

The Necessity of Counselor Individuation for Fostering Reflective Practice

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Counselor self-reflection is crucial for increasing self-awareness and improving counseling practice. Nonetheless, the definition for reflective practice is noninclusive of practitioner self-reflection. Furthermore, little is known about the characteristics necessary for critical self-reflection, resulting in insufficient guidance for practitioners to acquire critical self-reflective capabilities. Examining these concerns reveals that counselors will be more capable of reflective practice as they individuate, or develop, their personalities. Thus, the promotion of counselor individuation is essential.

Keywords: critical reflection, counseling, individuation, reflective practice, self-reflection

Much of the writing in the area of reflective practice is demonstrative of the ways that reflection is important for effective and competent practice (Furr & Carroll, 2003). In addition, counselor self-reflection as a means to increase self-awareness has received greater attention in recent literature within the counseling field (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Wong-Wylie, 2010). Kramer (2000) argued that good counselors not only possess self-awareness, but also are “well along in personal evolution” (p. 71). In this sense, personal evolution can be likened to individuation (Jung, 1954), a process in which individuals strive for wholeness of the conscious and unconscious aspects of their psyches. Despite increased support for the awareness of the inner world of the counselor (Kramer, 2000) in the literature, three issues of concern require attention. First, a definition of reflective practice inclusive of counselors’ self-reflecting is absent from the literature (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Pedro, 2005). Second, little is known about the characteristics required by counselors to engage in critical self-reflection (Merriam, 2004). Third, failure to identify these characteristics results in insufficient guidance for counselors to acquire critical self-reflective capabilities. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to address these three identified issues. Within this article, I propose a definition for reflective practice inclusive of self-reflection, highlight key cognitive and affective characteristics necessary for counselors to critically self-reflect, and analyze and evaluate the relationship between counselor individuation and their critical self-reflective capabilities. With this knowledge, counselors will likely be better equipped to engage in reflective practice as they individuate.

This article is divided into four sections. In the first section, I focus on the importance of counselor self-awareness and provide a brief overview and clarify the meaning of reflective practice. In the second section, I describe the most commonly explored domains of critical self-reflection and outline three characteristics required by counselors to engage in critical self-reflection. In the third section, I illustrate the way counselors develop critical self-reflective capabilities as they individuate. In the final sections, I discuss the implications for practicing counselors and future research.

Counselor Self-Awareness and Reflective Practice

The importance of reflective practice in the counseling field is highlighted by the necessity of counselor self-awareness for competent and ethical counseling practice (Wong-Wylie, 2010). As a result, I describe the way counselors’ increased self-awareness contributes to improved counseling practice. In addition, I will provide a brief overview of reflective practice.

Counselor Self-Awareness

The necessity for counselor self-awareness is evident when taking into consideration the potential for practitioner ethnocentricism and culturcentricism (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Ho, 1995), and the nature of the transference relationship between clients and counselors (Cashdan, 1988; Grayer & Sax, 1986). Collins and Arthur (2010) emphasized that counselors who lack self-awareness are more likely to be ethnocentric, or use their own values and assumptions to make judgments

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about the normalcy of clients' situations. They argued that counselors' biased judgments can be harmful to clients' emotional and psychological well-being. Therefore, counselors should increase their understanding of their subjective realms (Kramer, 2000) and the ways their personal lenses influence their decisions (Pettifor, 1996). The significance of counselor self-awareness is further magnified when working with diverse clients and across cultures (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Ho (1995) put forth the concept of *culturocentrism* to describe the way counselors' internalized cultures, or cultural beliefs, influence their cognitions. In turn, counselors' subjective cultural lenses can affect interpersonal understanding and all decisions made during the counseling process (Ho, 1995; Sue et al., 1992). Therefore, having an increased awareness of their personal lenses and internalized cultures is necessary to alleviate ethnocentric and *culturocentric* tendencies, respectively (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Ho, 1995).

