accomplishment as a benchmark of identity

The participants reported their searching for professional identity through the social recognition of their professional credentials and their capability to grasp the theories, techniques and skills in their practice.

Counselling is viewed as a useful psychological intervention approach; it is generally used in general practice by a range of helping professionals nowadays. The helping professionals which offer counselling services include clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, social workers, teachers, occupational therapists, medical doctors and psychiatrists. Although the service of counselling is viewed as useful and professional here in Hong Kong, the field of counselling did not used to receive any recognition as a unique profession.

The affirmation of their contribution by the agencies regarding their input was very encouraging for the students. However, the ambiguity about the counselling profession reflected from some of the agencies' feedback became a source of frustration for the student counsellors. Counselling development in Hong Kong is in its adolescent stage. The search for its identity in the counselling profession is still a present major issue in Hong Kong.

Students attempt very hard to achieve the formation of a professional identity (Nolinske, 1995) ever since entering their professional training. Whiting, Bradley and Planny refer to the transforming therapist as being,

a movement toward a well-developed clinical identity; an eclectic style, sensitive to the impact of factors of diversity; greater introspective and reflective ability; an integration of theory and practice; and autonomous means of functioning.

(Whiting, Bradley and Planny, 2000, p.125)

Developing clinical knowledge is a major concern in professional preparation. The participants emphasized their professional desires to integrate the techniques and theories they had learned in the academic setting through the guidance of the supervisors. The student counsellors were diligent in their clinical practice on the case work and group work skills. They tried especially hard in the case conceptualization which is supposed to be the indicator of their professionalism. Therapists at different stages of training have different needs. Skills such as case conceptualization, pattern recognition, integration of cognitive, behavioral, emotional and interpersonal aspects of the client, can facilitate the student counsellors' capability to discriminate meaningful patterns, and enhances their intervention skills and the rich store of clinical knowledge database.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, one of the goals of counselling education and supervision is to help the trainee to achieve professional competence in different qualitative knowledge and skills as experience increases (Stoltenberg and Grus, 2004). It is noticeable that the provision of a secure supervisory environment in the form of (1)

“buttressing”, the supervisor’s presence is like an external prop, resembling a buttress built to steady their vacillating characteristics; (2) “recognizing”, the acknowledgement of their strengths and weaknesses; and (3) “approving”, the allowance of their mistakes and taking on their responsibilities with them in times of poor performance. The participants’ motivation to learn was high. They reflected that they understood their insufficiencies and incapacabilities. They did not mind unveiling their shortcomings for the sake of professional growth under the condition that they can feel the presence of a secure supervisory environment.

CHAPTER 7

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

7.1 Overview

The main purpose of this chapter is to present contributions from the research data collected in the study of counselling supervision and internship in the Hong Kong setting. The implications of the research findings fall into two areas in the counselling profession, to provide recommendations for future counselling and supervision training and usher the researchers into new areas of the cultural phenomena, especially the issue of *Guanxi* in the counselling training and development in Hong Kong Chinese culture. Limitation as well as strength of this research will be identified.

7.2 Raison d'être of this research

William Wordsworth wrote in the famous poem, *The Rainbow*, "The child is father of the man" to delineate that all our personality characteristics, both positive and negative, are well-established in our early stage which is the foundation of a person's whole life development. The learning experience in the novice training stage is fundamental to a professional. It is important to groom developing professionals to adopt healthy, fruitful and positive learning experiences so that they can be of assistance to their clients and aid the development of the counselling profession.

This research aimed at hearing and studying the current supervisory and internship experience of student counsellors through their voices and narratives, and their experience in terms of their perception, expectation, feelings and behaviour.

7.3 Researching findings: The three major considerations and their implication for cultural appraisal in internship and supervisory experience

The research aimed to give supervisors a better understanding on what constitute an effective learning environment and how the domain of “Chinese cultural selves” affects the learning and the supervisory relationship. How can the programme provide a better internship environment for the students? What should the supervisors do in order to create a better and more effective learning environment for the students? The three considerations, which include cultural, developmental as well as contextual consideration, are emerging aspects which need to be carefully addressed for the professional development of counsellors and for the benefit of stakeholders.

7.3.1 The distinctive feature of *Guanxi* and its implication for cultural appraisal in internship and supervisory experience

Cultural impact is a silent partner in all relationships. Culture awareness is a necessary precursor for educators and supervisors in professional training. The

research results indicate the cultural idiosyncratic aspects of the role of "*Guanxi*" elements in the supervisory relationship. The results of this study reflect the inner voices of the student counsellors, their frustrations and concerns in the training. *Guanxi* became a prominent element to facilitate the practice of the functions in supervision and internship.

7.3.1.1 Incorporating *Guanxi* knowledge both in supervisors as well as counsellors' training protocols

Given the importance of supervised learning, it is imperative that a counselling professional training programme incorporate *Guanxi* in their training protocols. To facilitate the establishment of the counselling profession, which is a Western-oriented discipline, in Eastern culture, we need to master the rudiments of the *Guanxi* domain. In the professional training, Supervisory *Guanxi* is prominent in supervision in Chinese culture.

Clinical supervision involves a very complicated and dynamic social construct *Guanxi* process which encompasses visible and invisible parts found in the intensive interaction. Successful counselling and supervision practice must consider the intrinsic aspect of cultural context as well as a collaborative relationship.

