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An Investigation into Supervision Techniques to Support Shy CSD Students

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Students who feel shy and peer collaboration: A closer look

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of peer collaboration in enabling graduate students who labeled themselves as shy to participate in a summer clinical experience. Through detailed analyses, it is shown how one shy student successfully completed the experience and another, while following a different social trajectory struggled and required more input from the clinical supervisor. The article proposes that collaborative, peer to peer interactions can help a student transcend an intrinsic shyness.

Introduction

Graduate clinical experiences by their very nature are fraught with perceived hazards for the novice clinician. Communicating with family members, creating the goals of the intervention, planning the activities to support those goals, keeping the client engaged in learning, and figuring out how to navigate between small groups of clients is challenging for most student clinicians. The practice of pairing students for tasks has been proven effective, particularly in university settings. (McAllister, 2005; Williams, 1995; Ehrgott & Silberer, 2014). For those who consider themselves shy, the journey can be doubly difficult. Shyness has many different definitions in the literature, but for this study we will use the construct of social withdrawal which hypothesizes internal motivations for removing oneself from social interactions (Coplan & Rubin, 2010). Shy

individuals, according to this model, want to interact but at the same time feel wary and anxious about interacting. Shyness first appears in early childhood, but while some children outgrow shyness, others seem to retain the feeling of shyness into young adulthood (Nelson, 2013).

Peer collaboration is often used in clinical training outside of the communication disorders field. Six themes taken from studies (Ladyshewsky, 2000; Strochein, Hagler & May, 2002; Aston & Molassiotis, 2003) of peer collaboration in clinical education for physical therapy and nursing have described greater student learning through 1) the development of teamwork skills; 2) emotional support and advances in self-confidence 3) better opportunities for problem solving through peer discussion; 4) enhanced opportunities for peer reflection; 5) increased autonomy, accountability and responsibility; and 6) improved clinical skills. For example, Strochein et al (2002) found that physical therapy students took part in increased dialogue and reflection in the presence of peers, which she thought facilitated a connection between theory and practice. Ladyshewsky (2000) also examined cooperative groups of physical therapy students. He found students were able to support each other to reduce stress and learn from each other through joint problem-solving initiatives (p. 20). It is important to note that in addition to increased opportunities for reflection and problem solving, there were also interpersonal benefits such as emotional support and reduced stress. Emotional support for students who feel shy should be an added benefit.

Grundy (2004) surveyed communication disorders students who had been placed in groups and their supervisors. She found that despite possible difficulties inherent in peer learning, the benefits outweighed the pitfalls. Students liked peer collaboration because they could share ideas and resources, give each other praise and feedback, and learn from a broader group and experiences than they could on their own. Supervisors liked peer collaboration groups because

they produced more time to do other clinical or administrative tasks while the peers planned together, saw clients together and gave each other feedback (Grundy, 2004). Communication disorder students placed in cooperative groups helped both supervisors and graduate students in the enculturation process.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of clinical supervisors and two students who self-identified as shy and their reactions to being assigned a peer collaborator for a clinical experience. It was hypothesized that peer collaboration would benefit students in clinical settings even if they felt shy. A secondary purpose was to describe what happened to a student who self-identified as shy who was not able to collaborate with a peer.

Theoretical Framework

This investigator chose to use a qualitative model as the best choice for this study. Qualitative methods offered an opportunity to observe the experiences under scrutiny where they occurred—in the natural and authentic context of the clinical setting (Damico, Simmons-Mackie, Oelschlaeger, Elman & Armstrong, 1999). The advantages of using qualitative methods included allowing the researcher to focus on the graduate student and supervisor perspectives; to collect descriptive data through interview or review of artifacts; to focus on the process of social action rather than the product. It was both focused and flexible. The flexibility allowed for the collection of data that reveals the actual experiences of participants, yet the focus allowed for examining and analyzing in order to understand the complex data as patterns develop.

Principles of qualitative research also included cyclical data collection and additional data collection as themes emerge from the analysis (Spradley, 1980; Creswell, 1998; Strauss and

Corbin, 1998). This allowed the researcher to continue to refine both the research questions and the data collection opportunities as better understanding of the complex social phenomena under investigation emerged from the authentic data. Additionally since different types of data will answer different questions about the same phenomena, by using several data sources the researcher increased the validation of the findings through triangulation which enabled the use multiple sources to support emerging hypotheses.

The data for this study consisted of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the graduate student participants and the supervisor participants. Before any recordings, permissions and assurances of anonymity were signed by all people involved. Guidelines for confidentiality and secure handling of the data were followed. Different interview procedures were used for the graduate students and the supervisors. Each interview took place in a quiet room in the university clinic and lasted 30-40 minutes in length. The interviews were digitally video recorded and the data saved in a folder that corresponded to a number assigned to each participant. The data was transcribed by this investigator who also printed off several copies of each transcribed interview for quality control and coding. This data collection also included handwritten field notes, copies of written supervisor feedback, and transcripts of digital audio supervisor feedback.