In addition to challenging ethnocentric and *culturocentric* tendencies, counselor self-awareness is necessary for navigating the transference relationship between clients and counselors. Grayer and Sax (1986) described client transference and counselor countertransference as clients' and counselors' intersubjective unconscious and conscious experiences of one another and themselves. They demonstrated that countertransference consists of counselors' perceptions of clients originating from counselors' previous personal experiences, as well as processes of identifications based on clients' transferences during sessions. Cashdan (1988) and Dales and Jerry (2008) argued that counselors' countertransference experiences within the therapeutic relationship can be used as a therapeutic tool. Furthermore, they asserted that counselors' self-awareness is a key component to understanding the relationship dynamics and, in turn, successfully navigating the transference relationship. Alternatively, counselors with minimal self-awareness might unintentionally engage the transference relationship in a way that results in ineffective therapy or harm to their clients (Cashdan, 1988). Therefore, counselors' self-awareness is necessary for navigating the transference relationship and making informed professional decisions (Dales & Jerry, 2008). Given that counselor self-awareness is considered to be crucial for improving practice, self-awareness is closely associated with the tenets of reflective practice.

Reflective Practice

Wong-Wylie (2010) maintained that reflective practice was supported as one of the main methods for counselors to be proactive and increase their self-awareness when working with clients. Influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey (1933), Schon's (1983, 1987) seminal writings are primarily associated with reflective practice. Schon (1983) described the reflective practitioner as one who "reflects on the phenomena before him and on the prior understandings which have been

implicit in his behaviour" (p. 69). Schon and Wong-Wylie were instrumental in differentiating between modes of reflection in practice and defining reflective practice.

Modes of reflection. Schon (1983) described two modes of reflection to explain the ways practitioners reflect on professional situations: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-in-action occurs when practitioners make decisions when in unique professional situations based on information derived from their reflecting and questioning of their tacit, or difficult to articulate, knowledge (Schon, 1987). Alternatively, reflection-on-action pertains to practitioners engaging in reflective thinking after the occurrence of professional situations. Based on their speculations of professional situations, practitioners consider what they might have done differently or what they can do differently in future practice (Schon, 1987).

Connecting reflective practice with personal self-awareness, Wong-Wylie (2010) introduced a mode of reflection that describes practitioners' self-reflection. Inspired by Schon's (1987) two modes of reflection, she put forth a third process of reflection, *reflection-on-self-in/on-action*. Different from reflecting solely on situations in practice, Wong-Wylie (2010) used reflection-on-self-in/on-action to refer to practitioners reflecting on the way their personal experiences influence them on both a personal and professional level. Rooted in Clandinin's (1993) narrative perspective, reflection-on-self-in/on-action is based on the belief that individuals' personal experiences influence their professional selves. Clandinin referred to the term *personal practical knowledge* to describe practitioners increasing their personal awareness to promote personal and professional growth. Likewise, Mezirow (2000) asserted that individuals' beliefs and thought processes are formed from social and cultural experiences throughout their lives. From this perspective, practitioners' personal lenses will influence their learning, perceptions, and interactions in both personal and professional situations. Therefore, practitioners will inherently make better informed professional decisions as they increase their self-awareness (Wong-Wylie, 2010).

Defining reflective practice. Largely influenced by Schon's (1983, 1987) writings on reflective practice, subsequent scholars also viewed reflective practice in terms of reflecting solely on professional situations (Pedro, 2005). For example, Jarvis's (1992) definition of reflective practice is commonly referred to in the literature regarding practitioners improving professional practice (Atkins & Murphy, 1993). Jarvis defined reflective practice as a "form of practice which seeks to problematize many situations of professional performance so that they can become potential learning situations and so the practitioners can continue to learn, grow, and develop in and through their practice" (p. 180). In a counseling setting, an insufficient definition of reflective practice can create confusion for counselors acquiring reflective practice skills. Therefore, I draw from Clandinin's (1993) writing on personal practical knowledge and Wong-Wylie's (2010) mode of reflection

tion, reflection-on-self-in/on-action, to form a comprehensive definition of reflective practice. Thus, reflective practice can be defined as a form of practice in which counselors problematize and reflect on professional situations, themselves and their personal experiences, in order to gain new knowledge and improve their practice. As a result, counselors engaging in reflective practice will not only reflect on clients and in-session interactions, but also on the role of the person of the counselor (Wong-Wylie, 2010). For example, they will aim to improve their practices by reflecting on the way their past and present personal experiences affect their interactions with clients (Wong-Wylie, 2010). Self-reflection included under the umbrella of reflective practice calls for an examination of practitioner self-reflection.