Guanxi, which emphasizes connections, is an extremely significant concept in Chinese communities. Two strangers are able to establish strong connection quickly if they can catch connecting points during their transactions. In order to achieve a

therapeutic effect when working with the clients, the knowledge of how to build up *Guanxi* with clients within a short period of time is extremely significant. Besides, knowing how to develop *Guanxi* connections with other professionals helps student counsellors to work smoothly in the internship agency. *Guanxi* engineering work affects interpersonal openness. *Guanxi* determines the appropriateness of behaviour. Very often, role competency includes the *Guanxi* competency in our community. Chinese very often think according to the worldview of self-in-relations, so relating to the extravert environment becomes the major emphasis. It is important to equip novice Counsellors with a broad range of skills, especially the *Guanxi* skills so that they are able to work adequately in teams. The *Guanxi* engineering work may be another important topic in counselling and supervisory training and research with respect to the Chinese culture.

Guanxi knowledge is not restricted to interns. The supervisors should also strengthen their *Guanxi* knowledge base before they can enhance their student counsellors to work more professionally and their capability to deal with the *Guanxi* dynamic in the Chinese culture in the supervision process as well as the counselling with their clients. Professionals require a regularly updated version of one's 'cognitive capital' (Claxton et al., 1996, p.5). The supervisor's attention to the relationship dynamic and their ways of managing the relationship distance forms

the ground of development and modelling, and students learn how to adjust their relationship position according to the developmental stage in the supervisory relationship. The notion of *Guanxi* engineering is different from dealing with *Guanxi* hierarchy and *Guanxi* horizon. *Guanxi* management in a clinical supervision context needs to pay heed to self-cognizance and social-cognizance. The concept of self and the perception of social others affect *Guanxi* engineering works which further impact on the interpersonal distance, relationship tasks and psychotherapy.

Guanxi cultivation in an appropriate approach with clients, supervisors as well as other working professionals is crucial in Chinese culture. Polanyi (1966, cited by Afiouni, 2007) proposes two types of knowledge: tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge (Spender, 1996, cited by Afiouni, 2007) is obtained through experience and has a personal quality which makes it hard to formulate, conventionalize and share with others. It is a "know-how" mental scheme. On the other hand, explicit or codified knowledge (Polanyi, 1966, cited by Afiouni, 2007) is communicable and conceptualized through systematic storage in information systems. *Guanxi* is a form of tacit knowledge which is far more complex in reality. It always involves implicit communication. Novice counsellors may find difficulties to interpret such types of complicated messages from the clients, working partners and authority figures. The participants reported that they were unable to realize the unsaid messages only

when they had made mistakes in the workplace or in the counselling rooms. They had difficulties distinguishing the implicit messages from the explicit words which can be quite opposite. Novices need a contextual understanding with the help of a conceptual map relating to *Guanxi* concepts, such as directions of social-psychological functioning of *Guanxi* strategies, before they can grasp such types of *Hanxu* (indirect and implicit) communication. It is essential for stakeholders to develop culturally appropriate training for the counselling profession.

A good grasp of the notion of *Guanxi* and its related knowledge database by supervisors as well as student counsellors will certainly enhance the integration of the counselling practice in Chinese culture.

7.3.1.2 The appropriate use of authority in supervisory relationships

Authority can be a useful component in a relationship and promotes positive learning in the Chinese community.

Confucianism has generated a high value in filial piety which has also affected their perception of how they treat authority figures such as parents and teachers, and it is natural and well-appreciated for Chinese to pay respect to authority figures (Sun, 2008). Authority sensitivity has still been exerting widespread effects on new Chinese generations as from the narrative of the participants.

Besides, Chinese learners are compliant-Listen-centred prone. Many researchers (Yang, 1986; Ho, 1986) have reported that Asian students have high regards for learning with a focus on cooperative learning and are normally highly-strung to the demands and requests of the learning context. The present research outcome, though focusing on the supervision in the counselling profession, closely resembles their results. This finding certainly will raise supervisors' cultural awareness in their training of novice professionals in a Chinese cultural context. Supervisors exert a determining influence on supervisees' future professional life and professional practice. Learning is maximized when supervisors are recognized as expert, trustworthy and attractive (Dodenhoff, 1981). If a supervisor takes on a more authoritarian role without good *Guanxi* built up at the early stage of the supervision, conflict and tension, either implicit or explicit, is likely to occur. The cultural image of the authority of supervisors on one hand can facilitate the professional growth of students so that they can learn the most from the supervisors, but on the other hand can block learning progress. The results highlight supervisors' role in the cultural-prone coping mechanism in the supervisory relationship. Enhancing supervisor proficiency will increase their awareness of the supervisee's implicit tension in facing authority figures and their corresponding coping stance. The cultural *Guanxi* hierarchy impacts the formation of the supervisory alliance.

