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CHAPTER 3

Preparing and Presenting Lectures That Exemplify the Ideals of Counselor Education

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A chapter about the lecture in counselor education provides both readers and the writer an opportunity to reflect upon and improve their instructional methods and habits. In preparing to write this chapter, I quickly found numerous books, articles, and websites about lecturing. Initially I questioned whether professors needed another one. Then I began to find books and articles devoted to lecturing in particular disciplines such as history, English, physics, and sociology. Next, I looked for a book about effective lecturing in counselor education. I found none but the search crystallized a question, "What is the purpose of and procedures for an effective lecture in counselor education?" And, I thought of a simple answer. In addition to presenting content, counselor education lecturers should model good counseling practices. That is the unique advice offered in this chapter, namely *take your counseling skills to the lectern.*

In elaborating this main point, I describe the lecture, its rationale, and my experience with lecturing. In so doing, I agree with an analogy offered by Donald Bligh (2000) in the fifth edition of his classic book, *What's the Use of Lectures?* Bligh compared lecturing to musical composition and performance. He explained that if individuals want to write a symphony, they should first study the symphonic form. After learning the general form, a composer writes in a particular musical

style that she or he prefers, while realizing that listeners will have their own preferences. So this chapter discusses the form of the lecture to prompt readers to reflect on their preferences.

THE LECTURE

Readers of this book may have more than once wondered why they attend or give lectures. This question caught my attention when I began my first teaching position. The previous occupant of my new office had left behind several books on educational psychology. Thumbing through the books, one article caught my attention. It was entitled something like "The Purpose of the Lecture." The first paragraph asked a question that remains with me today, "What is the purpose of the lecture since the invention of the printing press?"

A lecture serves to orally communicate important information to a large group of people. In a formal lecture, the presenter typically reads a written document or at least follows a detailed outline. The word "lecture" comes from the Latin *lectus* meaning to read. Lectern denotes the reading desk used by lecturers. Instructors read a lecture. However, this response to the query about the lecture's purpose ignores the second part of the question, "since the invention of the printing press."

The mechanical printing press, starting late in the 15th century, turned books into a media for mass communication. Until then, lecturers typically possessed the only book. They transmitted the knowledge in the book by reading aloud important passages as students took notes (Dyer, 2009). However, today students have their own books. They may acquire the information in the book quickly and accurately, and at their own pace. Reading a book may be a better way of gaining information than listening to a formal lecture on the same material. Obviously this article on educational psychology left me wondering about how I should lecture. I did not want to read a book to graduate students in counselor education yet I was assigned 2.5-hour class periods in which to lecture to large groups of students. I wondered what I could do instead of lecture. In due course, I came to understand that a lecture does not have to be a formal presentation that repeats the material in the book. The presentation may be an informal lecture, sometimes called a lecture demonstration or lecture discussion that concentrates not on the information but rather explains why the information matters, elaborates its meaning, and discusses how to use it. The informal lecture may be used to clarify the material in the readings and increase student understanding of it. That is why the informal lecture remains the dominant instructional method in higher education.

LECTURE PROS AND CONS

There are several additional reasons for the lecture's predominance. The first is efficiency. The time saved by lecturing rather than tutoring or problem-based instruction may be used for research and advising. A second reason is ease of preparation. Once a lecture is prepared, it is easy to revise it for a second use. A third reason is that counselor education departments use lecture courses with large enrollments to balance small enrollments in practica and doctoral seminars, thereby making delivery of the program economically feasible.

From a pedagogical perspective, a lecture is an excellent instructional method for presenting new information and an orientation to important material before engaging students in more active learning. The lecture is a time-efficient means to introduce students to the information that they will apply in practica and internships. Large-group lectures on counseling theories, tests and measurement, diagnosis, human development, career development, learning theory, substance abuse, and multiculturalism provide an overview for studying the subjects in-depth and offer guiding frameworks for using the material in practice. In the phrase "present a lecture," the word "present" even implies introduction because it means introduce or bring before the public. And, the lecture is a structured way to introduce students to difficult ideas and potentially disturbing topics. Of course a lecturer prompts further study and application of a subject by igniting students' curiosity about the new material. A sparkling lecture may even recruit students to specialize in a particular area of counseling practice or doctoral study.

Although the lecture possesses many positive features as a method of instruction, it has negative features as well. The main criticisms of the lecture format arise from it being teacher-centered rather than learner-centered. Recall that the word *lectus* is defined by what the teacher does. It goes without saying that in preparing a lecture, an instructor learns more than the students will learn.