Components and Characteristics Necessary for Critical Self-Reflection

To support counselors to successfully integrate themselves into the practice of counseling, Kramer (2000) advocated for and suggested ways for counselors to self-reflect. An underlying assumption of promoting counselor reflective practice is that counselors are capable of critical self-reflection. However, the individual characteristics necessary for engaging in critical self-reflection is minimally addressed in the literature (Merriam, 2004). Therefore, I outline components of critical self-reflection commonly explored within the literature, as well as highlight from this discussion the key personal characteristics necessary for practitioners to critically self-reflect.

Understanding Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection is frequently associated with Mezirow's writings (1991, 2000) on the theory of transformative learning in the field of adult education. Mezirow highlighted both cognitive and affective domains as integral to understanding critical self-reflection.

Cognitive domain. Grounded in cognitive and developmental psychology, Mezirow (1991) highlighted reflection as a key component to transformative learning, or individuals' experiencing a change in their meaning perspectives. More specifically, Mezirow proposed that individuals can change their meaning perspectives, or world views, by reflecting on their beliefs, assumptions, or perspectives.

Mezirow (1991) identified three levels of reflection that individuals can use for learning: content, process, and premise reflection. Practitioners who use content reflection, the first and most superficial of the three, will reflect on the nature of a problem (Mezirow, 1991). Counselors engaging in content reflection would consider clients' presenting concerns and situations. In the next level, process reflection, practitioners will reflect on the interpretation of data and examine the quality of practice (Mezirow, 1991). Counselors using process reflection would explore the usefulness of their therapeutic

approach for clients. These practitioners might experience a change in their meaning schema, such as their beliefs that make up their interpretations of experience (Mezirow, 1991). Lastly, Mezirow identified premise reflection as the third level of reflection. In premise reflection, also known as critical reflection, practitioners reflect on their underlying beliefs and assumptions and challenge the validity of these presuppositions formed from prior learning (Mezirow, 1991). Critically reflective counselors would question and challenge their underlying assumptions implicit in their approach with clients. Critical reflection promotes a deeper level of reflection necessary for reflective practice in which a perspective shift, or a transformation of personal meaning perspectives, can take place (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). As a result, the cognitive domain of critical reflection and, in particular, critical self-reflection, involves practitioners examining and challenging their meaning perspectives, as well as those of others in a rational and critical manner once a problem is identified (Mezirow, 1991).

Affective domain. Mezirow (1991) focused less on the affective domain of critical self-reflection (Taylor, 2008). However, emotion (Damasio, 1994; Frijda, 1986) and attachment (Bowlby, 1973) theorists helped to explain the way emotions are interrelated and interactive with meaning perspectives. Meaning perspectives are developed as children adopt internal representations of their primary caregivers during the attachment phase (Bowlby, 1973). During this time, children create connections between categories of objects and situations to their primary emotions (Damasio, 1994; Frijda, 1986). These primary emotions and core beliefs related to meaning perspectives are unquestioned and become unconscious, or implicit. Furthermore, individuals' subjective lenses continue to shape their perceptions of future experiences, even despite contradictory evidence.

Scholars (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Mezirow, 1991) described practitioners' awareness and analysis of emotions as a necessary part of the process of critical self-reflection. For example, counselors can experience negative and positive emotions when questioning personal meaning perspectives (Boud et al., 1985). In turn, emotions can either enhance self-reflection or deter practitioners from critically self-reflecting (Boud et al., 1985). For example, when experiences are too threatening to the way individuals think or learn, they tend to block out or distort their cognitions to provide compatible interpretations (Mezirow, 1991). As a result, practitioners will often unintentionally avoid questioning long-held meaning perspectives to protect themselves from further emotional injury (Boud et al., 1985). Therefore, counselors' emotional and cognitive development may influence their ability to critically self-reflect.