7.3.1.3 Understanding one's cultural worldviews and coping stance in the collectivistic framework

The concept of cultural encapsulation, which was first introduced by Wrenn (1985), acts as a good reminder to supervisors to be attentive to their own unchallenged and biased cultural assumptions which may affect their interpretations of supervisees' behaviour. Although the spirit of congruence has been emphasized in the counselling profession, it needs to have a cultural re-interpretation. Chinese interns normally suppress their emotions and personal opinions through a variety of mechanisms. Less openness in supervisees' behaviour needs to be interpreted from a broader perspective in the Chinese culture, instead of just being interpreted as incongruence, dishonesty and passive-aggressiveness from the Western paradigm, which could actually mean authority respect. If Chinese supervisees disagree with the advice or guidance given by supervisors, they would choose to respond very carefully and skilfully. This form of reaction reflects that, on one side, they are authority-recognition-sensitive, but on the other side, they are using their frequent-used *Guanxi* coping mechanism to manage their anxiety found in the hierarchical relationship.

How relationship respect is executed in Chinese culture is different from that in the Western world. To reject others or object to them directly, especially elders, is impolite and not appropriate. This is neither self-approved nor community-accepted.

To be obedient and considerate and preserve harmony in the relationship is of high value in Chinese communities. However, inappropriate management of these types of “face strategies” will become pseudomutuality or outwardly-compliant-but-inwardly-rebellious behaviour in supervisees. This will be detrimental to both the learning and motivation of novice counsellors.

Face strategies are unavoidable and important in Chinese learners when facing authority figures, so how can they be executed in supervision that benefits the professional training but is not deleterious to professional development? Not only the student counsellors, but also the supervisors, should pay attention to how the *Guanxi* strategies are practised in the supervisory relationship and what contributing factors affect the relationship. Thus, the notion of supervisory *Guanxi* is of first priority in the supervision training programme.

7.3.1.4 The cultivation of a holding supervisory environment with the consideration of the Guanxi concepts

Clinical counselling supervision, which is particularly significant in counsellors’ development, is a special form of training to engage counsellors’ continuous growth professionally in self-awareness and other-awareness so as to secure their clients’ welfare as well as the counsellors’ personal well-being as well as their counselling self-efficacy. Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth describe it as,

an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship in which one person is designated to facilitate the development of

therapeutic competence in the other person’.

(Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth, 1982, p. 4)

More effort from supervisors should be put into the cultivation of a good supervisory environment with the understanding of *Guanxi* dynamic so as to enhance the learning and teaching atmosphere in the supervision. “Holding environment” is a very famous concept created by an English paediatrician and psychoanalyst, D. W. Winnicott (1896-1971) whose contributing influence in psychoanalytic theory and relational psychology, has provided an important concept in intimate relationships as well as in therapy. This concept is also very useful in supervisory relationships. Hawkins and Shohet (1989) have made use of the Winnicottian notions of “good-enough” and “play” to account for how supervisors and supervisees can be co-creators of a learning atmosphere which emphasizes new ways of thinking and learning. Holding environment in supervision provides a safe place for the supervisees to take risks, explore new things and face challenges in the clinical world. A poor holding environment will block and inhibit supervisees’ growth. A good holding environment will facilitate “ego-relatedness” (Winnicott, 1965) which denotes the emotional bonding with significant others in the process of development of a personal integrated sense of self. In supervision, student counsellors undergo a similar process: the supervisees do not openly discuss their frustration and difficulties with their supervisors unless they feel the support and acceptance of the

supervisors. The effectiveness of the supervision relies highly on the supporting alliance between the supervisors and the supervisees. The emerging counselling professional needs to experience the transition from dependence to independence, and disintegration to integration in their professional growth. The holding supervisors are able to mindfully practise and be aware of cultural impacts on the relationship while be willing to understand the developmental needs of their novice supervisees.

7.3.2 The discriminative egoistic trait in novices and its relevance in training

7.3.2.1 The design of a developmentally appropriate supervision protocol for supervisors

Very often, experienced supervisors may ignore the cognitive and professional status of supervisees. The supervision focus may easily fall on the management of the cases and ignore novices' personal needs and struggles. A novice is defined as a person, according to Skovholt and Rønnestad (1995), who must rely on rules to guide their practice because of inexperience from which to draw responses. The journey of the counselling novice is strenuous and difficult. Novice practitioners have to face a lot of challenges and ambiguity in their professional tasks. Many novice counsellors experience disenchantment with their training program and feel inadequate with acquired skills after they face the realistic world which is different

from that portrayed by academic models (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003).

A systematic and stage appropriate supervision protocol is beneficial to both parties.

The supervisors will be able to check the progress of the supervisees and the supervisees will have a clearer picture of what should be captured in the process. A clear and specific assessment rubric is also advantageous to the supervision process.

The supervisors are able to feature the systematic procedural method of conducting supervision. These guidelines for supervision will facilitate the supervisees to know what to learn and where to improve.

7.3.2.2 The tailor-made training with the consideration of the self-formation of novices

There are many terms to describe the characteristics of novice self, such as “unbalanced professional self” (Ohlson, 1996, cited in Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003); “The fragile and incomplete practitionerself” (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003) which actually help us to have a better picture of their experience. Experience captured from student counsellors serves as significant value for counselling educators. From the research results, I have used the four terms of novice self-formation: (1) the accommodated self; (2) the cognitively impoverished self; (3) the wrestling self; and (4) the enthusiastic self to denote the egoistic status of novice student counsellors. The notion of self-formation helps to facilitate the self-efficacy and meet the needs of student counsellors. Novices will often be

benefited by a well-guided, secure environment that allows for independent decision-making and this experience often increases their confidence and self-esteem (Capps, 2004).