Defining the lecture as something done by the instructor is particularly problematic in the discipline of counseling. Counselor educators concentrate on relationships between clients and counselors. The working alliance and interpersonal reciprocity that defines these relationships is central to counseling practice. For the lecturer, the partner is not the personal student but an impersonal audience. The lecturer gives a performance. One of my colleagues describes a good lecture as science and show business. Recall that the word "present" may mean introduce, yet it may also mean a gift; in this case, a gift that the lecturer gives to the audience. In presenting a lecture, an instructor thinks more of the audience than of the individual student. This is in contrast to small group classes in which there is a stronger relationship between the students and teachers. The instructor teaches the students rather than presents the material. Teaching is not a performance; it

is an interaction between teacher and learner. The role of reciprocity is between individuals; the professor even knows the students' names. This lack of reciprocity between lecturer and audience pertains particularly to a free-standing lecture. When an instructor presents a series of lectures to the same students during the course of a semester, however, that teacher does learn the students' names and forms relationships that will influence subsequent lectures.

Teachers can allow for students who learn at different paces. A lecturer cannot. The lecture is geared to the middle of the audience, not to the curious and prepared nor to the indifferent and unprepared. Exceptional students at both ends of the distribution may be somewhat ignored. Because lecturers do not have a personal interaction with individual students, lecturers cannot easily assess students' attitudes during a presentation, although an effective lecture may shape or even change students' attitudes. They also do not teach skills. Graduate students are adults who want to apply what they learn, and do so soon. They do not want to memorize facts. Instead, they seek to learn principles, concepts, and applications. They also would benefit from critical thinking about the material and being actively engaged with it.

STUDYING HOW TO LECTURE

Despite these limitations, lectures may be a superb instructional method if a lecturer works at it. Returning to Bligh's (2000) analogy to writing a symphony, the lecturer may master the form by studying it. Part of studying the lecture should concentrate on the quality materials available in books, journals, and websites. Based on my review of the literature on lecturing, I recommend a few places to start. First one might consult a classic article by Murray and Murray (1992) that provides an orientation to effective lecturing in terms of anticipation, preparation, execution, and support. Anticipation means considering the students' place in the curriculum, prior learning, and level of preparation as they enter the lecture hall. Preparation means making decisions about what material to include based on the objectives and then constructing a structured and organized lecture. Execution means using performance skills (e.g., timing, body movements, eye contact) to effectively present the lecture. Support means evaluating the lecture through self-reflection, peer feedback, and student evaluations. A good follow-up to Murray and Murray's article is Sullivan and McIntosh's (1996) 14-page outline of effective lecturing that includes when to lecture, planning the lecture, lecture components, presenting the lecture, reducing presentation anxiety, and evaluating the lecture.

Further study of micro-skills and strategies for lecturing may be easily done on the World Wide Web, starting with the resources on your own university's web pages. You might then move to the web pages produced by the Center for

Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. In particular, review the pages on *Traditional Teaching: Web Resources* (Cook & Scanlan, 2003) that present 10 topics on lecturing with a total of 210 links to other websites.

PREPARING AN EFFECTIVE LECTURE

Lecture implies that you have prepared a presentation before you enter the classroom. Thus, an effective lecture is prepared first and delivered later—the better the preparation, the better the lecture. However, it is not enough to concentrate on the content of a lecture. The effective lecturer balances preparation of content with equal attention to the process of delivering that content. Most counselor educators have a set of personal guidelines that they follow in constructing the content and process of a lecture. Consider the following guidelines about preparing a lecture.

▶ ***Be intentional in what you choose to teach.*** It is wise to begin lecture preparations with the end in mind. Ask yourself what outcomes you seek. Answer this question by identifying the big ideas that you wish to impress on students. The answer should focus on student needs, not your own needs. This is particularly important when you are lecturing on topics about which you research or write. You know a great deal about these topics and care deeply about them. Remind yourself that students do not need all the details.

▶ ***State big ideas succinctly.*** After identifying the big ideas, try to state them succinctly. Challenge yourself to state each big idea from a lecture in one sentence and then one paragraph. You may even try reducing the ideas to a few key terms. For practice, try to craft a single sentence that explains your favorite counseling theory. Maybe Adlerians believe that increasing social interest will solve life's difficulties or Rogerians assume that reflection of feeling and meaning helps clients discover their authentic self. Now you can conceive how each of these sentences may be elaborated in a "two-minute elevator speech," a one-hour lecture, or a six-hour workshop.