Counselor Characteristics

The review of reflective practice and critical self-reflection highlights the importance of counselor emotional and cogni-



tive development for critical self-reflection. More specifically, three characteristics necessary for critical self-reflection are mature cognitive development (Kitchener, 1986; Merriam, 2004), the capacity for reflective distance (Bateson, 1972; Voegelin, 1999), and heightened emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Greenberg, 2002).

Mature cognitive development. A necessary component to critical self-reflection is practitioners' cognitive abilities to rationally examine their meaning perspectives and identify problems in their cognitions (Mezirow, 1991). However, Merriam (2004) argued that practitioners must possess mature cognitive development, or an advanced level of cognitive functioning, to participate in these cognitive tasks. Merriam suggested that an individual's cognitive abilities are more advanced than the last stage of Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, the formal operational stage (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Similarly, Kitchener (1986) argued that individuals demonstrate increased reflective skills once they possess cognitive abilities beyond deductive reasoning and abstract thinking skills acquired in the formal operational stage.

Expanding on Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, Kitchener (1986) outlined three higher stages of cognitive functioning in the reflective judgment model. Individuals in Stage 5 of Kitchener's model demonstrate dialectical thinking skills, or question unsupported premises. In turn, they acquire the capacity to embrace contradictions within their own thoughts and feelings (Kitchener, 1986). Individuals in Stage 6 and Stage 7 demonstrate the capacity for epistemic cognition, or the ability to discover problems within their cognitions (Kitchener, 1986). Furthermore, they demonstrate additional reflective judgment skills, such as the ability to examine alternative perspectives and identify that knowledge is uncertain and actively constructed (Kitchener, 1986). Consequently, counselors will be better equipped to engage in critical self-reflection as they acquire mature cognitive development.

Capacity for reflective distance. Mezirow (1991) demonstrated that common obstacles to engaging in critical self-reflection are individuals' tendencies to overlook a problem and avoid challenging their meaning perspectives. Philosopher Eric Voegelin (1999) identified *reflective distance* as a third dimension of consciousness. Predicated on individuals' awareness of their subjective experience of reality, Voegelin described reflective distance as the capacity for human beings to reflect upon and evaluate their consciousness. Likewise, Thomas Kuhn (1996) described the way scientific paradigms, or models of reality, are difficult to change based on their bias and self-affirming nature. Kuhn argued that individuals must experience paradigm shifts and the accompanying perceptual switches to acquire the capacity to objectively view and challenge previous paradigms. In addition, Kuhn explained that paradigm shifts occur following a paradigm clash, or when there is opposition between the underlying assumptions defining two models.

Applying the concept of a paradigm on an individual level, Gregory Bateson (1972) introduced three types of learning: I, II, and III. In Types I and II learning, practitioners use trial and error with the same self-limiting presuppositions of their world views even if they do not receive reinforcement for their efforts. As a result, practitioners experience behavioral changes and, at most, acquire new alternatives to their presuppositions (Bateson, 1972). Alternatively, individuals in a Type III learning experience acquire a new set of presuppositions, or a new world view, as they realize they belong within a larger system and discover new possibilities (Bateson, 1972). In other words, they gain a less limited and more objective perspective as they see a context within a context and, in particular, themselves within a context. In turn, their paradigm shift allows them to question their unexamined premises and the categories of Type II learning. Therefore, counselors acquire the capacity for reflective distance once they have a Type III learning experience. In turn, they gain the skills necessary for critical self-reflection, such as the ability to identify problems and challenge their meaning perspectives.

Heightened emotional intelligence. The necessity for counselors to have the capacity to regulate their emotions when detecting and questioning their meaning perspectives was highlighted within the affective domain of critical self-reflection. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to identify, assess, and control one's emotions (Goleman, 1995). In particular, individuals with increased emotional awareness practice detecting their emotions and making connections between their body, thoughts, and emotions (Greenberg, 2002). Furthermore, individuals with increased emotion regulation capacities are better equipped to cope with and regulate their emotional experience (Greenberg, 2002). Consequently, counselors with heightened emotional intelligence will be better able to critically self-reflect. Given that all three characteristics are necessary for critical self-reflection, counselors must strive to attain them to engage in reflective practice within their counseling practices.