Triangulation of the data was achieved through thick description of analyzed data, comparisons of the printed audio- and video-recorded data and investigator field notes to confirm patterns identified.

The University Peer Collaboration Model

The data were collected at a university clinic program for children who were emergent and struggling readers. Graduate students were each assigned to work with two of the children. All

graduate students were paired with a second graduate student to create a "buddy" system.
Learning activities that each had to plan for and implement included a one-on-one shared reading
time with each child, a small group literacy activity for a group of 3-4 children, and a Writer's
Workshop with each assigned child. The 'buddies' were instructed to share planning for the
small group activities as they would also be sharing facilitating the small group twice a week
each. One reason for this was that in order free each student up for an individual session, his or
her other child took part in small group with the reading buddy. A second reason was to ease the
planning and implementation of a small group of children by sharing the experience with a peer.

The behavior of the supervisor's followed closely to that described in Anderson's
Continuum Model of Supervision (Anderson, 1988) as the students moved from an evaluation-
feedback stage to a consultant, self-supervision stage. The program was scheduled after the first
year graduate clinical experiences with one or two clients and before off-site experiences in
schools and hospitals. During that summer, supervisors would model and give feedback as
needed during the first part of the summer program, but definitely step back and serve as
consultants in the second part of the summer program.

Results and Interpretation

From a larger study of graduate student and supervisor interactions, two students were found
who considered themselves shy and two patterns of collaboration emerged as these shy students
attempted to participate in the summer literacy program. Each student identified themselves as
shy during the interview process.

Participant One: Shyness Self-Identified

Participant One: Well, I mean I really enjoyed the whole experience, I was a little nervous about it cause I'm not the kind of person that wants to get up and talk in front of people although the reading aloud. That was, like, okay.

Investigator: Doing it your own way.

Participant One: … I've always been a really shy person, but I knew… that was something I needed to do and then the final "presentation" was hard for me, but I did have fun doing it. When I found out what we had to do I was like, "whoa, really?" I don't see it, I don't see it.

Participant Two: Shyness Self-Identified

Participant Two: Um, I feel like it kind of pulled me out of my shell a little bit…it takes me awhile to …open up and get comfortable …

Participant One (age 40) and Participant Two (age 25) were graduate students in the Communication Disorders department at an American university in a southern state. They both told the investigator that they were shy or described social anxiety in such a way as to be labeled shy during the post-project interview. Each had been assigned to a 'buddy' and two children.

Participant Two's Peer Experience

Participant Two was able to plan and implement a summer long theme (a trip around the world) with his 'buddy' and his abilities in small group increased as the summer progressed. He described planning with his reading buddy for the theme of their small group activities:

Participant Two: Well, I spent hours and hours at the library every week trying to find books. Participant Three was my partner, and we had come up with… about seven weeks to do a continent each week, so it … was easy and then from there …I had gotten a book from the library—

Investigator: That was her idea?

Participant Two: Yeah, yes she came up with the continent … from there I made an outline of what we were going do each week … depended on how the kids reacted to it … and they seemed to like it so we kept going with it, but I had gone to the library and I had got an activity book … with like with instructions, and, uh, all kind of little art projects you can make, which is what we used for group the most part… I would have them … read the instructions, (unintelligible), you know …work together … how they thought what would work best.

In this excerpt Participant Two described that his reading buddy, Participant Three,

thought of the idea of the round the world theme, and that he was able to find an activity book

that contributed to the success of the theme to provide a variety of reading and writing activities

for the children. Participant Two and Participant Three not only planned together, but also sought

books to use with their small group of assigned children.

> *Participant Two:* Ok…we probably met, uh, at least once a week. We'd talk every day after clients … to consider… how group went for her, how individual session went for me, we'd, you know, talk back and forth about those things. We'd get together once every week or two to go to the library together—
>
> *Investigator:* and you went to the library together?
>
> *Participant Two:* Yeah, a few times we did … to kind of pick books, so we pretty much knew … even before we'd go in … what she was doing in individual, she would tell me what she would read and we would … try and help each other pick books for them to choose from, so, uh, I got to know her a lot, we worked really well together, so, that was a good thing.

Participant One's Peer Experience

In contrast, in her first week of small group, Participant One told of speaking with many different

people for ideas, but not her assigned reading buddy, Participant Four.