The awareness of the egoistic trait of novice student counsellors will enhance a deeper understanding by supervisors of how to execute the stage-appropriate approach in their supervision process, on one hand to protect the students' vulnerability, and on the other, to intensify their desire and enthusiasm to learn.

Experienced supervisors should be more sensitive to the egoistic desires, needs and struggles to assist novice student counsellors in their mentoring at the early start of the professional journey. This also enhances the professional growth of supervisors.

7.3.3 The compatible circumstantial inclination and its inauguration for the counselling profession in the Hong Kong setting

I have held a deep conviction in the counselling profession for over 30 years. I have witnessed the hardship of its development here in Hong Kong's culture. Ongoing efforts have been made by the counselling professionals, including our commitment to our continuing professional growth and obligation to ethical responsibility. It really takes a lot of energy to overcome all kinds of hurdles along this professional journey.

Public ignorance of its professional nature, the absence of government provision of

social resources for the development of the profession and role uncertainty have contributed to the great difficulties in establishing the profession's legitimacy.

After years of effort, the community has started to understand its nature and recognize its contribution to society. Counselling in Hong Kong has started to attain professional criteria, the development of professional associations and ethical code of practice, the accreditation of the professional curriculum in the university, various counselling programmes, and credentials. Left behind are the procedures of government licensing practice with the provision of more and more practice opportunity from the community and input of supervision curriculum for the training of trainers.

Students who have chosen to enter the counselling profession share the sentiment in the provision of counselling service to clients. Other than the socially recognized professional identity, as a professional counsellor, we have to commit to lifelong professional growth. The internal personal qualities, self-reflectivity, the existence of mentors, learning opportunities and high-quality supervision are elements of great importance in the contribution to professional accomplishment.

7.4 Strength of the study

7.4.1 Personal, deep and down-to-earth

The aim of the research was to examine what enables student counsellors to learn

effectively and the impacts of individual cultural construct on the professional learning, training and supervisory relationship. Qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for studying individuals within their cultural frameworks (Morrow et al., 2001).

Internship and clinical supervision is an exciting, but challenging experience for the recipients; it can also be exciting but frustrating, fruitful but hurtful in certain circumstances. A multitude of difficulties and complications need to be recognized and properly dealt with in order to enhance professional quality especially in the provision of culturally sensitive supervision in professional training.

I chose a qualitative approach as the methodology of this thesis with the aim to go deep into the world of the participants. "Qualitative methodologies provide the means to seek a deeper understanding and to explore the nuances of experiences not available through quantification" (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p.25). Qualitative research is "idiographic and emic" as contrary to "nomothetic and etic" (Morrow and Smith, 2000, p.252) quantitative tradition. The interest lies in studying the actual experience of a few participants by a digging-in process. Therefore, qualitative researchers rely heavily on conversations, interviews and narrative (Gergen, 2001b; Padgett, 2004). Ponterotto and Casas (1991, pp.122-123) state, "The qualitative researcher reminds one of a client-centered therapist, attempting to see life as does

the client, to walk in his or her shoes and path, to achieve a deep level of human understanding and empathy".

Feminist researchers employ strategies to decrease the power imbalance between researcher and researched while acknowledging this imbalance and fostering the research process as one of mutual give and take.

(Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton 2001, p.326)

The strength of the research lies firstly in the participants' own personal meanings and expression. And qualitative study allows in-depth exploration of the participants' personal experience which can be described in rich detail. Besides, the local contexts and the cultural selves of the participants can be taken into serious consideration. The dynamic processes, especially the relational dynamic can be revealed in this research.

The provision of the opportunity for student counsellors to express their inner community of voices, which encompass the struggles, desires and efforts they have gone through in the learning process is of great value to stakeholders. It facilitates a deeper understanding of how to build up an effective environment for novice counsellors.

7.4.2 Enhancing trustworthiness in this research

Williams and Morrow (2009) recommend three major categories of trustworthiness which include: (1) integrity of the data, (2) balance between reflexivity and

subjectivity, and (3) clear communication of findings.

Integrity of the data which refers to the adequacy (Morrow, 2005) involves clear articulation and replication of the study by others. It also refers to dependability (Patton, 2002, p.546) as “a systematic process systematically followed”. In the collection of qualitative data, there are a lot of factors which may affect the research journey as well as the interpretation of data, such as the power, emotional involvement, the assumptions, cultural and cohort bias of the researchers, and various aspects along the interaction process with the research participants. It is therefore critical to be mindful of the issue of trustworthiness when conducting a study.

The procedures of the data collection and analysis process were conscientiously managed to ensure the quality of this research. The questions of the interviews were closely supervised by supervisors and re-assessed after the pilot interview. Feedback on the transcripts was invited and collected from the participants so as to match the coherence and consistency of the interview results. The tenet of integrity of the data was carefully stressed in the methodology chapter in this thesis. In addition to this, the sufficiency of the data was assessed. The “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the participants’ experiences (Morrow, 2005, p. 252) under scrutiny relates to the details and rich multiple layers of culture and context in which

the experiences are concerned and investigated.

7.4.3 Humanistic Research paradigm

To consider the trustworthiness of an investigation with the help of paradigm-based strategies is crucial.

It is impossible to write meaningfully about standards of trustworthiness in qualitative research without acknowledging and understanding the worldviews and premises, referred to as paradigms that underpin them

(Williams and Morrow, 2009, p.577).

