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Supervisee Experiences of Broadening and Narrowing in Counselling Supervision

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Abstract

This study investigated supervisee perspectives of broadening (i.e., thinking and acting creatively and being open to exploring new ways of being) and narrowing (i.e., the experience of perceiving one's choices as limited) processes in their supervisory experiences. Ten supervisees who completed all requirements for a master's degree in counselling were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. Data were analyzed using a variation of the consensual qualitative research method developed by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997). Participants described their experiences of broadening and narrowing and their perceptions of their supervisors' contributions to these processes. The findings include four categories of broadening and five categories of narrowing, each with subcategories. Implications for the process of supervision are offered.

Supervisee Experiences of Broadening and Narrowing in Counselling Supervision

Supervision is considered a central component in the training and professional development of counsellors (Holloway, 1987; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2001; Watkins, 1997) and is one of the three legs of the tripartite model of counsellor

training (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2001). The quality of supervision during the early stages of counsellor development appears to have long-lasting effects (Skovholt & Jennings, 2004; Orlinsky, Botermans, & Rønnestad, 2001). Counsellors internalize, accumulate, and continue to draw on early supervisory experiences throughout their counselling careers and it is clear that the effects of positive supervision extend well beyond the formative years of counselling (Orlinsky *et al.*, 2001; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Skovholt & Jennings, 2004). Some outcomes of effective supervision include an increase in supervisee confidence, clearer personal identity, increased therapeutic perception, expanded ability to conceptualize and intervene, increased resiliency in the process of counselling, and strengthened supervisory alliance (Worthen & McNeill, 1996).

Just as positive experiences in supervision may have profound and longstanding effects, negative experiences resound for many years and may impact the developing counsellor, Ladany (2005) estimates that 25% of supervisory experiences are unconstructive and counts decreased counsellor self-efficacy among the most negative consequences of counterproductive events in supervision. Identifying and managing both positive and negative experiences in supervision may assist in creating a positive learning experience for counsellors-in-training.

Emotions in Supervision

There is no doubt that counselling supervision is an emotionally charged experience for the supervisee. The supervisory relationship itself may contribute to supervisee vulnerability and anxiety (Goodyear, Wertheimer, Cypers, & Rosemond, 2003). According to Holloway (1987), the anxiety created by being in an intensive, ongoing, and demanding relationship may supersede the anxiety that is intrinsic in becoming a counsellor. In such cases, we can only assume that this anxiety would be compounded by a supervisory style that is not adapted to supervisee functioning.

A wide range of emotions is often elicited before, during, and after supervision encounters. Understanding supervisee experiences of emotion during these encounters can have important implications for supervisors who hope to facilitate optimal supervision for their supervisees. Emotions impel us to act and the consequences of certain negative emotions in supervision have been well documented. For instance, Hahn (2001) detailed the experience of shame in supervision and outlined how, although a normal supervisory reaction, it can emerge differently depending on the individual. Emerson (1996) described

supervisee fear and the importance of creating a safe environment in supervision as a prerequisite for effective learning. Anxiety in counsellors-in-training has also been documented as a commonly occurring emotion (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003). When supervision is perceived as unsafe, supervisees may withhold important information from their supervisors (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996), mask their emotions and engage in counterproductive behaviours (e.g., Hahn, 2001), and avoid dealing with potentially important processes (See Emerson, 1996; Ladany, 2004). Supervisees' perceptions of positive and negative experiences in supervision are therefore very likely to have an impact on their professional development (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). Having a clearer understanding of how supervisees perceive and navigate the currents of positive and negative emotions in their supervisory experiences could assist supervisors in creating climates that are conducive to more effective supervision practices. The concepts of broadening and narrowing provide useful heuristics in studying supervisee experiences of supervision because they refer to processes that are often linked to learning: creativity, expansiveness, openness and spontaneity. Furthermore, these constructs directly broach the role of emotions in the learning process.

