

2019-10

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Dixon, S. & Chiang, C.M. (2019). Promoting reflexivity and reflectivity in counselling, education, and research. Proceedings from the 2018 Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference, 15-31.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/111408>

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Promoting Reflexivity and Reflectivity in Counselling, Education, and Research

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Abstract

Though reflectivity and reflexivity are often perceived as similar concepts with overlaps they both have variations and need to be understood as unique constructs with different manifestations within the field of counselling psychology. Both terms are relevant to the counselling profession; they play a role in how we as counselling psychologists promote and maintain culturally-appropriate interactions with diverse clients. The aim of this paper is to recommend that it is incumbent for us as counselling professionals to engage in reflective and reflexive practices to ensure that we are working in the best interest of everyone we engage with. With the understanding that both concepts are critical components of being ethical, responsive and active in our professional stance, we as counselling psychologists¹ are encouraged to use reflection and reflexivity to develop a good understanding of themselves and our identities inside and outside of the counselling context. It is hoped that this paper will enable the audience to generate meaningful discussions about practical ways to promote consciousness-raising around reflective and reflexive practices; particularly, as we strive to facilitate change in a supportive and safe environment when working within and across various social-cultural and historical contexts.

Keywords

reflectivity, reflexivity, counselling psychology, social justice, social construction

Reflective and reflexive practices are central skills for counsellors, and are therefore essential to the profession of counselling psychology. For this paper, *reflectivity* refers to be the “use of personal values, experiences, and habits to make meaning and is a central tenet of [inquiry-based learning approach]” (Wilhelm, 2013, p. 57) to process multiple perspectives and to solve problems in complex situations (Young, Lambie, Hutchinson, & Thurston-Dyer, 2011). Conversely, *reflexivity* describes “a practice of observing and locating one's self as a knower within certain cultural and sociohistorical contexts; [it] leads to self-awareness, scholarly accountability, and recognition of a range of human truths” (Sinacore, Blaisure, Justin, Healy, & Brawer, 1999, p.

¹ For consistency in this paper, the authors will use the terms counselling psychologists, practitioners, and counsellors interchangeably.

267). Both concepts are relevant within the field of counselling psychology as we take a critical stance in the work that we do and our intentional actions as counselling psychologists. Here, *counselling psychology* is viewed as a “broad specialization within professional psychology that is concerned with using psychological principles to enhance and promote positive growth and mental health of individuals, families, and the broader community” (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2009, para. 1). Drawing from this inclusive view, counselling psychologists have a responsibility to bring a collaborative, developmental, multicultural, and holistic wellness perspective to their teaching, research and practice, to facilitate change at the micro, meso, and macro levels of society (Arthur & Collins, 2010).

Given the above definitions, engagement in both reflective and reflexive practices can better position us as practitioners to be able to promote and maintain culturally-appropriate interactions with our clients at a relational level (Fook, 2002). In so doing we have the capability to deepen our knowledge-base, culturally-responsiveness, and socially-just inquires that can lead to better working alliance with clients (Arthur, 2019; Laitila & Oranen, 2013). Such practices also create a safe and collaborative space for consideration to be given to the integration of social justice and advocacy initiatives in our work with diverse clients (Arthur, 2019).

In this paper, the authors adopt a collaborative stance in addressing the concepts of reflectivity and reflexivity. To start, we will position reflectivity and reflexivity within a social constructionist framework as the theoretical grounding for these key concepts. Next, we provide an in-depth conceptualization of reflectivity and reflexivity within the context of counselling psychology. This will be followed by the effective roles these terms play in counsellor education. Then, we address the growing need for reflective and reflexive processes in research. Next, attention will be given to the infusing of reflectivity and reflexivity in social justice and advocacy work through a case study illustration. Key implications for counselling, teaching, and research are highlighted. We conclude with ethical considerations in our roles and responsibilities as reflective and reflexive counsellors, educators, and researchers.

