The Helping Relationship: Development and Evaluation of a Skills-Based Program for Psychology Undergraduates

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1. Introduction
Despite the recognized role of psychologist’s helping skills in therapeutic alliance and psychotherapy outcomes (e.g., Lambert & Barley, 2001), undergraduate courses in psychology remain mostly theoretical and technical, with few opportunities for students to practice and develop real helping skills (Lecomte et al., 2004).

Some effective programs for training student’s helping skills exist (for example, see Hill et al., 2008; Lang & van der Molen, 2009), but further research is needed to evaluate the training outcomes and predictors of outcome (Hill et al., 2008).

2. Purposes of the research
1) To develop a helping skills training program for undergraduate psychology students
2) To evaluate the outcomes and the predictors of outcome of this training program

3. Training program
It is a skills-based program based on two major effective trainings:
1. the three-stage model of helping (Hill, 2009)
   - Exploration
   - Insight
   - Action
   (The three-stage model of helping, Hill, 2009)

2. the Cumulative Microtraining (CMT) (Lang & Van der Molen, 1992)
   One or two skills are learned apart and then integrated with the others. For each skill: six steps: 1° theoretical information, 2° bad and good illustrations on video, 3° theoretical exercises, 4° role plays, 5° feedback about the role-plays and 6° writing of the learning points.

4. Studies planned
   • Design: experimental studies (pre/post test, control groups) will allow us to examine:
     - the efficiency of the training program (i.e., will students’ helping skills improve as a result of the training)
     - and some potential outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy) and predictors of outcome (e.g., learning motivation) of the training program.
   • Participants: the training and its evaluation will be conducted with samples of undergraduate students in psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain.

5. References

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