Broadening and Narrowing Processes

Fredrickson (2001) uses the term broadening to explain the effects of experiencing positive emotions. She hypothesizes positive emotions, such as joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love, "share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (p. 219). Experiencing positive emotions increases the array of thoughts and actions before experiencing the emotion. The "broadening effect" on a person's momentary thought-action repertoire results in greater flexibility, enhanced creativity, and unusual thinking (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 2). Reading a book or watching a television show on a given topic may broaden our everyday options such that we may read more on the topic, sign up for workshops, or discuss it with friends and colleagues. The broadening effect spans across thoughts, feelings, and actions so that the repertoire available to us in each of these dimensions is expanded, leading us to act and think in creative and new ways.

In contrast to the effects of positive emotions, negative emotions are hypothesized to narrow a person's momentary thought-action repertoire.

Narrowing is thus defined in contrast to broadening. If a person is terrified of snakes and encounters one along a path, generally the person will either try to escape or freeze in fear. That is, the person's perceived options in the moment are narrowed. Narrowing is not necessarily a negative effect. On the contrary, in an emergency situation it may be beneficial to have a few good options to choose from rather than to generate creative new scenarios.

Fredrickson (2001) posits that positive emotions "function as efficient antidotes for the lingering effects of negative emotions" (p. 221). In contrast to negative emotions, experiencing positive emotions may facilitate a person's ability to formulate positive meanings and act in more positive ways (Myers, 2000). Rathunde (2000) argues that a more balanced view of broadening and narrowing is important in the creative process and notes that positive and negative emotions are not mutually exclusive. Broadening can help in assisting an individual to explore new ways of being but narrowing is an important part of choosing between options (Rathunde, 2000). Although narrowing is generally perceived as a constricting process, it may be beneficial in structuring and containing experiences.

Broadening and narrowing provide interesting heuristics for investigating the supervision process, together reflecting excitement and growth on the one hand and a safe structure on the other. This study explored supervisees' perceptions of broadening and narrowing in their supervision during their internships. Our research questions were: (a) How do supervisees experience broadening in their supervision? (b) How do supervisees experience narrowing in their supervision? Our aim was to explore whether supervisees experienced broadening and narrowing and, if they did, to discover what they did as a result. This study focused exclusively on the perceptions of the supervisee using a semi-structured interview protocol.

Method

We adopted a variation of the consensual qualitative research (CQR) method developed by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) in order to carry out our research. This method was chosen because of its potential to (a) simplify large amounts of information without losing richness, (b) allow for the examination of separate categories of interest, and (c) allow for categories of data to be easily charted (Hill *et al.*, 1997). CQR is influenced by Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory and uses the constant comparison approach, which requires of researchers to continually compare the data and the categories being derived until the core ideas

have been verified (Hill *et al.*). The CQR method therefore relies on the cooperation of a team of judges who must reach consensus regarding the core ideas they find in the data, and on the participation of auditors to check the accuracy of their work.

Participants

The participants in this study were 10 graduate students, 9 women and one man, ages 24 to 47 ($M=35.8$, $SD=9.4$), enrolled in a Master's level counselling program in a large Canadian university. The interviews were conducted after the successful completion of course and internship requirements but prior to their official graduation. All participants completed the standard requirements of the program which include a minimum of 400 internship hours at a community agency spread out over two academic semesters. Internship sites included educational settings (e.g., university counselling services, high school counselling), community agencies, medical settings, and government employee assistance programs, among others. Students registered for internships typically receive a minimum of one hour per week of individual supervision at their internship site as well as three hours per week of group-format supervision by a faculty member at the university. Internship site supervisors must hold a minimum of a Master's degree in counselling or a related mental health field, are licensed or certified to practice in their jurisdiction, and have extensive experience as counsellors.

Procedure

All participants signed an informed consent form, which included a statement of ethics approval of the study as well as the goals of the research. They were also given Frederickson's (2000) definitions of broadening and narrowing and then asked whether they had experienced these processes in their own supervision (please see Appendix). They were then invited to discuss their experiences, including their actions and feelings during, and subsequent to, broadening and narrowing episodes. Interviews were audiotaped and subsequently transcribed. The average interview length was an hour.