Research paradigms can be considered as an umbrella having the quality of inclusion of the researcher's worldviews of reality, the relationship between researcher and participant, the researcher's bearing on subjectivity or objectivity, the position of the researcher's values in the research effort, the process and procedures of the research, and the language used to communicate the research processes and findings to audiences of the research (Ponterotto, 2005). This worldview sees human beings as co-creating their reality through participation, experience and action. The language and conversation became the necessary tools for the participants to communicate their real life experience and it also assisted the researcher to capture the participants' experience (Willig, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 384) confirm that "work in this tradition attempts to make qualitative research more humanistic, holistic, and relevant to the lives of human

beings". The same articulation of discourse regarding the participants' supervision experience will generate different meanings and understanding within a social constructionist epistemology.

7.4.4 Researcher's Reflexivity

The balance between subjectivity and reflexivity was seriously considered. Researcher bias and subjective attribution are two of the factors that may affect trustworthiness of research. However, it is inappropriate to equate qualitative research with subjectivity and quantitative approaches with objectivity (Scriven, 1972). Fischer and Goblirsch (2007) argue that the self is shaped, maintained and modified in human interaction and dialogue. Walsham (2006, p. 325) points out the best device for researcher's analysis is "his or her own mind, supplemented by the minds of others when work and ideas are exposed to them". ,

Meaning is not inherent in an act or experience but rather constructed through social discourse. Meaning is generated by the linkages that the participant makes between aspects of the life he or she is living and by the explicit linkages that the researcher makes between this understanding and interpretation, which is meaning constructed at another level of analysis.

(Josselson and Lieblich, 2002, p. 276)

One of the significant strategies to deal with biases and assumptions originated from the researcher's own life experiences or in interactions with research participants is the practice of reflexivity (Morrow, 2005). Reflexivity increases

trustworthiness because it helps to clarify thinking, make explicit the implicit, such as the hidden values, purpose and beliefs (Watt, 2007). Researcher reflexivity assists the researcher to pay attention to how one's own experiences and worldviews affect the research process. The endeavour for the researcher is to be aware of the unavoidable bias of preconceptions, personal interests or limits (Sullivan, 2002). Reflexivity increases the sophisticated understanding of research methodology. It allows for the development of a thorough, concise, and elegant conceptual framework with a systemic, yet flexible, and potentially emergent research design (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Reflexivity requires our suspension of our judgment, our proclivity for foreclosed inquiry (Russell and Kelly (2002). Effective reflexivity allows researchers a unique frame of reference through an ongoing record of experiences, reactions and emerging awareness of assumptions or biases (Morrow, 2005).

Critically reflective practitioners constantly research these assumptions by seeing practice through four complementary lenses: the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of learners' eyes, the lens of colleagues' perceptions, and the lens of theoretical, philosophical and research literature (Brookfield, 1998, p.197). These lenses are cautiously executed along my research process. Conducting qualitative research requires considerable reflection on the

researcher's part, and the ability to make a critical assessment of informants' comments. It involves debating the reasons for adopting a course of action, challenging one's own assumptions and recognizing how decisions shape the research study (Carcary, 2009, p.12).

Qualitative and quantitative researchers have their own ways of working with subjectivity. These are very much influenced by the underlying research paradigms.

de Vaus (2001, p. 235) states, "The study of context is important because behavior takes place within a context and its meaning stems largely from that context".

Contextual as well as cultural consideration was crucial in understanding the meanings of the participants' subjective experience. It is dangerous to exclude the context in psychological research of focusing on intrapsychic and interpersonal variables.

Qualitative researchers can "recontextualize" their interview-based data by examining and re-examining the contextual issues (Morrow, 2005). Patton (2002)

integrates constructivism and social constructionism, identifying standards of quality and credibility, acknowledging the matter of subjectivity. Patton also emphasized the integration of theory and practice, deep understanding and particularity, "doing justice to the integrity of unique cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 546).

He also stresses the importance of dialogue among multifarious perspectives.

Constructivist/interpretivist paradigms share similar worldviews with postmodern,

ideological and critical theories. To achieve the goal of managing subjectivity, qualitative researchers pay attention to a number of important issues, including making their implicit assumptions and biases overt to themselves and others, reflexivity, and representation (Morrow, 2005). Increasing consciousness will enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

With regards to the clear communication of findings in psychotherapy research, which is executed in the form of writing and presentation of the work, the six categories of reflexive actions suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) were practised and utilized in my research process. They are (a) reflections on analysis, where researchers think deeply and theorize about what is being learned, including the emerging themes, patterns, and connections between data sources; (b) reflections on method, by examining the procedures and strategies, study design, and problems with data sources; (c) reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts; (d) reflections on the observer's frame of mind, through providing interpretations of the preconceptions associated with a study and its evolution; (e) encounters that occur that provide new ways of thinking about prior assumptions; and (f) points of clarification. These are my major concerns to ensure the trustworthiness of this research thesis.

Revealing the limitations in current therapeutic or methodological approaches while

suggesting new alternatives to consider and encourage further dialogue on a topic important to psychotherapists, psychotherapy researchers, and psychotherapy clients, suggesting a new course of action, based on the data, in terms of improvement in psychotherapy practice or research and creating contribution to social justice (Williams and Morrow, 2009) will certainly add to the “social validity” (Wolf, 1978; Morrow, 2005) of the research.