Positioning Reflectivity and Reflexivity in a Social Constructionist Framework

The term *social construction* was firstly introduced to the field of psychology by Gergen (1985). The basic assumptions of social construction include that there are multiple truths, which are socially constructed and co-constructed (Gergen, 1985). Based on this perspective, social constructionist scholars emphasize individuals’ meaning-making process and challenge their “taken-for-granted” truths (Gergen, 1985, 2009). Integral to this process is the use of language in how we as unique and diverse individuals construct, deconstruct, reconstruct, and co-construct knowledge based on our lived experiences (McNamee, 2004). According to Prochaska and Norcross (2014), we can be viewed as agents who can make social justice and culturally-informed changes in how we deconstruct and reconstruct our subjective realities through language and social engagement with others. Further, as reflective and reflexive beings who value multiple understandings, we have the potential to view misinterpretation of meanings in our work as likely the ambiguity of the human experience (Gergen & Wortham, 2001). As counsellors, we can also negotiate meaning within the therapeutic process through the collaborative co-construction of realities with our clients (Gergen, 2009). This co-creation of meaning invites us to be respectful, optimistic, holistic, reflective, and reflexive in how we interact with our clients.

From this perspective, the authors support the collaborative position that we should act as our clients' accountability ally in working *with* them and not *for* them (Madsen, 1999, p. 21). As social constructionists, we believe that embracing this position enables us to take a non-expert stance and create space for cross-cultural dialogues with clients. Also, by engaging in reflective and reflexive practices, we can help our clients develop a sense of agency and empowerment to facilitate their own change. In this role of active engagement, we should strive to consider the construction and application of knowledge in socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts (Gergen, 1985). Within the social constructionist framework, knowledge is constructed and not discovered; it is also not universal or objective but rather subjective interpretations of our lived experiences (McNamee, 2004; Raskin, 2002). From this standpoint, we are encouraged to reflect on the complexity of the human experience and the value-laden processes of our approach to knowing that our social environments tend to limit, shape, create and reflect reality, and thus influencing the choices we make in constructing our worldviews (Galbin, 2014).

Another important point to note when addressing this framework is that from a socio-political standpoint, power structures within society dictate what is normal and abnormal (Gergen & Wortham, 2001). At the societal level, we as counselling psychologists who might adapt a social constructionist theoretical framework to inform our work with clients, are gently reminded to respect and value the lived experiences of the individuals with whom we engage (McNamee, 2004). Quite often, people in power are likely to impose ways of being and existing upon people who have less power. This means that as counsellors, educators, and researchers, we need to be mindful of our responsibility to challenge the status quo in our reflexive and reflective practices. In so doing, we are able to reflect on our own biases, assumptions, and values in order to determine how they might impact our research, teaching, and practice. In this vein, the authors support Cushman's (1995) perspective that it is the cultural interplay of our language, moral understandings, institutional arrangements of power and privilege, constructed narratives, and social engagements that complete us as human beings. We posit that through critical reflection and reflexivity, we can work mutually with diverse clients to change our personal interpretation and meaning of realities, given our unique and multiple experiences in the areas of counselling.

Infusing Reflectivity and Reflexivity in Counselling

Reflective practice is considered to be a critical component of culturally competent counselling (Collins, Arthur, & Wong-Wylie, 2010). As counsellors, we are encouraged to use reflectivity to develop a good understanding of ourselves and our identities to become more self-aware of how we engage with others. This means that we should "first activate prior reflections, then confront and build on prior experiences and knowledge" in the counselling process (Wilhelm, 2013, p. 57). The counsellor-client relationship can be better understood through reflections on our worldviews, which invites curiosity and non-judgment when working with diverse clients (Paré, 2013). This dynamic calls for us as practitioners to explore our assumptions, values, and biases that are often influenced by our multiplicity of worldviews (D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2005). It is also suggested that reflection-in-action must occur during sessions with various clients to maintain culturally-appropriate interactions (Collins et al., 2010). As counsellors who see value in embracing an *emic* worldview that considers "culturally-specific" perspective within group versus an *etic* perspective that is "culturally-universal" and embraces an outsider's

viewpoint (Sue & Sue, 2016, p. 41). We support Collins et al.'s (2010) position that increasing one's knowledge and skills is not enough for competent practice, but that as counsellors we must engage in continuous reflection in the context of our relationship with a wide range of clients.

Additionally, counsellor reflexivity should be considered within the context of ensuring cultural competency in the therapeutic relationship. Such consideration requires us as counsellors to examine our clients' (and others') assumptions, values, and worldviews in relation to how we interact with them (Cunliffe, 2016). This involves a critical analysis of our collaborative roles in counselling where we join with our clients and help them develop their competencies about cultural diversity. As such, the authors argue that reflexivity in practice is a significant component of being an ethical, responsive, and responsible practitioner (Cunliffe, 2016). We also support Collins et al. (2010) that a key aspect of reflexive practice is the opportunity for counsellors to be mindful of external factors and how these factors might directly and/or indirectly influence the counsellor-client relationship. These factors include, but are not limited to socio-cultural issues, historical contexts, language, and social justice concerns like educational, economic and social mobility inequalities, which can impact policy-making initiatives for oppressed and non-dominant groups in our society (Collins et al., 2010). Later in the paper, we will expand on the topic of social justice. In addition to counselling, the concepts of reflectivity and reflexivity are becoming increasingly prevalent in counsellor education discourse (Laitila & Oranen, 2013). Below, we argue that this prevalence is important in our professional identities as counsellor educators to help us function as change agents in our work with students.

Integrating Reflectivity and Reflexivity in Counsellor Education

Reflectivity and reflexivity are essential to counsellor education (Laitila & Oranen, 2013). As counsellor educators, it is important for us to adopt a reflective and reflexive stance in our work with graduate students (also referred to as trainees) in order to help them generate deeper insights into their learning. We argue that to encourage true reflection and reflexivity, counsellor education must be individualized where trainees are given the opportunity to identify their learning needs and focus on enhancing their own identified areas of competencies (Laitila & Oranen, 2013). One constant reminder for us as counsellor educators is to integrate reflectivity and reflexivity in our work with trainees to ensure that they are able to develop their professional identities in an emotionally safe and respectful environment (Luft & Roughley, 2016). For counsellor educators, this might mean modelling behaviours like self-compassion with our trainees to help them develop their self-awareness, and self-acceptance skills. *Self-compassion*, a concept coined by the researcher Dr. Kristin Neff, "involves responding to our difficult thoughts and feelings with kindness, sympathy, and understanding so that we soothe and comfort ourselves when we're hurting" (Neff, n.d., para. 1). By practicing these skills, we believe that trainees will be better able to engage in self-care strategies to make them more engaged and functional in their pedagogical learning.

According to Luft and Roughley (2016), cultivating a welcoming and collaborative space for graduate students will encourage them not only to feel empowered but also allow them to become critical thinkers in their reflexive practices. Sinacore and colleagues' (1999) work with students who have taken counselling and psychology courses support the above authors' position. Sinacore et al. (1999) highlight seven key strategies that can help to promote reflexivity in the classroom.

They briefly include the following: a) clearly stating goals in course objectives for using reflexivity; b) integrating readings on reflexivity in course content and materials to enhance student learning; c) modelling by acknowledging and explaining how our personal and professional history as counsellor educators might influence our teaching style and choices; d) invite speakers from diverse backgrounds (e.g., women with disabilities, ethnic minority women, gay men and lesbians, women from various religions, etc.) to include their voices by speaking about their experiences to offer students a solid source of knowledge; e) develop reflexivity in class discussions by having “students practice articulating and clarifying what professional and personal knowledge guides their understanding of peoples’ lives, including their own” (p. 268); f) creating assignments for students that encourage reflective practice such as giving them the opportunity to interview someone of a different race, class, religion and socio-economic status; and g) work collaboratively with students to develop grading systems that are congruent with the goals of the course that incorporate reflexive learning. The above strategies offer creative ways for counsellor educators to empower students to have self-agency in their learning.

Further, we believe that trainees will be encouraged to take risks in generating novel and innovative ideas, which are required for reflective and reflexive learning, growth, and development. Another practical strategy that can be used in counsellor education to help augment trainees’ learning in reflective and reflexive practices is creating the opportunity for them to engage in journaling (Luft & Roughley, 2016). The act of writing and reflecting on one’s and others’ feelings can stimulate deeper reflexivity for many students (Dixon, 2018). For example, through journaling, some trainees might begin to realize that their personal autonomy is dependent on their responsible actions, and the quality of the social relationships which are enhanced through interactions with others (Fook, 1999). Also, another useful exercise for students could be having them complete reflective/reflexive papers where they are challenged to become critical thinkers in their own graduate education learning (Wong-Wylie, 2008) and professional identity development (Luft & Roughley, 2016).

By partaking in the strategies outlined above, the authors’ perspectives correspond with Andersen’s idea (1991) that the development of reflectivity and reflexivity is influenced by both trainees’ outer dialogues with us as educators, and inner dialogues with themselves. In this way, learning is multi-dimensional and requires a more individualized approach which can motivate trainees to evaluate their skills, performances and needs, and receive tailored training according to these evaluations (Laitila & Oranen, 2013; Shaw, 2010). By joining with our trainees in their learning, as counsellor educators, we can observe them in their educational contexts and have a better understanding of how they construct their realities. Aside from counsellor education, the concepts of reflectivity and reflexivity are also applicable in the research context, and as such will be addressed below.

Creating Space for Reflectivity and Reflexivity in Research

Over the years, the need for reflective and reflexive practices in the field of research, particularly quantitative studies, has become a point of contention among various scholars (Attia & Edge, 2017; Mortari, 2015; Walker, Read, & Priest, 2013). From this perspective, we point to the philosophical polarizations that exist between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies,

which likely accounts for the limitation of reflective and reflexive practices within quantitative studies (Walker et al., 2013). Here, the authors briefly highlight three common research domains with the understanding that many more are prevalent in the field of research: experimental / positivism, postmodern social constructionism, and pragmatism (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012; Scotland, 2012). First, the school of thought that tends to govern quantitative research is experimental / positivism. Positivists believe that there is a single objective reality, which can be measured and tested with the use of quantifiable tools (Crotty, 1998). Secondly, qualitative research tends to align with a postmodern social constructionist framework that accepts multiple truths and realities (Waller, Farquharson, & Dempsey, 2015). Such realities are subject to interpretations, and therefore are more likely to be explored using qualitative methods. Lastly, mixed methods adopt a more pragmatist approach with the emphasis that reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted, and as such the most effective method is the one that addresses the phenomenon been studied (Scotland, 2012).

Given the subjective nature of reflexivity and reflectivity, these concepts appear to be mainly practiced in qualitative research, where it is used to legitimate and validate research procedures (Mortari, 2015). Below, we will provide a rationale for the effectiveness of reflectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research, with which it is primarily associated. We will also address the value of these terms in quantitative studies, especially in mixed-methods research (Walker et al., 2013).

To start, the practices of reflectivity and reflexivity are valuable mental activities in both our private and professional lives (Mortari, 2015). As such, learning the benefits of both concepts are fundamental for researchers because they allow us to engage in thought-provoking dialogues and rich narratives with participants in a safe space without judgment (Fook, 1996, 1999). In the research field, reflection is considered a vital cognitive practice (Mortari, 2015). Further, in qualitative studies, reflection can be used to evaluate processes, results and how the research evolves, while reflexivity examines the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the the research and one's own interpretation of these influences in the research process (Roulston, 2016; Sinacore et al., 1999). Shaw (2010) explains that reflection in research is concerned with the research process, verification, and ensuring that measures are taken to accurately document participants' accounts of reality. Alternatively, reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role in observing and positioning him/herself as a knower within certain cultural and sociohistorical contexts within the study (Sinacore et al., 1999; Wilhelm, 2013) and the co-constructed interpretations of this reality between the researcher and participants (Shaw, 2010). We also support Hsiung's (2010) view that reflexivity holds much significance in the qualitative domain as the process of examining both oneself as a researcher, and the research process.

Based on the above positions, we argue that by being aware of one's role, the researcher can address implications and be mindful about how they influence the research process. More so, building on the understanding that analysis of participants' accounts is not enough to provide accurate results, as researchers we need to analyze our own lived realities and determine how they might or might not influence the research outcome. Our position is strengthened by Roulston (2016) who postulates that being reflective about one's own role as a researcher and being reflexive about the experiences of our participants' socio-cultural and historical contexts can provide valuable information to increase research accuracy and contribute to knowledge of effective

qualitative research methods. As researchers, reflectivity can take the form of journaling about our biases, values, and assumptions during the research process (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). Bringing these issues to the forefront can likely help us to accurately identify limitations in our research findings and possible ways to address these issues in future investigations (Dixon, 2015).

Additionally, one way to ensure that we are being reflexive in our research practice is to intentionally review transcripts to ensure that participants' voices are being validated and are true representations of their socio-cultural and historical experiences (Wong-Wylie, 2008). Research can take this reflexive process a step further by having participants review their stories to ensure that the inclusion of their voices is heard, and their experiences are not dismissed or minimized. This way, the participants have the agency to re-construct, re-evaluate, and reframe their narratives to fit their experiences if they see the need to do so (Dixon, 2015). To illustrate the utilization of both reflectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research, the first author² makes reference to her work that used a qualitative methodology known as heuristic inquiry (Dixon, 2015). Developed by Moustakas (1990), *heuristic inquiry* is a unique approach that attempts to discover the meaning and the essence of the unique human experiences through the process of reflection, reflexivity, exploration, and elucidation of the nature of the phenomenon being studied (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). My research explored the reconstruction process of Jamaican Canadian immigrant women who used faith to cope with post-migration life stressors like racism and unemployment. As a researcher, I was able to integrate my story alongside the other co-researchers³. Utilizing critical reflectivity (Kondrat, 1999), I was able to acknowledge through journaling that I was both affected and being affected by my new socio-cultural contexts and geographical location, which in turn influenced my lived experiences as an immigrant in Canada.

Additionally, by engaging in reflexive practice, I became painfully aware of the common stories shared with me by my co-researchers of how they made meaning through their faith. According to these women, their faith helped them to cope with post-migration challenges amid adverse circumstances (Dixon, 2015). As a reflexive researcher, I privileged the perspectives and values of my co-researchers (Wilhelm, 2013) within their Canadian cultural and socio-historical contexts. In my reflexive role, I came to the understanding that in creating a safe space for the co-researchers to share their stories, I was supporting their reconstructed realities in meaningful ways (Sinacore et al., 1999). The integration of reflective and reflexive practices in my study allowed me to deepen my knowledge and foster a better understanding of both concepts. I also displayed transparency and empathy to my co-researchers while valuing their narratives and reducing the power imbalance that often exists in research contexts (Dixon, 2014). This form of power imbalance between researchers and participants is often prevalent in quantitative research due to its objective nature that tends to reject data that are considered subjective (Dixon, 2014).

It should be noted that in scoping the social science literature, there is a dearth of quantitative research that addressed the concepts reflexivity and reflectivity. These concepts appeared only in a few mixed methods studies (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Walker et al., 2013; Yvonne Feilzer,

² As heuristic inquiry requires the researcher to integrate his/her voice in the study, I will use the first person because it aligns with this approach.

³ In heuristic inquiry, participants are referred to as co-researchers because both parties share common experiences and there is no power imbalance between them.

2010). To align with the literature, the primary focus will be given to reflexivity and reflectivity in mixed method approaches. Regarding quantitative research, the argument is often made that the utilization of reflectivity and reflexivity in this scope of investigation might limit its objective nature (Walker et al., 2013). However, this traditional way of thinking has been criticized by recent scholars who posit that using a mixed-methods approach can allow for the meaningful incorporation of reflectivity and reflexivity (Attia & Edge, 2017; Waller et al., 2015).

To illustrate, Walker et al. (2013) used a reflective research diary in their grounded theory's mixed-methods study that conducted a retrospective audit of 150 hospice case notes. The authors did not clearly identify the quantitative method used in the study but indicated that data were extracted from the "hospice case notes and transferred to a data capture form, which served as the data collecting instrument, with the first researcher acting as a technician" (Walker et al., 2013, p. 39). In terms of reflexive practice within the study, the authors reported that they kept a detailed history of the research process to critically reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and observations about interactions with staff and data. This form of reflexive practice supports Finlay's (2002) position that the reflexive process allows researchers to engage in explicit self-aware analysis of their roles. The outcome of this mixed-methods investigation supports the claim that reflexivity allows for critical analysis of the data, and as such challenges researchers' understanding and development of the research process in a meaningful and transformative way (Finlay 2002; Walker et al., 2013). In the same vein, reflective and reflexive practices have shown great importance in the social justice domain because they create space for meaningful discussion about advocacy and activism work.

Relevance of Reflectivity and Reflexivity for Social Justice

For many years, the philosophy and conceptualization of social justice have been discussed across academic disciplines without any concrete resolution (Arthur & Collins, 2014; Reisch, 2002; Thrift & Sugarman, 2019). In fact, recent discussions of social justice and social advocacy work in the counselling psychology literature have noted that the concept is often difficult to define and is commonly misunderstood as a taken for granted term that has varying interpretation (Arthur & Collins, 2014; Thrift & Sugarman, 2019). With this contention in mind, the authors borrow from the works of various scholars to provide an inclusive definition of social justice. We propose that *social justice* includes a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to address their collective needs in a safe and secure manner (Arthur & Collins, 2014; Bell, 1997). In line with this definition, we reason that at the heart of social justice is a need for critical reflection and reflexivity ranging from an individual practice skill to a force for social change (Fook, 2002; Kondrat, 1999). Examining social justice through a critical reflective and reflexive lens require us as counselling professionals to consider a paradigm shift in our attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about justice and injustice (Arthur & Collins, 2014). Thus, being advocates for marginalized groups and giving them voice are important elements of social justice and social change practices, which are salient aspects of our professional identity (Arthur & Collins, 2014). Further, social justice can be practiced at three levels: individual, communal, and societal (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). For the purpose of this article, the authors focused on the "individual level", which means that we view counselling psychologists' reflective and reflexive practices as the starting point to facilitate social justice and advocacy work. We further acknowledge that changing societal injustice is the ultimate goal of social justice.

According to Collins and Arthur (2017), practicing social justice at the above individual level requires counselling educators to start with “conversation” in the context of teaching and training, which could facilitate counselling trainees and practitioners to reflect on their own social locations. This means that as counsellors, educators, and researchers, we need to be intentional in reflecting on the intersectionality of our own identities and evaluate how they might impact our work with diverse individuals. For instance, being socially mindful of our identities like race, social economic status (SES), gender, sexual orientation, faith, and ability within Canada can help us come to terms with our taken-for-granted privileges. For some of us, the examination of such identities might bring to our awareness feelings of oppression and being othered as members of a non-dominant group within a multicultural context. Regardless of our social location, reflecting on our own privileges and experiences of oppression can be challenging, and at times can create tension between counsellors and clients, educators and trainees, as well as researchers and participants (Luft & Roughley, 2016). We contend that cultivating a collaborative and respectful relationship between the above parties can prompt reflective questions about social justice. Also, we believe that the exploration of social justice issues through reflection can help to facilitate change as we recognize how our worldviews might inadvertently influence our privileges and/or oppressions based on our social locations.