> *Participant One:* Well at the beginning I started out, um, I was really nervous about the first group-I didn't know what to do, like I was thinking of a million different things I could try with 'em and the first thing I tried was, um, I asked pretty much everyone I know what do you want to know… what would you be interested in doing? You know, I tried a friend who's a teacher and asked her opinion and--
>
> *Investigator:*   Mm-hmm
>
> *Participant One:* I ended up coming up with … patriotism, um, we talked patriotism, we read the book <u>Wilky the Cockroach</u>, something about he goes to the White House, it was kind of interesting so we threw that in there—we were going to write letters to soldiers, but I found the kids had absolutely no interest in doing that.

So from her attempt at small group planning during the first week, we see that Participant

One did not consult with her buddy, and also had a difficult experience with the small group of

children. When Participant One did describe working with Participant Four, the description

revealed inconsistent attempts at collaboration.

> *Participant One:* We did sometimes and other times we did our own thing …we talked
> about it a lot we always knew what the other one was doing, but we didn't ever
> necessarily do the same thing.
>
> *Investigator:* Did you talk, um, away from the project at all?
>
> *Participant One:* Yeah, usually like at school after class and stuff like that we'd talk
> about it and … there were some things we didn't get to do, but there were things that she
> was doing like the project with animals with the kids and they were all talking about their
> favorite animals and they were really interested in snakes so that led me to do the groups
> about snakes and focused on snakes and learned about them and… and she was going to
> continue the snake theme but decided to do something different so she switched to
> something else and then, you know, it was just one thing kind of triggered the other and
> then that way it—
>
> *Investigator:*   Okay
>
> *Participant One:* It just…

Participant One's attempts at planning for small group consisted of patriotism, snakes, writing

fairy tales. She had no overarching theme to tie the weeks together as some of the successful

collaborators had: a trip around the world, gardens and plants, the animal kingdom.

From this data we see that working with a peer helped Participant Two with planning and

implementing the small group activities, while Participant One did not work with her peer and

struggled.

A second benefit from collaboration with a peer appeared to be an increase in confidence that

may have played a part in some successful behavior strategies that were observed by this

investigator during small group. Twice Participant Two was observed by this researcher keeping

the children together during a transition time between activities which tended to cause children to

wander. The first time, Participant Two was assisting his buddy who was leading the facilitation.

A young child wandered away in the large activity room. Participant Three kept the attention of

the group, and Participant Two slipped away and led the child back to the group, immediately grabbing an object off the table to entice the child back into the small group activity when the child held the object. Another time, Participant Two called to two children and got them involved looking at a book together during a transition time.

Participant Two's increasing confidence in front of the large group of children, students and supervisors was also demonstrated toward the end of the summer, when he was asked to read a book aloud in front of the large group. The book was <u>The Diary of a Wombat</u> and Participant Two surprised the group by reading the Wombat's voice with an Australian accent. He and this researcher talked about this event in the interview.

Participant Two's Large Group Read Aloud

Investigator: Sounds good, uh, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Participant Two: ... I feel like it … pulled me out of my shell a little bit…it takes
me awhile to … open up and get comfortable and I felt like by the end for …
the day we did the skit and everything, that was…

Investigator: You were Mr. Twit.

Participant Two: Right, so that …

Investigator: (Laughing) Oh and, I'm sorry, when you read that Mr. Wombat voice…

Participant Two: Exactly, see, Supervisor One threw that on me, it was like ten seconds
before and she wanted me to read it and was like "You want to read this?" so I was …
how can I make this interesting. The last day I gotta do something.

Investigator: Undiscovered talent!

Participant Two: Exactly!

Investigator: Entertaining-- was brilliant, yeah…

Participant Two: So, it pulled me out of my shell a lot. It challenged me, and I learned a
Lot from it, so…

> *Investigator:*   That's great.

> *Participant Two:* I wish I could do it every summer.

We see in this transcript Participant Two overcoming his innate feeling of shyness to star in a read aloud opportunity. However, there is evidence from the supervisor interview data that a third pattern emerged from failure to work with assigned peer.

As mentioned above, the supervisors in this data tended to stop modeling and giving feedback in the second part of the summer program. This move to mentorship from evaluator only happened if the student was ready to take on self-supervision, as happened with Participant Two. Participant One needed supervision help in the form of face-to-face feedback and digital auditory feedback during the fifth week of the six week program.

Participant One's Need for Continued Supervisor Support

Participant One continued to need support from two supervisors in both shared reading time and small group time two weeks past the date when supervisors tended to step back and let the students take charge. Participant One's supervisor, Supervisor One, described her concerns about Participant One during her interview.

Supervisor Concerns

> *Supervisor One:*

> > For example there was one particular student, Participant One, struggled with her clients initially, and I really wasn't happy, comfortable, with her process with those kids until well into the second half, and even then I was still sending her some auditory feedback and having some conversations with her. And it turned out that once she started employing one or two good additional strategies, then I pulled myself back a little bit more.