▶ ***Spiral through big ideas three times.*** At any point during a lecture, not everyone will be listening to you. Thus the big ideas need to be repeated. For maximal effectiveness, you should use a variety of approaches each time you repeat the big idea. It is also useful to begin the lecture with the end in mind. Use your two-minute elevator speech to capture the interest and attention of students. The speech should serve as an advanced organizer to introduce the key concepts and summarize the important information that the students will learn. And, at the conclusion of the lecture, summarize succinctly what they have learned. You might even begin by saying, "If anyone asks you what we did in class today, this is what you could tell them."

▶ ***Contextualize the ideas.*** The big ideas should be related to other material that the students already know or will soon learn. In addition to placing the ideas into contemporary context, they should be considered in historical context. For example, in teaching counseling theories, it is important to mention the historical era and cultural context in which a theory emerged. Students need to understand that counseling theories and techniques develop to respond to the questions asked and needs felt by certain types of clients in particular contexts. The repression of Freud's turn of the century Vienna evoked psychoanalysis while the disillusionment with authorities following World War II evoked client-centered and Gestalt therapies. The bustle of life in high modernity produced brief therapies while 21st century post-modernity has produced narrative therapy.

▶ ***Offer alternative views.*** In addition to contextualizing ideas and practices, counselor educators conscientiously offer alternative perspectives. They realize that individuals may take multiple perspectives on any issue and that where they stand shapes what they see. For example, when teaching the measurement of individual differences, a lecturer might mention that the logical positivist viewpoint of inherent traits differs radically from the social constructionist viewpoint of traits as interpersonal reputation. Or, that the two epistemic positions differ on their views of working with "the self" during counseling; one helps a client to actualize the self while the other helps a client to construct the self. Providing students with alternative positions or lenses for looking opens their eyes to new visions and insights.

▶ ***Organize the material differently than in the textbook.*** Students who study different organizations of the same material achieve higher levels of mastery. Gestalt learning theory (Bigge & Shermis, 1992) recommends that lecturers help students recognize a problem, learn its elements and concepts, and then keep reorganizing them. Rather than preparing lectures directly from the students' textbook, consider slightly reorganizing the material. Ideas for different organizations of the same material may be found in other textbooks. This does not mean the languid practice of assigning the students one textbook while lecturing from another textbook. It does mean restructuring the material in the book and mentioning additional points, examples, and illustrations.

▶ ***Prompt critical thinking.*** It is useful to invite students to practice thinking like a counselor, especially by having them apply what you have just presented. You may do so by intermittently asking rhetorical questions and also by having them process case studies and simulation problems that require critical thinking. Occasionally, you might work through a case yourself by thinking aloud so students can hear you process information.

▶ ***Include active learning.*** It is important to provide opportunities for active learning during the lecture. These activities are best inserted at key junctures in the lecture material. Consider using 10–15 minutes of activities for every 45 minutes

of lecture, and be sure to keep the activities directly relevant. There are two popular activities that engage students and prompt interaction. The first is called "think, write, pair, and share" (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). You ask students to think in some particular manner about a big idea that you have just presented. Then they write their thoughts down, pair up with a partner, and read their notes to each other. This is followed by discussion between the partners, then discussion among pairs of partners or the whole class, and finally debriefing by the lecturer. A second activity involves students in discussion by projecting a few examination questions, especially application-type questions, for each block of the lecture.

▶ ***Include aesthetics.*** An outstanding lecture illustrates core ideas with exemplars from a variety of cultural forms including literature, art, poetry, and myth. With regard to literature, lectures may use classic or popular books to illustrate their points. For example, a colleague uses the chapters in Sherwood Anderson's (1919) *Winesburg, Ohio* to teach psychopathology. Each chapter in that first modern novel tells the story of a "grotesque" adaptation to life that illustrates personality disorders. Some lecturers play songs that express the key ideas. While words depict thoughts and music evokes feelings, a song helps students feel a thought. Consider for example Paul Simon's (1965) song *I am a Rock*. Listening to that song, students may feel the meaning of schizoid personality disorder as well as four rules (Becker, 1991) followed by adult children of alcoholics (i.e., don't say, don't trust, don't feel, and don't tell). Poems may also add feeling to key ideas. For example Wallace Stevens' (1990) *The Idea of Order at Key West* elicits feelings about the narrative construction of reality and Emily Dickinson's (1960) *The Province of the Saved* summons sentiments about becoming a counselor.