7.5 Limitation of the study

The inherent characteristics of the chosen qualitative methodology place limitations on the data and findings. There are several limitations of this current research.

First of all, the result of the study cannot be generalized. This was a qualitative study which did not emphasize generalization due to its small sample size. The major intention was to listen in depth to the inner and personal voices of the participants.

A wealth of data from the participants may or may not be representative of other student counsellors.

Secondly, the data of research sources came solely from a university. It is quite possible that the results may vary if the study is replicated at another university.

The limitation is temporarily unresolved since only one university in Hong Kong offers such undergraduate programme in counselling and psychology for training counsellors. A continuous study to replicate this research is worthwhile.

Thirdly, the narratives of the participants provide a "one-sided" view of the experience. This narrow focus should be paid attention to when viewing the data. In order to grasp a more comprehensive picture, research from various angles will facilitate a deeper understanding.

Fourthly, the data were collected at a specific time of the lived experience of the student counsellors, so the data did not reveal any changing process. The supervision process lasted for approximately ten months. The longer they stay in a relationship, the more time for adjustment there will be and the result of the experience will alter due to a better understanding. And a longitudinal design will also help get a clearer picture of the changing process.

And fifthly, this research focused on self-reported data, so it can only measure what the participants were conscious of. Those sides of the stories, which the participants were unaware of, could not be understood. And this made bias unavoidable in this dimension.

Sixthly, cohort effects, personality difference and relational chemistry which may contribute to the experience of the participants were neglected in this study.

Finally, the research focused mainly on the perspectives of the supervisees. Supervision is an interpersonal process. The exploration of supervisors' perspectives will help to produce a more comprehensive picture to enhance the

professional growth of the supervisees.

7.6 Recommendations for further research

Counselling in Hong Kong is becoming popular. The scarcity of culturally appropriate theoretical knowledge and research study needs to be addressed. The study of counselling supervision is still in its infancy.

Suggestions for future research would include an expanded approach to include the perspective of the supervisors. This would provide another angle of the training process. Besides, if possible, the angle from the clients' perspectives could also be studied. Then there will be a more comprehensive view of the training process.

Since group supervision is widely practised in the training, little concern is paid to this area. The dimension of *Guanxi* in group supervision with reference to the relational dynamic of and collectivist culture is worth studying.

The ethics of *Guanxi*, which arouse argument from various standpoints, have been another critical topic that needs to be addressed in the further research on clinical supervision. *Guanxi* is very often related to the sharing of benefits in the business world. It is frequently associated with giving-and-receiving behaviour, doing favours, special treatment, etc., which might lead to ethical concerns of the vital gains or subtle benefits. It is important to know how to draw the line of appropriateness. How do the students face their clients in the context of *Guanxi* in their internship and

sometimes *in* dealing with the cultural *Guanxi* with their clients as well?

7.7 A reflective journey of the researcher

The research journey is approaching the end. I know that it is time for harvest. This is not only a research, but a story about me as a researcher, a practitioner and a person. Starting from the first phase of initial engagement of the proposed research, I entered step by step into the different phases of immersion, incubation, illumination explication and the synthesis as suggested by Moustakas (1990).

I will conclude this journey of researching and knowing in two ways.

First of all, the research is actually a journey of adventure to me. The journey to depth and complexities in human experience was fascinating and challenging. And I found this orientation was consistent with my counselling professional training. My journey of inquiry began with curiosity. I started to read the different stories constructed by the participants and reviewed the literature on how different theorists and researchers had constructed different worlds of realities. The research process reminded me to be more conscious of the underlying assumptions, our experience and ideology, cultural and contextual influence. The self-examination of past experiences and assumptions allowed me to recognize the influences of a variety of genres.

Secondly, I will summarize the research experience with two words: "Pain and Gain".

This is a story of frustration, pain, sufferings, creativity, breakthrough and growth.

It facilitated me to review my practice, my profession through different lenses of the student participants, academics, theorists and researchers from different cohorts.

Counselling professionals do not mature overnight. It is a lifelong journey for a professional to become an expert.

7.8 Conclusion

Every year many students enter counselling programmes. They have to overcome many hurdles and go through many stages. The growing process must be accompanied by good training programmes with sufficient guidance from the clinical counselling supervisors. A good start is halfway to success. The student interns are at the early stage of the journey. The interns' stage of professional development affect is the fundamental basis for the well-being of a professional.

In order to discover what the determinants of a sufficient and satisfactory learning environment for beginners are, the study started off with two research questions which profiled the road map for the design of the research. First of all, what are the experiences of trainee HK student counsellors in clinical supervision? Secondly, what is an effective supervision environment for trainee student counsellors in a HK university setting?

These two questions led the way to explore the developmental responses, and the

cultural influence on the student counsellors' in times of success, struggles and difficulties. I wanted to investigate the prominent factors for an effective and favourable supervision environment for trainees in a Hong Kong university setting. The vital spark in the research journey with these participants aroused much of my inner inquiry about how to foster a better learning, the development of clinical counselling skills and self-efficacy in the new professionals.

I chose a qualitative methodology to conduct a thorough study with ten counselling psychology undergraduates regarding their internship and supervision perception and experience in their final year. This was to reveal their experiential issues and portray the perspectives of the participants in the early stage of their counselling professional development.