The authors argue that reflectivity focuses on thinking dimension (i.e., awareness), while reflexivity emphasizes on action dimension (i.e., practice). Compared to reflectivity, reflexivity has a critical underpinning in that it allows practitioners to transfer knowledge into professional actions (Fook, 2002). In the context of social justice practice, reflexivity can be considered as the ability to apply reflective skills to one’s socio-political and historical locations in his/her professional learning and practice (Sinacore et al., 1999). To illustrate, let us consider the case of a trainee under supervision: biological male, European descent, working-class, heterosexual, cisgender, the preferred gender pronoun “his/him”, and abled-body. Given the opportunity to engage in reflection on his own privileges and oppression in relation to his social locations, he might recognize that his biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation have brought him access to privileges and opportunities to grow as a “traditional man”. However, his low SES has forced him to put his education on hold because he needed to work several jobs at the same time to afford his professional development. Based on his reflection on privileges and oppression, his reflexive practice might focus on “how” he utilizes these reflections into his own learning and lived experiences.

Within the context of professional learning, the supervisor might draw from the work of social constructionist scholars (e.g., Gergen, 2009; White & Epston, 1990) by using the externalization strategy. For example, when working with the supervisee seeing the above male client, the supervisor might ask the trainee whether or not the client views the presenting issue as the problem and not himself as the problem based on his social location. Utilizing this strategy with the trainee might be empowering for him to engage in further reflections and reflexivity about his social locations. Also, joining with the trainee, the supervisor might tentatively invite him to engage in journaling and/or incorporating more readings into his repertoire about socioeconomic disparity. These activities might stimulate the trainee’s awareness about the intersectionality between gender, social class, education, and SES, and how the interplay of these variables has influenced his social locations and cultural worldviews.

Furthering the dialogue in the context of professional practice and training, this trainee might be working with a lesbian client during his practicum, who is coming from a middle-class background, with a presenting issue of “feeling unmotivated” about her life. In this case, the trainee needs to be aware of the cultural differences of sexual orientation and SES between himself and the client. Additionally, he needs to be sensitive about what his thoughts and feelings are around these differences and how they might influence his ability to understand the client and emphasize with her situation. Further, to strengthen the working alliance, it might be beneficial for the trainee to be transparent about being a privileged heterosexual male and check in with the client about how his identified gender might create some discomfort for her. If the client responded that the trainee’s (counsellor) cisgender and other privileges made her uncomfortable, the trainee could demonstrate appreciation for the client’s response and acknowledge his own privileges and make efforts to avoid the obstacles of these privileges in their collaboration and conversations during counselling. Such openness from the trainee might create trust for the client and allow her to feel more comfortable discussing her sexual orientation and experiences of oppression in a safe space.

Thus, the trainee can take an affirmative position to gender and sexual orientation diversity and have more meaningful, nonjudgmental and compassionate conversations with the client. Of importance is the fact that working from a social constructionist framework also creates relational space for both the trainee and client to have these socially-informed conversations about her sexual orientation and experiences of oppression (Wulff & St. George, 2017). To this end, we argue that continuous engagement in reflections for us as professionals is likely to stimulate critical reflexivity, consciousness-raising, and intentional change that is action-oriented and socially-motivated. Furthermore, supervisors need to reflect on their own privileges and oppression related to social locations and be mindful about how these factors are likely to impact the supervisory relationship.

Implications for Counselling Education, Practice, and Research

Reflective and reflexive practices are key dimensions to the professional advancement of the counselling community on a whole. In support of this stance, Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, and McCullough (2015) indicate that practitioners’ self-awareness has been integral to the counselling profession, particularly in the development of their multicultural and social justice competencies. In this vein, the following implications for counselling education, practice, and research are warranted.

To start, counselling education adds fundamental value to the growth of the counselling profession. Several scholars have discussed counselling pedagogical approaches and the need to shift to feminist and multicultural pedagogy, in order to address more critical reflectivity and reflexivity of counsellors’ awareness and advocacy during counselling teaching and training (Enns & Forrest, 2005; Enns, Sinacore, Ancis, & Phillips, 2004). Additionally, numerous researchers have proposed a scientist-practitioner-advocate model (SPA model) to emphasize counsellors’ social responsibility in counselling professional work (Fassinger & O'Brien, 2000; Mallinckrodt, Miles, & Levy, 2014). As reflectivity and reflexivity are well encouraged in the educator-trainee relationship, counsellor educators are gently challenged to enhance their competency by

incorporating a social constructionist pedagogy (Gergen & Wortham, 2001). This pedagogical framework stresses both relationship and dialogue and considers education to be a relational process, which can be employed as a guide to facilitate future counsellors' reflectivity and reflexivity. Additionally, Laitila and Oranen (2013) proposed a training model, Developing Professional Practice (DPP), which is more tailored towards counsellor training. DPP is a five-phased training model, aiming to facilitate trainees' reflexivity on their professional practices by initiating reflection questions and asking them to respond in everyday and professional language (Laitila & Oranea, 2013). This model can be effective in supporting future counsellors to develop good reflective and reflexive skills that are critical for social justice and advocacy work.

Secondly, within the counselling process, counsellors have an ethical responsibility to provide an environment where clients feel safe, heard, and validated (Savickas, 2016). Based on the rapport and collaborative relationship between the counsellor and client, the counsellor can facilitate the client's awareness of his/ her situation (i.e., reflectivity) and actions based on his/her awareness (i.e., reflexivity) by prompting reflective questions, echoing the client's words, or requesting clarification (Guichard, 2016). For example, the counsellor could ask the client: "*What do you think of this situation where you have been feeling excluded in relation to your gender?*". Counsellors could use this question in future practice to guide clients' awareness about their situations and social locations.

Thirdly, counselling researchers' reflectivity and reflexivity are strongly connected to their integrality as scholars whose studies are ethically-based to demonstrate general respect to participants and the research process (CPA, 2014). Thus, counselling researchers' ability to engage in reflectivity and reflexivity is essential to conducting research regardless of the selected methodology being utilized. For qualitative researchers, ongoing reflecting on their own social locations and how these positionalities might influence the research process correspond to the concept of "epoché" from Husserlian phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). This means that researchers need to be aware of their own pre-concepts of the research topics, which are often related to their own lived experiences. By monitoring and managing the influence of their pre-concepts during the research process, researchers will be able to provide deep and rich descriptions of participants' experiences of the researched phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, quantitative researchers are also encouraged to consider integrating reflective and reflexive practices into their work. By so doing, they can increase their awareness about their own social locations, which can positively influence the research topic undertaken and their respectful interpretation of the data (Sprague, 2016). Therefore, reflectivity and reflexivity enable researchers to consider culturally-sensitive counselling implications and place value on the applications of the findings disseminated to the broader society for the advancement of knowledge.

To summarize, the concept of reflectivity starts with the individual's cognitive processes by being aware of variables such as his/her⁴ own values, privileges, and oppressive experiences, and so forth in relation to his/her social locations as well as other subjective contexts. In contrast, reflexivity brings counsellors, educators, researchers, and trainees from cognition to action level.

⁴ Note that in this paper, the authors' use of his/her gender pronouns do not negate the fact that other gender pronouns might be excluded from the discussion, which is not our intention. As such, these gender pronouns can be replaced with ones that fit the readers' gender preferences.

The authors argue that we should strive to “enact” our reflections in the context of our professional learning and practices, including counselling and research (Fook, 2002). We believe that reflectivity and reflexivity are essential to all aspects of counselling because they are fundamental to how counsellors, educators, and researchers foster culturally-appropriate work that is socially-just and responsive to the diverse needs of *all* people.

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