▶ ***Develop skill at storytelling.*** As noted earlier, lectures should combine science with storytelling. Myths, parables, and fairy tales contain wisdom and make points memorable. For example, Cinderella is an appropriate fairy tale to tell before teaching Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial stages because she experiences the first five stages, beginning with mistrust of caregivers and ending with identity achievement. Myths, legends, and folktales engage students as they discuss difficult topics in a safe space. A rich source of myths for the counselor education curriculum appears in a series of books by the mythologist and storyteller Michael Meade (2010; http://www.mosaicvoices.org). Also, consider sharing stories about your own experiences as a counselor. You may wish to further develop your skill at storytelling by studying Lipman's (1999) *Improving Your Storytelling* and Goodman's (2010) *Storytelling as Best Practice*.

▶ ***Use professional media.*** Lectures should not be just auditory; they should include pertinent and engaging slides and media to liven things up. Of course, there are many professional films produced for classroom use beginning with the famous videotape entitled *Three Approaches to Psychotherapy* (Shostrom, 1986) in which Perls, Rogers, and Ellis interview a woman named Gloria. Jon Carlson has

produced a particularly useful *Psychotherapy Video Series* (http://www.apa.org/pubs/videos/about-videos.aspx).

Short clips from motion pictures have long been used by counselor educators to animate core principles and prompt discussion. Best practices and suggested clips appear in an article by Toman and Rak (2000) on the use of cinema in the counselor education curriculum. Also, consider browsing two books about using movie clips to teach about positive psychology (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008) and mental illness (Wedding, Boyd, & Niemiec, 2009).

▶ ***Accommodate diverse learning styles.*** The lecture is best for auditory learners and linear thinkers. Help students with other learning styles by using visuals and multimedia. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. My best example of this is Holland's (1997) RIASEC hexagon. While I can explain orally the construct of type consistency, showing a picture of the hexagon communicates to students in a different way. Also, be sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities. For example, if a visually-impaired student attends your lecture, then be sure that you or the person sitting next to the student reads aloud all the information on slides.

▶ ***Include social justice issues.*** Counselor educators are concerned in every lecture with teaching for diversity and social justice. They discuss the meaning of the material across all groups as well as whose voices are being left out of the discussion and what actions might be taken to foster social equality. For example, when lecturing about a psychometric inventory, they address bias in the items and norms as well as whether the key studies on the inventory included a representative sample. Useful ideas about teaching for diversity and social justice appear in sourcebooks by Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) and by Enns and Sinacore (2004).

▶ ***Discuss epistemology and philosophy.*** When they lecture, counselor educators model how ideas should not be taken for granted. They encourage students to consider the assumptions that underlie the material. As a simple example, almost every major concept in the counselor education curriculum may be examined from the epistemic position of logical positivism or social constructionism and most research questions may be approached with quantitative or qualitative methods. Discussions of meta-cognition help students realize that their own philosophy of science will shape their practice.

DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE LECTURE

When I first began working at a medical school, a few of the senior faculty wanted to preserve the tradition in which assistant and associate professors could write a lecture but only a full professor could present it. They asserted that preparing a lecture is one thing, whereas presenting it is another thing. We have all witnessed how

poor delivery—whether due to anxiety or carelessness—can ruin a well-prepared lecture. Effective lecturers invest as much effort into delivering a lecture as they do in crafting it. Consider whether any of the following advice about this effort might be useful to you in presenting your own lectures.

▶ ***Rehearse.*** Recall the old joke about a visitor who asked a native New Yorker how to get to Carnegie Hall. Of course, the answer was "practice, practice, practice!" Similar to a Carnegie Hall performer, the effective lecturer rehearses before performing. And, this rehearsal is not just for the premiere presentation of a lecture, it needs to be ongoing and occur before every repeat performance. For a new lecture, it is advisable to rehearse the lecture with an audio or video recorder and then review the results. Immediately before going to the lecture hall, prepare yourself physically and mentally. Some counselor educators take a walk or nap or meditate. Whatever works for you, be sure to create a transitional space between other work tasks and entering the lecture hall.

▶ ***Arrive early.*** If you arrive at the classroom well in advance of the scheduled start time you may circulate among the students and get to know them personally. It helps to learn about their current academic circumstances: Do they have a big test coming up in another class or did they just get the results from one? How are things going for them?