Four judges independently analyzed and coded the transcripts and then met as a group to discuss the themes they have identified until they reached an agreement (consensus) regarding the ones that best represent the data. To help the judges in their task, each research question initially served the role of a domain, an overarching theme that encompassed several core ideas. These domains changed as the research team worked with the data and identified core ideas, which are succinct

terms or phrases that capture the essence of the answers to the research questions and are as close to the raw interview data as possible. In other words, core ideas reflect the explicit meanings of participants' disclosures.

The judges worked independently on each interview and then met as a group with the first auditor to discuss the results in order to reach an agreement regarding the coding of the data. Consensus is a central part of the CQR method which calls for judges to develop a single unified version that they all endorse as the best representation of the data (Hill *et al.*, 1997). As a result, core ideas with a 100% concordance rate were retained. Although there were few disagreements between judges regarding the core ideas, when the primary research team could not agree on a particular core idea, one or both of the auditors made suggestions which were later discussed with all judges present. Once the core ideas were outlined within each domain, the primary investigator charted the data and presented them to an auditor (the second author) who ensured that the core ideas were reflective of the raw data. This triangulation process entailed a thorough review of each transcript and core idea code to point out contradictions, redundancies, and alternative labels. Data collection and analysis was an iterative process as the charted data was refined continually as new core ideas emerged. During a cross-analysis procedure, domains and core ideas were compared across all 10 cases as we strived for a higher level of abstraction and the creation of categories. Whenever the core ideas being grouped were not clear, the judges went back to the individual cases and tried to clarify their meanings. The cross-analysis was audited by the second author.

We followed the guidelines specified by Hill *et al.* (1997) and Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, and Ladany (2005) with regard to reporting the frequencies. We labeled categories that applied to all cases, or all but one case, as "general" and we referred to categories that occurred in one to three cases as "variant." Categories that applied to four or more cases but not more than eight cases were labeled as "typical" (see Hill *et al.*, 2005 for a detailed description of the rationale).

Training Clinical Judges

Four judges, all women, were divided into two dyads. All four judges were advanced master's-level graduate students in a counselling program at a large Canadian university and did not know the participants. Judges were responsible for generating qualitative descriptions of core ideas. Prior to their work on the current study, the judges were trained to use the CQR method by the first author who discussed the process steps outlined

by Hill *et al.* (1997) with them until they understood the procedures. In order to gain some experience with generating core ideas, the team practiced coding using a data set that was previously analyzed until the judges became familiar with the tasks involved. Training the research team required weekly meetings that lasted between 60 and 120 minutes for about two months.

Results

Descriptions of Narrowing

Supervisees described five categories associated with the narrowing process in supervision: (a) negative feelings, (b) positive feelings, (c) self-deprecation, (d) detachment and emancipation, and (e) positive consequences involving learning and growth (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Supervisee Descriptions of Narrowing and Broadening

Category	Endorsement
<u>Narrowing</u>	
1. <i>Feelings associated with narrowing</i>	General
Apprehension	Variant
Anxiety	Variant
Frustration	Typical
Anger	Variant
Shame	Variant
Resentment	Variant
Fear, feeling unsafe	Variant
Anxiety from being inauthentic	Typical
Coerced/trapped	Variant
Self-reproach	Variant
2. <i>Positive Feelings</i>	Variant
Sense of security from structure	Variant
3. <i>Self-Deprecation</i>	Typical
Sense of being disqualified, put down	Variant
Lowered self-confidence/lowered self-efficacy	Variant
Self-doubt/second-guessing	Variant
Generalized the negative feedback/self-downing	Variant
4. <i>Detachment and emancipation</i>	Typical
Quiet defiance: Paying lip service	Typical
Triangulation	Typical
Passive observer	Typical
Loss of confidence in supervisor	Variant
5. <i>Positive Consequence: Learning and Growth</i>	Typical
Became more intentional	Typical
Increased awareness of self and process	Variant
Moved beyond comfort zone	Variant
<u>Broadening</u>	
1. <i>Feelings associated with broadening</i>	Typical
Pride	Typical
Joy	Typical
Relief	Variant
Excitement	Variant
2. <i>Self-Enhancement</i>	General
Increased self-confidence	General
Empowerment	Variant
Positive self-talk/self-acceptance	Variant
Increased self-awareness	Variant
Broadening "contagion" / self-motivating	Variant
3. <i>Increased commitment and engagement</i>	Typical
Renewed enthusiasm	Typical
More reading	Variant
4. <i>Perception of Improved Performance</i>	Typical
Felt more receptive to feedback	Variant
Positive change in behavior and work with clients	Variant
Increased spontaneity	Variant
More "present" in supervision and counselling	Variant

