

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)

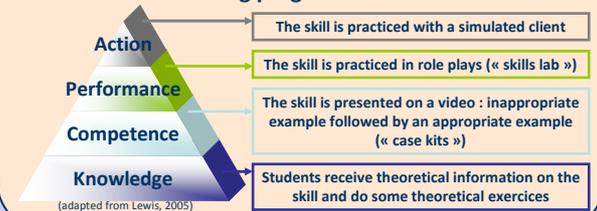


(The three-stage model of helping, Hill, 2009)

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.

These two trainings are integrated and adapted in an integrative perspective, as Boswell et al. (2010) recommend, for making students aware of the principles of change common to different orientations. The following figure, based on Miller's model (1990), illustrates our training program.



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.

• Measures :

1) Helping skills

- **Video test** : the Communication Skills Progress Test (CSPT) (Kuntze et al., 2007) consists of video clips presenting a client talking. Students have to write down what they would say if using a specific skill.
- **Simulations** : students have to participate in role plays, and we take :
 - **Objective measures** (e.g., the number of *helping skills* used)
 - **Subjective measures**
 - Reported by the client
 - Reported by the psychologist

Use of multiple measures because results differ in function of the type of measure and the perspective (Hill et al., 2008).

2) Outcomes and predictors of outcome : questionnaires

5. References

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