▶ ***Welcome the students.*** Counselor educators use their professional skills to create a sense of community and belongingness in the lecture hall. This includes encouraging students to connect with each other and feel at home in the lecture hall. It may be useful to think of how the working alliance in therapy may be transferred to the lecture hall. This "educational alliance" between students and lecturer may include agreement on the goals of the lecture, consideration of the students' ability and responsibility in working toward those goals, the lecturer's empathy toward students, and a respectful connection between students and lecturer that enhances students' commitment to a career in counseling.

▶ ***Begin with conversation.*** I always begin by asking students to share an interesting experience or significant accomplishment during the last week. Did anyone have a birthday, anniversary, buy a car, start a new job, and so on? Sometimes students will talk about a bad event such as a car accident or death of loved one. Model your counseling skills as you process the bad news with the students. You may choose to share something about your own week but a little self-disclosure goes a long way. If you do choose to share something, it is best to directly relate it to the material for that lecture. For example, in beginning a lecture on early recollections as a projective technique, I mentioned that my wife and I had just seen a movie entitled *The King's Speech* (Hooper, 2010) in which the therapist began the first session by asking the King about his earliest recollection. I also make a habit of beginning each lecture with a relevant story from that day's newspaper as a means of grounding the material in real world experiences.

▶ ***Increase motivation to learn.*** Lecturers should attempt to cultivate students' existing motivation. This may include mentioning how the lecture material relates to their development as counselors. Relating the material to their career development and future jobs lends practical meaning to the lecture. It explains what the material may do for them and what opportunities it might eventually provide. Also when possible, connect lecture material to workshops, conferences, and journals of the American Counseling Association and its Divisions. For example, when lecturing on career counseling, a faculty member may mention the meetings and publications of the National Career Development Association and its State Branches.

▶ ***Model ethical behavior.*** It is important that faculty model the values of the counseling profession during the lecture. Ethical principles and behavior become more credible when every faculty member displays them while delivering their lectures. It is important the lecturer use non-sexist language and draw appropriate examples and illustrations from a range of cultures, ethnic groups, and religions. When the occasion arises, the lecturer may describe an ethical issue and how she or he dealt with it.

▶ ***Use platform skills.*** It almost goes without saying that delivery of the material counts. Lecturers are the "sage on the stage" so they need to attend to their performance. In gaining the audience's attention and earning their respect, everything from clothing to speaking voice matters. They must begin and end on time. As they speak, they avoid jargon and use simple language to communicate complex ideas. Effective lecturers are in tune with the emotional content of their material and use their counseling skills to process strong feelings elicited in the students. They always remember that they are there for the audience.

EVALUATE THE LECTURE

Improving lecture preparation and presentation skills requires evaluation and constructive feedback. This feedback differs from course evaluations. Before each lecture, an instructor may recruit a dozen volunteers to later submit anonymous answers to two questions: "What did you find useful in this lecture?" and "How could the lecture have been more useful to you?" I realize that these questions elicit positive responses, yet I also realize that this is the type of feedback that instructors can accept, process, and use. If you are fortunate enough to have willing colleagues, then invite them to your lectures and solicit their feedback. If they attend multiple lectures, then just sit down with them after each presentation and request feedback about one thing you did well and one thing you could improve. Over time, this simple procedure will markedly improve your lectures. If they can only attend one

lecture, then ask them to evaluate your lecture on 29 micro-skills by completing "A Lecture Skills Checklist" (Appendix A in Sullivan & McIntosh, 1996).

CONCLUSION

This chapter on the lecture began by offering the unique advice of taking your counseling skills to the lectern. While lecturers in counselor education should follow the generic principles for presenting effective lectures, they may go further by exemplifying the ideals of the counseling profession in their lecture preparations and presentations. This includes forming a relationship with the audience by negotiating shared goals, acknowledging the students' place in the curriculum, deliberately processing emotional components of the material and students reactions to it, and forging a working alliance that enhances students' commitment to the profession of counseling. As they do so, counselor educators should demonstrate ethical behavior, sensitivity to student needs, and compassionate response to student concerns. They also should display a commitment to social justice and an openness to diverse ideas. Standing at the lectern, counselor education faculty present themselves as counselors first and lecturers second. They model a relationship with their students that exemplifies the best practices in counseling while at the same time presenting lectures that advance students' professional development.

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