All of her assigned students received the emailed digital auditory feedback once this way, only Participant One received digital auditory feedback three times. During small group, Supervisor

One and Supervisor Three gave written feedback to Participant One a total number of five times. Other students would receive one episode of written feedback from one supervisor during small group.

Clearly, Participant One's anxiety and shyness got in the way of some of her therapy sessions being successful. Repeated modeling and repeated feedback by supervisors were necessary for Participant One to begin to be successful. Participant Two, relying on help and support from his reading buddy needed much less supervisor input and showed success earlier in the summer than Participant One did.

Participant One did, however, describe overcoming initial anxiety with the last activity of the summer which was a skit performed for the large group. The collaboration that went on throughout the summer with the supervisors and peers led Participant One to her own break through seen in the next transcript example

Participant One's Skit Experience

> *Participant One:* Stuff like that, it's just, I've always been a really shy person, but I knew, I mean, that was something I needed to do and then the final "presentation" was hard for me, but did have fun doing it. When I found out what we had to do I was like, "whoa, really?" I don't see it, I don't see it.

> *Investigator:*   Which character were you?

> *Participant One:* I ended up doing Supervisor Two.

> *Investigator:*   Oh, yeah, right

> *Participant One:* Figured, why not? Well, uh, everybody had already gotten most of the story book characters.

> *Investigator:*   Mm-hmm

> *Participant One:* And I was trying to think of what other story book characters would be and they had Supervisor One and Supervisor Two was on the list, and Supervisor Three,

and I was thinking, what I could do-cause Participant Five was going to do Supervisor One and I was, if he can do Supervisor One, I guess I'll try to do Supervisor Two-no one would expect that*.   I was very outside my comfort zone. But, I think the kids enjoyed it and I had fun doing it.

*Supervisor One was a female being portrayed by a male and Supervisor Two was a male being portrayed by a female.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The examples analyzed have shown the importance of collaboration with a peer as a learning tool for individuals who experience shyness. Participant Two collaborated with his assigned peer buddy outside of the clinic, visiting the library together, planning the trip around the world together and talking together about their clients. Participant Two's confidence grew as he collaborated with another student. Finally, Participant Two was allowed to move toward self-supervision with most of the other students, receiving no written feedback from his supervisor in the last three weeks of the program.

Participant One, while given an opportunity to collaborate, did not, and her ability to implement small group activities was limited. She needed repeated input from her supervisor before she could plan and implement small group activities. Clearly assigning her to a 'buddy' was not enough to guide her toward collaboration. While she was confident enough to take part in the student designed skit on the last day, as she told us, "I was very outside of my comfort zone." While she perhaps did not succeed as much as Participant Two, she did exhibit enough learning in the last week to earn the approval of her supervisor.

Benefits of peer collaboration for a student who felt shy that emerged included successful planning and intervention in small group literacy activities, increasing confidence, and increasing ability to self-supervise, thus minimizing supervisor input.

Limitations

There is a possibility that Participant One's age kept her from consistently working with a buddy who was fifteen years younger. However, an older student who did not consider herself shy may have had no problems collaborating with a younger peer. Shyness can have an effect on social interactions between persons of any age.

Implications

The experience of shyness often limits the learning through a clinical experience that requires interactions with others. It is important in our field to find ways to support these students. This study revealed that one way to facilitate the progress of students who consider themselves shy is to provide opportunities to collaborate with peers in clinical interactions. The support of another person in the planning, preparing and execution of plans seems to provide the person feeling shy with a protective aura that allows them to learn from the clinical experience. Greater opportunities to work with peers in an assigned manner can contribute to more successful clinical experiences for students with shyness.

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Learner Outcome

As a result of this activity the learner will be able to define shyness as it appears in CSD graduate students and assess the benefits of using peer collaboration to aid students who feel shy.

Continuing Education Questions

1. According to one model of shyness, students who are shy:
   A. Avoid large groups of people.
   B. Feel wary and anxious about interacting
   C. Do not want to interact with peers
   D. Refuse to take part in peer collaboration

2. Peer collaboration in clinical education helps student learning through:
   A. Emotional support and advances in self-confidence
   B. Decreased autonomy
   C. Shared work assignments
   D. Opportunities to help clients

3. Student who are shy and interact with peers gain:
   A. Friendship with a peer
   B. Evaluative supervisor support
   C. Increased confidence
   D. Extra time to look up therapy materials

4. Students who are shy but do not interact with peers cause:
    A. Clients to improve skills
    B. Supervisors to step back into a consultant role
    C. Clients to stop coming
    D. Continued supervisor modeling and feedback

5. Students who are shy:
    A. Grow out of it
    B. Always avoid contact with others
    C. Benefit from time alone to reflect
    D. Benefit from interactions with peers