Note. *General* indicates that the category was endorsed by 9 or 10 participants; *Typical* indicates that the category was endorsed by 4 to 8 participants; *Variant* indicates that the category was endorsed by 1 to 3 participants.

Negative Feelings

Participants were asked to recall what they were feeling during the supervision when they were experiencing narrowing and afterwards. All participants described at least one negative feeling, the most typical being frustration and anxiety resulting from being inauthentic in supervision. One participant described experiencing several feelings at once:

There's a feeling of restriction, there's a feeling of tightness, there's anger ... I internalized ... I'm needing to fit in this box that she is creating for me and so I try to fit into it ... so that's what I do in a [supervision] session with her and then I leave and I'm frustrated and my actions are I end up doing what's true to me, but I'm feeling incongruent because I'm telling her I'm doing this but I'm really not.

This supervisee described a common series of feelings that included being frustrated with the supervisor for insisting she use a particular counselling method and a sense of anger in response to perceived coercion. The negative feelings she described were compounded when she did not follow the advice. This led to a double bind for the supervisee that ended in a feeling of anxiety from being inauthentic. If she had followed the advice that she did not agree with, she would then have felt incongruent with her clients. If she chose to ignore the advice without informing her supervisor about her alternate actions, she would have experienced incongruence in supervision. A key ingredient in this depiction is the supervisee's sense that she cannot express or be faithful to her own approach which leads to hiding the counselling actions and her case conceptualization from her supervisor.

Positive Feelings

Although not a common occurrence, two supervisees reported gaining a sense of security from the structure that the narrowing experience provided. When supervisees were overwhelmed, the supervisor's restrictions on interventions helped them gain a sense of control in counselling. One of our participants described the narrowing she experienced as follows:

I could see someone who is beginning in counselling and they are still finding their way, and you still don't know what theoretical approach is yours, and what different techniques you like using, so you follow your supervisor, and there's someone that's right there, and you can watch them work, so it's a way for you to find your way. I can see someone doing it (narrowing) for that reason.

Self-Deprecation

A typical reaction to narrowing was a process that we labelled self-deprecation. It included the supervisees disqualifying themselves and generalizing negative feedback which resulted in a decreased self-confidence and a concomitant increase in self-doubt. One participant described a group format supervision that she experienced as narrowing. Her supervisor "in a nice and encouraging way said that I did something really, really wrong and I had to go and correct it ... he invited the staff to give feedback as well ... and everybody sort of backed him up ... I, like, didn't speak for the next couple of supervisions because I was terrified that ... I don't know what I'm doing." She went on to say, "My confidence level went down quite a bit ... I was second-guessing myself."

Detachment and Emancipation

A typical reaction to narrowing was a form of detachment and emancipation. We found four different subtypes. The first was paying lip service to the supervisor. This was a quiet defiance in that the supervisee gave no overt indication of conflict in the supervisory relationship. However, these supervisees privately discounted the supervisor's input. They secretly carried out their counselling according to their plans while leading the supervisors to believe that they were applying their suggestions. A more active form of detachment reported by participants was developing a supervision triangle. In triangulation the supervisees brought in the input of either another supervisor or sought out peer supervision. Another typical reaction was to become a passive observer. Supervisees recounted how they, at times, relinquished all control in supervision and became passive, contributing little to the process. In the following example the supervisee was a passive observer in supervision and then she engaged in triangulation. She described rejecting her supervisor's conceptualizations and seeking answers elsewhere:

I pretended I understood what he said ... I knew that things wouldn't be answered the way I wanted them to be answered so, that really shut down my own, umm, explanations of clients and concerns about clients and different issues.