Participation in counselling supervision and internship aims to enhance counsellor competence in knowledge and skills, counsellor well-being and protect client safety.

From the narration of the participants, they encountered various types of difficulties and frustrations all through the internship and supervision process.

The analyses of interview data were organized into five master themes. These were: student counsellors' experience in relation to *Guanxi*; Idiosyncratic desires of the student counsellors in the internship stage; the student counsellors' expectations in relation to the internship setting and the supervision environment; the mental

processing of the student counsellors in the learning; *Guanxi* strategies used by the participants. These themes were examined and re-examined along the evolving process.

This research provides special insights regarding the notion of *Guanxi* and its relevance in supervision. The *Guanxi* domain appeared to be one of the dominant themes which were quite pervasive among the narratives of the participants. A considerable amount of attention was paid to *Guanxi* issues, *Guanxi* hierarchy, *Guanxi* horizon and *Guanxi* strategies in the narratives of the participants. To incorporate *Guanxi* knowledge both in training protocols with supervisors as well as counsellors will facilitate more insight and techniques in understanding human dynamics. Good *Guanxi* will likely create a constructive feedback loop that results in a more satisfactory learning or counselling process. This is substantial for the counsellor educators to develop a culturally-appropriate counselling sequence of curriculum, supervision model and teaching styles with the recognition of the *Guanxi* dynamic in the entire programme.

In order to facilitate the learners to progress to a higher developmental stage, counselling educators and supervisors must first pay attention to the *Guanxi* dimension and its relevant issues and work out how to provide a holding environment which is a sufficient prerequisite for further progress and development

of counselling self-efficacy.

The changing nature of supervision over the course of training has long been addressed ever since the birth of the developmental model (Hogan, 1964; Worthington and Roehlke, 1979; Stoltenberg, 1981). In order to attain a professional identity, the personal transformation has gone through many stages and risks. More and more attention has been paid to how developmental changes occur in supervisees. The result of this research produced a resonant effect. To keep current in this field, this study also reflected the egoistic characteristics of the student counsellors and their struggles. Strategies for effective supervision must pay heed to the developmental characteristics as well as the developmental tasks of supervisees. The accomplishment of developmental tasks will surely facilitate the growth of the professional self in the early counselling professional. For growth to occur, identity development takes place at the same time. Identification of the idiosyncratic desires as prime motives and the notification of dilemmas and struggles as the catalyst for growth will facilitate the successful navigation in the supervision.

After all, the transmission of professional knowledge from one generation to the next is very important for the continuation and prolongation of the professions. The results from this study may serve as a stimulus and resource for counsellor

educators and clinical counselling supervisors in their implementation of training programmes and how to construct a successful supervisory alliance in the journey of training of the professional successors. It is hoped that these current findings will inspire further research and contributions from the field to promote optimal counselling professional identity to develop in Hong Kong Chinese culture.

The road to professionalism is long and crucial. Training for quality professionals poses great challenges. The practice of sequential training programmes for quality is growing to meet the high demand of the changing world. How to carry out clinical supervision with inspiration, knowledge and guidance needs more and more attention.

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APPENDIX A:

Research Project Information Sheet

Aim of the research project

This research is a phenomenological investigation of the supervisees' perception and experience of struggles in supervision in the undergraduate counselling internship in Hong Kong culture. The aim of this research is to generate valuable descriptive data of the supervisees' perceptions and experience of their struggles in their beginning stage of the professional development journey. In gaining a clearer perception of their' experiences, it is hoped that the field may better address the struggles in the training of professional counsellors.

Procedure

1. The participants will be asked to read through the research project information sheet.
2. The participants are asked to sign the consent form at the start of the interview.
3. A semi-structured interview will be conducted individually as a means of thorough inquiry. The interview protocol consists of open-ended questions to elicit narrative responses on the subjects' internship and supervision experiences. The interviews will last for approximately one and half hour each time.
4. The participants are invited to remain available for any follow-up interview that might be necessary for clarification purposes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this research study will be kept private. All personal details are totally confidential. Research record, transcripts and other recording notes will be kept in a locked file, only the researcher can access to the records. Tape recordings of interviews will be processed under the participants' permission. In any sort of published materials, no personal information can be identified.

Voluntary Nature of the Research

The research is completely voluntary, and participants are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences, and non-participation will not affect participants' current relations with the Shue Yan University.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this research is Pui Chi Tse under the supervision of 1st Supervisor, Dr Max Biddulph and 2nd Supervisor, Dr Qing Gu. Questions are welcome prior to the beginning of the interview. If there are any questions, participants may contact Pui Chi Tse by mobile at 94711327 or email at puitse2006@gmail.com. Dr Max Biddulph can be reached through email at <max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk>, Dr Qing Gu can be reached through email at qing.gu@nottingham.ac.uk. If there is need to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research, the participants may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham through email at <educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk>.

Risks and Benefits of participation in the study

The research has no particular risks. Each participant's identity and personal information will be kept confidential. The benefits of participation include the opportunity for participants to discuss and reflect upon their internship and supervision experience. The importance of this study lies in its value and aim to contribute to counselling training especially in the relation to the supervision to the juniors.

APPENDIX B:

Research questions:

What the developmental responses are as reported from the student counsellors?
How does culture affect the student counsellors' response when facing success, struggles and difficulties?