■ The Individuation Process and Counselor Reflective Practice

Mature cognitive development (Merriam, 2004), the capacity for reflective distance (Voegelin, 1999), and heightened emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) are key characteristics that are required by counselors to engage in critical self-reflection within their practice. Attainment of higher personality development is commonly referred to in human development models (Loevinger, 1976). As a result, an examination of models of personality development can be used to understand counselors' acquisition of higher cognitive and affective capabilities necessary for reflective practice.

In the individuation model suggested by Jung (1954) and further developed by Hollis (2005), individuals acquire an

expansion of ego consciousness as they progress through the two stages of the individuation process, the first half of life and second half of life. Specifically, individuation is a process in which individuals cultivate their personalities and strive to integrate the conscious and unconscious aspects of their psyche (Jung, 1954). Although the process of individuation accounts for human life spans, Jungian psychoanalysts (Hollis, 2005; Pascal, 1992) primarily focused on the second half of life. They argued that few individuals progress to the second half of life. Furthermore, movement to this stage of individuation is unrelated to chronological advancement (Hollis, 2005; Pascal, 1992). Similar to Jung, Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) presumed that human beings have the potential to shape their personalities and evolve from automatic to voluntary development. Known as Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (TPD), Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) developed the five hierarchical levels of functioning. Progression through these levels, or a process of positive disintegration, involves the restructuring of individuals' underlying organization of affective and cognitive functions (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Therefore, the TPD model is useful for understanding counselors' attaining emotional and cognitive critical self-reflective capabilities as they progress from the first half to the second half of life of their individuation process.

First Half of Life

The first half of life is a necessary process of ego-differentiation, in which a separate ego-consciousness emerges from the unity of the self, or unconscious (Pascal, 1992). During this stage, individuals' basic psychological functions (i.e., feeling, thinking, intuition, and sensation) characterize these conscious or unconscious aspects of their psyches (Pascal, 1992). In turn, they establish their personas (Jung, 1954), or the way they present themselves to the external world, as their way to adaptively function within society. Jung (1954) and Hollis (2005) argued that the majority of adults are in this stage of individuation. Levels I and II of the TPD model (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) can be used to provide a conceptualization of the cognitive and affective capabilities acquired by individuals during the first half of life.

Level I. Level I, primary integration, is the least differentiated level of development. Within this level, individuals develop their mental functions and personas as they become rooted in their external world (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Primary integration is characterized by individuals acting on primitive drives and instincts with no inner psychic milieu, or intrapsychic factors. They display impulsive and rigid behaviors, resulting in a limited ability for developmental transformation (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). In addition, individuals in Level I view the world in egocentric terms and highly value social acceptance and advancement. As a result, once social norms are learned, they are closely

adhered to in order to avoid punishment or to receive rewards (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Furthermore, they demonstrate minimal appreciation for the abstract, minimal emotional awareness, and only some emotional responsiveness (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Essentially, individuals in this level have limited capacity to process experiences with depth (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977).

Level II. Individuals in the second level, unilevel disintegration, begin to develop an inner psychic milieu, such as an ability to notice individual differences, attain minimal self-awareness, and a capacity to imagine multiple possibilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Characterized by disequilibrium of the primary structure, individuals in unilevel disintegration begin to notice a difference between their subjective experiences and objective realities, or inner realities and outward appearances. However, they experience either minimal affect or intense, mixed emotions, resulting in a loose structure unequipped for stress and emotional tension (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Similar to Level I, individuals in Level II continue to view a single plane of reality. Therefore, they make decisions based on their immediate cultures and are unaware of a larger sense of order. In turn, their experiences are perceived in distorted, ego-affirming forms, resulting in most individuals either reverting back to Level I or staying in this level for an extended period of time (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). These tendencies are characteristic of individuals engaging in Type I and Type II learning experiences of Bateson's (1972) types of learning. With regard to their cognitive development, individuals in this level demonstrate formal operational skills. However, some have the capacity to question unsupported premises, which is distinctive of Stage 5 in Kitchener's (1986) reflective judgment model.

When considering the three critical self-reflective characteristics previously outlined, individuals in Level I and Level II of the TPD model (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) fail to acquire the capacity for reflective distance and mature cognitive development. In addition, they possess minimal emotional intelligence. Therefore, counselors in this stage of individuation do not acquire the mature cognitive and affective capabilities necessary for reflective practice. Consequently, they are unequipped to challenge their underlying assumptions affecting practice, and instead will reflect on the nature and quality of counseling practice.

Second Half of Life

The second half of life is the gradual integration and unification of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche (Pascal, 1992). The beginning of this stage is marked by intense inner conflict in which individuals question their ultimate purpose in life (Hollis, 2005). As individuals resolve the successive layers of psychological conflict, they begin to take responsibility and recognize themselves as the origin of

their own destiny (Pascal, 1992). Levels III, IV, and V of the TPD model (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977) can be used to conceptualize the cognitive and affective capabilities acquired by individuals during the second half of life.

Level III. Level III, spontaneous multilevel disintegration, is characterized by individuals experiencing a differentiation of mental life and an increased ability to view reality in multiple, hierarchical levels (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Their advancement from Level II to Level III is spontaneously brought on by the intense inner conflict between the contrast of what is and what ought to be. In other words, they engage in a Type III learning experience (Bateson, 1972), in which they experience a paradigm shift and acquire a new set of presuppositions. With their attained capacity for reflective distance, individuals realize that they are not restricted to the set of presuppositions learned in the first half of life. Similarly, Hollis (2005) described this as a point in which individuals realize that they are more than their ego-consciousness. Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977), Hollis (2005), and Jung (1954) observed that few adults progress to this phase of human development given the complex process involved in achieving a paradigm shift.

Multilevel disintegration is marked by individuals experiencing numerous, intense inner conflicts and a heightened sense of individual responsibility (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). In addition, their behavior is guided by an emerging, emotionally discovered, hierarchy of values and aims. Viewing multiple levels of reality, individuals can more objectively reconsider their role identities and engage in an existential search and increased self-exploration (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). During this time, they begin to identify and process complexes, or implicit sets of presuppositions learned in the first half of life, and integrate unconscious aspects of their psyches into consciousness (Pascal, 1992). Individuals in Level III develop an increased capacity to acknowledge and cope with inner conflict, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). These are characteristics that define Stage 6 of Kitchener's (1986) model of reflective judgment and those associated with the ability to engage in reflective judgment. In addition, individuals attain greater emotional intelligence as they increase their emotional awareness and coping skills. Therefore, counselors in Level III begin to acquire the cognitive and affective capabilities necessary for engaging in reflective practice.

Levels IV and V. In Level IV, organized multilevel disintegration, individuals are more organized in their striving for their well-defined internal hierarchy of values and aims (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Also, they recognize the limitations to autonomy and embrace emotional interdependence. In addition, their inner conflicts are lessened as they reconcile complexes and acquire an expansion of ego-consciousness (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Hollis, 2005; Pascal, 1992). As a result, they attain heightened emotional intelligence. Individuals in

Level IV display behaviors that tend toward their personality ideal and service to others. They approach these tasks by demonstrating acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty. In other words, they present with the characteristics of Stage 7 of Kitchener's (1986) model of reflective judgment, displaying more matured reflective judgment skills. Therefore, counselors in Level IV will fully acquire the capabilities that are necessary for engaging in reflective practice. This increased capacity will be evident in practicing counselors by their ability and tendency to question and explore their underlying assumptions when working with clients.

Individuation is considered to be a continuous striving (Hollis, 2005). Very few individuals have been observed to attain Level V, secondary integration, the final level of the TPD model (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Ideally, individuated individuals are believed to achieve balance in their psychological functions, reconciliation to their destiny, and universal compassion and self-sacrifice (Hollis, 2005; Pascal, 1992). Ultimately, individuated counselors would attain the highest levels of cognitive and affective functioning needed to engage in critical self-reflection. Therefore, counselors' individuation is fundamental to their ability to acquire the capabilities necessary to engage in reflective practice. These conclusions bring forth serious implications for counseling practice.

■ Implications for Counseling Practice

In the previous section, I demonstrated that counselor individuation is pivotal to acquire critical self-reflective capabilities necessary for reflective practice. Under analysis, two prominent outcomes involving the individuation process and critical self-reflective capabilities were evident and have implications for practicing counselors. The first outcome was that individuals must transition to the second half of life of the individuation process to begin to acquire the cognitive and affective capabilities necessary for reflective practice. Scholars (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Hollis, 2005) have argued that individuals must experience a paradigm clash and intense inner conflict to create a paradigm shift that transitions them to the second half of life. Therefore, counselors striving to engage in reflective practice should use strategies that will encourage their experience of a paradigm clash to support their progression to the second half of life. However, for individuals to actively create a paradigm shift and acknowledge a different paradigm can be challenging. As a result, they might avoid contradictory presuppositions to escape experiencing inner conflict (Kuhn, 1996). Also, individuals might resort to using self-destructive methods to cope with increasing inner conflict as opposed to acquiring healthier coping skills (Plotkin, 2008). Therefore, creating a supportive environment to promote counselor individuation is important. For example, seeking out mentors, collegial sup-

port, and personal therapy might be necessary (Plotkin, 2008) when counselors use strategies for inducing paradigm shifts.

The second outcome was that individuals acquire higher cognitive and affective capabilities necessary for reflective practice as they progress in the second half of life. Active integration of unconscious aspects with conscious aspects of the psyche (Pascal, 1992) requires individuals to engage in activities, such as shadow work, developing their unconscious psychological functions, and processing sacred wounds (Pascal, 1992; Plotkin, 2008). Doing these activities helps them to develop an appreciation for the nonrational as well as to personally explore their unconscious realms, such as fantasy, imagination, intuition, and symbols (Pascal, 1992; Plotkin, 2008). Therefore, counselors should also use personal development strategies that promote the nonrational and exploration of the unconscious realm so that they can navigate and progress within the second half of life. Counselors using strategies targeted at transitioning to and maneuvering within the second half of life may acquire the critical self-reflective capabilities necessary for engaging in reflective practice. Consideration of these implications leads to several areas that require further investigation.

Future Research

A shortage of research for counselor reflective practice and personality development and promoting counselor individuation is evident. Specifically, exploring the effect of practicing counselors' developmental level on engagement in reflective practice is important. Moreover, research is needed to understand the effect counselors' engagement in reflective practice has on counseling outcomes. Also, researchers investigating counselor personality development and developmental patterns would be beneficial. In turn, workshops, mentorship programs, and support groups can be created for counselors' individuating needs. In promoting counselor individuation, more research is needed to understand the process of transitioning from the first half of life to the second half of life. For example, having an increased understanding of the internal and external components that promote or hinder paradigm shifts may be helpful (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Also, researchers should develop methods that will support counselors to experience paradigm shifts and navigate in the second half of life. For example, scholars could focus on adapting experiential (Cranton, 1994) or Jungian (Pascal, 1992; Plotkin, 2008) approaches for counselors' personal use.

Conclusion

The necessity of reflective practice and, in particular, critical self-reflection, is apparent when considering the importance of counselor self-awareness for improving counseling practice. Therefore, the literature on this topic addressed three identified issues. First, a definition for reflective practice in-

clusive of practitioners' self-reflecting was provided. Second, mature cognitive development (Merriam, 2004), the capacity for reflective distance (Voegelin, 1999), and heightened emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) were highlighted as three key characteristics required by practitioners for engaging in critical self-reflection. Third, the acquisition of these critical self-reflective capabilities as practitioners progressed through the individuation process was demonstrated. Although the individuation process is considered a lifelong journey with the final goal rarely, if ever, accomplished (Hollis, 2005), counselors should foster their individuation process so that they are capable of engaging in reflective practice in their counseling practices.

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