She described smiling and nodding in supervision but then "tried to get the information that I needed and the questions I needed answered from somebody else." Finally, another subtype was losing confidence in the supervisor. Here supervisees genuinely felt that the supervisor's advice would not help their clients.

Positive Consequences: Learning and Growth

Although supervisees described many negative reactions to narrowing, it was quite common for them to reframe narrowing experiences in a positive light when looking back at these moments. Typically, supervisees observed that they became more intentional with their clients as a result of narrowing in supervision. Some supervisees described a heightened self-awareness in the counselling process and felt they were able to move beyond their comfort zone.

Descriptions of Broadening

Our analysis of the interview data yielded four categories, each including subcategories, related to broadening in supervision: (a) positive feelings, (b) self-enhancement, (c) increased commitment and engagement, and (d) perception of improved performance.

Positive Feelings

Participants described four positive feelings during and following the broadening process in supervision. Pride and joy/happiness were typically reported positive feelings while variant positive feelings included relief and excitement/enthusiasm.

Self-Enhancement

All of the interviewed supervisees reported having experienced a sense of self-enhancement during broadening processes. The most common subtype the research team identified was an increased self-confidence. For example, a participant described the result of her supervisor giving her an active role in the supervision as follows, "the fact that she congratulated me ... everything I would tell her she would focus on and tell me how good it was ... I actually felt like I was doing this for a while, [like] I wasn't a student." Other, less common subcategories of self-enhancement included a sense of empowerment, positive self-talk, and an increase in self-awareness. Finally, one interesting but infrequently occurring subcategory was identified by the research team as broadening contagion. In such cases, broadening seemed to create a sense of self-motivation which led the supervisee to create more opportunities for broadening to occur.

Increased Commitment and Engagement

It was common for supervisees to experience an increase in their commitment to counselling and supervision as a result of broadening. This participant's experience is a good example of this increase in commitment:

I was more encouraged to tell her more stuff because I knew she wasn't going to just look at me and say "that's bad, that's bad what you did, you should do this, do it my way or no way" type of thing ... this is my counselling ... this is my counselling session so I should go ahead and try new stuff and not be afraid to do it.

Perception of Improved Performance

Although it was typical for supervisees to experience an improvement in their supervision and in their counselling as a result of broadening, they varied in how they experienced improvement. Some supervisees believed that broadening led them to be more receptive to feedback in supervision. Others described a positive change in their behaviours that led to a perceived improvement in their counselling. Others still described feeling more spontaneous as a result of broadening. Finally, some supervisees described a sense of being more "present" in their work. One participant described this as:

Very focused, you know, very interested ... present ... I guess it probably made me more confident because I felt that I had some good resources. I felt that I had the support of the organization, and I was optimistic about where I was working. So, it was like ... I had energy so ... it helped bring energy to the client's sessions.

Discussion

Broadening and narrowing are processes that were described as having an influence on the degree of supervisee investment in supervision. Experiencing positive emotions influences a person's momentary thought-action repertoire, resulting in increased flexibility, creativity, and unusual thinking (Fredrickson, 2001). These characteristics are valued in supervision, enhancing supervisees' self-confidence and increasing their commitment to the learning process. Narrowing is also important when supervisees experience an overwhelming situation that needs to be contained. This study focused on describing the supervisees' perception of the impact of broadening and narrowing during their supervision. Our findings suggest that

broadening and narrowing are prominent experiences in supervision and that they have some influence on how supervisees shape their self-judgment processes.

The participants in this study were forthcoming about their broadening and narrowing experiences and they easily recalled and dissected supervisory experiences that had either inspired them or constrained their growth and development. Supervisees were enthusiastic and passionate in describing their broadening experiences and the supervisors that brought these about. These instances were recounted with fervour and continued to elicit strong and vivid emotional responses suggesting the importance of early supervisory experiences in counsellor development. A common element in these stories was that the opportunity to express their own *savoir-faire* both enhanced their commitment to their own development and to supervision as a conduit for that growth. This is in line with Fredrickson's (2000) notion of *upward spiralling*. In this aspect of the theory, a cycle of reciprocal influence would cause positive meaning to increase broadening and positive emotions and these in turn would make it more likely that events would be interpreted with positive meaning. Consequently, positive emotions in supervision may help supervisees to experience broadening and to imbue feedback with positive meaning. The spiralling effect would lead to more positive emotions and meaning making within supervision, which would feed self-confidence and activate more broadening. The impulsion to broadening stemmed from a momentum built on mutual respect, positive exchanges, and engagement. When participants could not relate to the concepts of broadening and narrowing as defined by Frederickson (2000), they stated so unequivocally.

Implications for Practice

The delivery of feedback is an important mechanism that contributes to the experience of broadening and narrowing. Supervisees generalized the feedback and related how their beliefs about themselves were coloured by the feedback they received and absorbed. Feedback was perceived as particularly conducive to broadening moments when the supervisor was respectful of the supervisee's knowledge and style. Feedback that required the supervisees to abstract themselves contributed to narrowing and was negatively perceived. Conversely, processes of either self-enhancement or self-deprecation were activated and participants' internal dialogue was influenced by the supervisory process. Because the supervisees at times internalized and appropriated the supervisor's criticisms, these perceived evaluations by their supervisors

became foundational for their beliefs about their practitioner-selves.

The supervisee's perception of the supervisor's communications is a critical element that deserves further study. That is, the supervisor may be adopting a benign or neutral stance, but it is how supervisees interpret this stance that will impact their responses. For example, several supervisees noted that in the absence of feedback, they assumed the supervisor to be critical and disapproving. Narrowing resulted from a shift within the supervisory exchange; the supervisees no longer felt safe or creative. When the feedback was perceived as being vague or overly critical, supervisees distanced themselves from the process and in some cases withdrew their investment in supervision in an effort to protect themselves. This was exemplified in our sample by overt actions such as triangulating a third party, by paying lip service to the official supervisor, and by passive moves, such as emotional disengagement and disqualifying the supervisor as a credible source.

When supervisors acknowledged their supervisees' contributions, the supervisees seemed to shift into a broadening mode. The incidents described by the participants indicate that positive feedback and valuing not only boost supervisees' good feelings about their work and about themselves as practitioners but also have a soothing effect that may counter anxieties and self-doubts that occur prior to the supervisory exchange.

It has been suggested that simply being in the role of supervisee will induce vulnerabilities, fears, and anxieties (Holloway, 1987; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Our findings suggest that these anxieties need to be addressed so that supervisees can experience a sense of confidence when sharing their work for examination, criticism, and evaluation rather than fear exposing their vulnerabilities and limitations as counsellors. Supervisees may need to be reassured through positive feedback and need their contributions acknowledged. Insecurity, self-doubt, and feelings of incompetence are common even among experienced therapists (Thériault & Gazzola, 2005, 2008) and alleviating anxieties in novice counsellors may help them to manage some of their anxious feelings and contribute to a sense of excitement. This notion resonates with Fredrickson's (2001) concept of the undoing effect of broadening which highlights how positive emotions can function as efficient antidotes for the effects of negative emotions. In the case of counsellor supervisees, positive emotions may function as an antidote against the constricting effects of beginner self-doubts. Our participants treasured those supervisory moments that included positive feedback and praise and used

these as a platform from which to evolve their own counselling styles and competencies.

The need to provide positive feedback and validation cannot be overstated. Indeed, the supervisee's level of engagement in supervision and hence their learning may depend on it. Positive feedback and praise may well set into motion a process of upward spiralling whereby the supervisee will give positive meaning to learning experiences as a result of positive emotions generated with their supervision. These positive emotions and meanings are most likely potent when related to self as practitioner and may serve as a template for the supervisee's future reference.

While spiralling is a process that seems to feed itself, this expansive movement needs to be guided by a capable supervisor and balanced by containing gestures – there is a positive role for narrowing. Supervisees at times benefit from interventions that are rather restrictive by experiencing a sense of security. They may also feel challenged to move beyond their comfort zone when their options are narrowed to exclude preferred ways of practice. These types of narrowing experiences would then enhance learning when feedback is constructive and growth-promoting. Conversely, supervisors need to be aware of how negative, vague, or incomplete feedback will impact the supervisee and the learning process. This type of feedback produces a sense of narrowing and creates feelings of insecurity, shame, and fear that are not conducive to supervisee growth and positive engagement.

Limitations

Broadening and narrowing were considered to be useful heuristics to study how supervisees experience supervision. These constructs tap into aspects of learning considered important: creativity, openness, enthusiasm, and motivation to grow. The participant responses indicated that these concepts were informative and easily understood. However, the natural tendency to equate broadening with positive emotions and narrowing with negative occurrences is possibly confounding. Although we made efforts to avoid presenting the ideas as dichotomous, some participants may have succumbed to the connotative pull to equate broadening with positive moments and narrowing with negative moments in supervision. Despite this possibility, narrowing was indeed valued for the feeling of security and direction it afforded.

A possible limitation was the selection of participants who were familiar with the first author. While this practice may invite demand

characteristics where participants respond according to what is considered socially acceptable, it also has some benefits. Respondents may disclose more meaningful and personally salient information when they trust the researcher. We recruited participants who were graduates of our program because of convenience. The sample was also comprised of mostly women (9 out of 10). A more balanced sample might have produced different categories and may have enriched the findings. The sample nevertheless represented the sex ratio of the group from which they were selected. Hence the findings are considered relevant for novice master's level counsellors receiving supervision in this context.

The findings ought to be viewed in light of the fact that all of our participants were novice counsellors in early stages of their professional development. Within the Canadian context of counsellor training, successful completion of supervised internships is a crucial component of certification as a counsellor. Implicit in this context is the evaluative role of supervisors. We suspect that different findings would emerge had we focused on experienced Canadian counsellors who voluntarily sought supervision for professional development, or on counsellors who worked in jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, where supervision is considered a life-long process.

Conclusion

The immediate and long term impact of narrowing and broadening experiences in supervision are substantial. Indeed their impact extends well beyond the supervisory hour and specific cases reviewed. One supervisee even described a life altering experience; a supervisory encounter that not only transformed her professional self but that also became a revelation that led to personal transformation. In order to maximize supervisee growth through broadening and narrowing processes, supervisors are urged to simultaneously provide conditions for upward spiralling to take effect and to contain supervisee expansiveness by narrowing. This may prove to be challenging as the optimal broadening and narrowing combinations will depend on individual supervisees' personality and distinctive needs. What may serve to activate broadening in one supervisee may be experienced as narrowing by the next. A supervisor's sensitivity and capacity to address process issues in supervision will be useful in confronting this conundrum. How and when supervisees experience narrowing and broadening must become supervisory "grist for the mill."

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Appendix

Broadening and Narrowing: Definitions Given to Participants

I'm interested in understanding your experiences of broadening and narrowing in your counselling supervision. "Broadening" is a term used by Barbara Fredrickson to explain the effects of experiencing positive emotions such as joy, interest, contentment, and love. She says that when people experience positive emotions, like the ones just mentioned, then they become more likely to think and act in creative, new ways. For example, she suggests that interest prompts a person to explore new things, and be open to new ideas, experiences and actions. These "broaden" the person's options. For example, a person might find a t.v. program on yoga interesting, so his or her everyday options might be "broadened" such that s/he might read or talk about yoga or even sign up for a class, whereas s/he had never even thought about yoga before.

Can you recall a moment when you were in counselling supervision and you experienced broadening? Describe what happened.

The opposite of "broadening" is "narrowing". So, whereas positive emotions increase a person's options to think and behave, some things might lead to a "narrowing" of options, limiting a person's choices. For example, if you are deathly terrified of snakes, and suddenly there's a snake in your path, your options will likely narrow to either running away or freezing in fear. You will not experience the "broadening" notion of being able to think and act in creative, new ways.

Can you recall a moment when you were in counselling supervision and you experienced narrowing? Describe what happened?