How far does culture and cultural assumptions affect the learning process? To what extent do cultural assumptions about hierarchy impact on the dynamic in the supervisory relationship? How does culture affect the student counsellors' coping mechanism in facing struggles and difficulties?

Areas of Questions	Questions	focus
II. About the internship	What were your feelings about your internship? What makes you feel like that? Is there any difference all through your stage of your internship?)	Significance of internship
	2. Does the internship contribute a lot to your professional growth? Why?	Significance of internship
	What are the tasks you think you need to acquire in the internships? Which is (are) your preference? . What is (are) the most significant task(s) in your internship? (Issues of personal development, socialization, cognitive development, moral development, multicultural understanding, issues of uncertainty, confidence in handling the case, issue of identity, job and responsibilities)	Tasks
	4. What is (are) the most significant task(s) in your internship? What should it be? Is there any difference all through your stage of your internship? 5. How do you find about your tasks, feel comfortable or challenging?	Tasks

	6. Any internal conflicts in your internships? What are those conflicts? Can you give some examples? What are the struggles in your training? Skills application or what?	Anxiety
	7. How do you find your motivation (reflects the supervisee's interest, investment, and effort expended in clinical training and practice) to learn in the internship?	Motivation
	8. What instructions from the supervisors will help you most? (skills, want to know "the correct" or "best" approach with the clients, Needs structure, positive feedback) (Dependent on supervisor. Needs structure, positive feedback, and little direct confrontation)	Autonomy
	9. How do you rate your self-awareness? How much are you aware of yourself in the internship?	Self-awareness
	10. How do you identify the problems of the clients?	Assessment skills
	11. How do you identify your own competency in your practice?	Competency
	12. How do you learn? How do you know that you are confident with what they practiced when they see the clients? What is your learning style? Are you aware of it?	Competency
III. About the supervision	1. What is your expectation and perception on supervision?	Perception and expectation
	2. How is your feeling about supervision?	Perception and expectation
	4. What is /are the most important element (s) you want to get during supervision?	Perception and expectation

	5. What have usually be done in your supervision? What have been emphasized in the supervision process?	Perception and expectation
	7. What do you usually get in each supervision session?	Perception and expectation
	8. Are you willing to disclose your incapability to your supervisor? Why? How much?	Supervisory relationship
	9. Did you ever conduct verbal/non-verbal challenge to your supervisor in case you two hold different opinions or stand during supervision?	Supervisory relationship
	10. What is the hardest time during supervision?	Supervisory relationship
	11. What is the happiest time or the most impressive moment during supervision?	Supervisory relationship
	12. What do you learn during supervision so as to feel satisfactory?	Supervisory relationship
	13. What have you experienced in the supervision? (freedom to do, instructions, comments from supervisors, corrections, affirmations, challenges etc) Which do they find most useful in their internship?	
IV. About supervisor	1. What is your first feeling about your supervisor after your first encounter with him or her?	Supervisory relationship
	2. Your preference of supervisor: assigned or free-choice. If you are given the choice, do you want to choose the supervisor yourself?	Supervisory relationship
	3. What should be the qualities of the supervisors according to your point of views?	
	4. What is your expectation on your	

	supervisor? What do you want to get from him or her?	
	5. In what way do you want your supervisor to give you help?	
	6. What do your supervisors emphasize in work with you?	
	7. How do you react to your supervisors' characteristics /style (which may be different from yours)? Does your supervisor's supervising style match your learning style?	
II. Self and culture	1.	
	2. How do you classify your relationship with your supervisor? Do you think that this relationship is hierarchical, lineal or collateral? How do you deal with this relationship? How does this relationship affect your communication with your supervisor?	
	How Confucianism and Collectivism -affect their students' supervisor and supervisee relationship?	
	Did you notice your own communicative behavior, such as speaking, listening, politeness, silence and turn-taking? Can you elaborate a bit in the individual supervision, group supervision?	
	Do these communicative behaviors vary in facing authority, teachers, supervisors and facing peers and your clients?	
	How did you connect with your supervisors and your partners? How did you know that you can connect with them?	

	Can you differentiate your communicative behavior in the following aspects: directness (implicit communication,), politeness, assertiveness (listening-centeredness,, vs. Criticality), inclusion (in-group and out-group distinction) in your communication with your supervisors and your partners?	
	How the face issues affect your communication with your supervisor and working with peers? Have you notice any of your face enhancing strategies in the supervision and your internship?	

APPENDIX C:

GENERIC PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

{Notes in *italics*}

Project title: Counselling Supervision in Hong Kong Chinese culture: A qualitative study of the Intern experience during their counselling internship

Researcher's name : Pui Chi TSE

Supervisor's name : 1st Supervisor – Dr Max Biddulph
2nd Supervisor – Dr Qing Gu

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

I understand that I will be audiotaped / videotaped during the interview.

I understand that data will be stored ...other recording notes will be kept in a locked file, only the researcher can access to the records.

I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name

Date

Contact details

Researcher: Pui Chi TSE; Email: puitse2006@gmail.com

Phone: 852-21048228, Fax: 852-28068044; 852-94711327

Supervisor:

1st supervisor: Dr. Max Biddulph; Email: <max.biddulph@nottingham.ac.uk>,

2nd supervisor: Dr Qing Gu; Email: <qing.gu@nottingham.ac.uk>

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:

educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk