

2008

Video Applications for Online Counseling: Design and Practice

Leping Liu

Troyann I. Gentile

University of Colorado Denver, troyann.gentile@ucdenver.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://source.ucdenver.edu/cpce_publications

 Part of the [Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Liu, L. & Gentile, T. (2008). Video Applications for Online Counseling: Design and Practice. In J. Luca & E. Weippl (Eds.), *Proceedings of EdMedia: World Conference on Educational Media and Technology 2008* (pp. 5662-5667). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Counseling Faculty Scholarship at source. It has been accepted for inclusion in Counseling Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of source. For more information, please contact kelly.ragland@ucdenver.edu.

Video Applications for Online Counseling: Design and Practice

Leping Liu
University of Nevada, Reno, USA
liu@unr.edu

Troyann Gentile
University of Nevada, Reno, USA
Troyann659@cs.com

Abstract: Online counseling has been one important portion in our counseling skill training courses. In online counseling, video applications (such as video-conferences, storytelling, interactive information materials, screen-capture video, and counseling video session evaluation) are used for client assessment, online communications, counseling education and evaluation. This paper will present the analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of integrating these applications into online counseling. Methods, procedures, activities, and issues will be described

Introduction

Since 1940s, technology has been integrated into the practice of counseling since its original applications (Berry, Srebalus, Cromer, and Takacs, 2003; Granello, 2000; Liu, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006; Myrick, 1997; Neukrug, 1991; Walz, Harris-Bowlsbey, Dinkmeyer, Carlson, & Nelson, 1990), and more and more into instruction and training of higher education students enrolled in Counselor Education programs over the past two decades (Cabaniss, 2002; Casey, 1999; Harris-Bowlsbey, 1984; Neukrug, 1991; Sampson, Kolodinsky, & Greeno, 1997; Watson, 2003), especially the use of video applications (Liu & Maddux, 2008; Liu, 2007). Previous literature suggests that research and practice have been done at the initial level of technology integration to explore appropriate technologies for counseling education (Bassoppo-Mayo, 1997; Bornas, Tortella-Feliu, Llabres, & Fullana, 2001; Schafle, Smaby, & Liu, 2006; Sturges, 1998). This paper will present our successful experiences at a higher level of integration – using technology to improve counseling practice (Maddux, Johnson, & Willis, 2001; Liu & Johnson, 2003), focusing on the design and implementation of integrating a set of video applications into online counseling practice (such as video-conferences, storytelling, interactive information materials, screen-capture video, and counseling video session evaluation). Counseling skills and online counseling procedures are based on the Skill Counselor Training Model (Downing, Smaby, & Maddux, 2001; Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999; Zimmick, Smaby & Maddux, 2000), and the design of the integration of the video applications is based on the Technology Integration Design Model (Liu & Velasquez-Bryant, 2003; Liu & Johnson, 2003).

This paper will present (a) the basic procedures and skills of counseling, (b) tasks in online counseling, (c) video applications that can be used to facilitate online counseling activities, and (d) some issues and tips of using video applications in online counseling

Basic Skills and Procedures of Counseling

In regular counseling skill training class, generally, students learn and develop eighteen basic skills (Downing, Smaby, & Maddux, 2001) through three stages: In the first stage, *Exploring Stage*, the objectives

are: (1) eye contact, (2) body language, (3) verbal tracking, (4) questioning, (5) paraphrasing, and (6) summarizing. In the second stage, *Understanding Stage*, the objectives are: (a) Interchangeable Empathy, and (b) Additive Empathy; and the following skills are practiced: (7) feeling and content, (8) self-disclosure, (9) concrete and specific, (10) immediacy, (11) situation action and feelings, (12) confronts caringly. In the third stage, *Action Stage*, the objectives are: (a) Decision-Making, and (b) Contracting; and the following skills are practiced: (13) deciding, (14) choosing, (15) consequences, (16) agreements, (17) deadlines, and (18) reviewing goals and actions to determine outcome. Then, students will use the skills in their class activities and later in their practicum sessions for the clinic.

The main procedures of counseling include (a) *Analysis* – to conduct assessment to the client, in which the counselor obtains the background information and the issues or problems of the client; (b) *Design* – to determine treatment plan, specific activities, backup preparations, and all the tasks need to be completed; (c) *Implementation* – to conduct counseling session, which can be a single session or multiple sessions where the counselor will use the above skills; and conduct follow-up communications with the client, this can be an option, or in any format (such as informal meeting, chat, or providing supplementary materials to the client to learn more relevant information about certain particular issues he/she may have); and (d) *Evaluation* – to evaluate the procedures, this is for the counselors to learn and improve.

Online Counseling

Online counseling can be defined as to complete all the counseling procedures and activities with any telecommunication means, without in-person meeting with the client. When all the activities, procedures, and documentations are done in an online environment, via the Internet, or any telecommunication tools, a thorough analysis and design is a MUST before the project starts. In the analysis and design stage of the counseling project, the counselor needs to determine a list of counseling tasks, and the appropriate technology tools that we can use to perform the specific task online. The following is a sample of to-do list as the outcomes from the analysis and design stage.

1. Task: Let the client know something about the counselor
Tools: An information Website, or a short video about the counselor
2. Task: Obtain the background information, or the issues and problems, from the client
Tools: Email, online assessment form, or others...
3. Task: Determine the comfortable level to which the client can use certain technology
Tools: through email, some try-out on the tools, technology-survey...
4. Task: Determine the format of the sessions
Tools: Synchronous communication tools, video conference tools, email, or others...
5. Task: Determine the way to deliver more relevant information to the client
Tools: story-telling, educational videos, interactive materials from the Web
6. Task: Determine the format of documentation and session-records for evaluation
Tools: interactive video editing, screen video capture tools, text-logs

Video Applications in Online Counseling

After the tasks and tools are determined, the next stage is the implementation stage. To use each tool, the counselor has to master some required technology skills, and sometimes the client needs to be trained first before they start the online sessions. This paper will focus on the four video applications and technology skills that are necessary to use them.

Web Delivered Video Clips

In the above Task 1, although each counselor first developed an information Website to give an introduction about the counseling services, the frequently asked questions and answers, we still want the client

to “meet” with our counselors, so that they do not feel that they are talking to the computer in the later online sessions. We taught our counseling students first create a short video clip about him/her-self, and a short talk.

The major issue the counselor confronted with is the conversion of the video file to a standard downloadable file type. At this age, most people know how to use a video camera to make a video. After they took the video, they need to import the video into the computer, specifically, a video editing program in the computer, and then save or convert the video clip into a standard video file. We found that *Microsoft Expression* has more options for users to import different the types of video files, and converted to different types of files. In our experiences, we taught the counselors to convert their video files into (*.wmv) or (*.avi) file, that Windows Media Player can easily open and play. After they had the workable video files, they put the videos onto the information Website; from there the clients can first “meet” with the counselor.

Synchronous Video Conference Tool

The synchronous video conference tool used in the online counseling project is Skype (Task 4). It is a communication protocol that uses peer-to-peer technology (P2P) to provide real-time communication via the Internet. It has several features that can provide effective synchronous online communication. First, it provides real-time voice via the Internet, one-to-one calling, or a conference calling (up to five people), which is just about the same number of students when they do group online counseling. Second, if the users set up their camera, they can perform either a one-to-one video call, or a video cast with a group of people when you talk via Skype, you can see each other from the video stage. Third, it has a 48-person chat board, allowing people to perform text-based chatting at any time; this is very convenient to obtain the conversation logs. And finally, it has a file-transfer function, which allows the users to send and receive any types of file while they are talking via Skype. Again, all of these are in real-time, synchronous communication.

Skype was the most welcome tools the counselors used in the online counseling sessions. With all the features, they achieved the goals they set for the online counseling. We prepared an instruction module for both the counselors and their client to learn Skype, although there are numerous such tools available on the market, Skype is the most convenient one. The best part about the Skype software is that it is free. The users only need to purchase a microphone headset that connects to your PC or Mac. Skype works on all operating systems including Mac OS X, Linux and PDAs using Pocket PC, with a native look and feel for each platform (Newman, 2006). It worked efficiently in the online counseling project.

Story-Telling Interactive Online Materials

Story-telling is to create a video with still pictures. The most popular program to do this is Microsoft Movie Maker. First a set of pictures are imported into the program, then they can be arranged into certain order, and assemble into a movie. The story-telling was used for Task 5 to provide more relevant information to the client in an interactive format. Most of the time, it plays an educator’s role as the reinforcement of the counseling session. More examples will be presented at the conference. (See Figure 1).

Video-Capture Tool to Record the Online Counseling Session

In regular counseling session, video camera is set for each counseling rooms; so all the conversations, performances, interactions, or the use of all the skills can be recorded and then imported to a video editing program for further evaluation and assessment editing (Task 6). In online counseling, it is difficult, and should be done with additional technology programs.

We also used an advanced program *Camtasia Studio*. It is a screen recorder and presentation program. Before the online session starts, *Camtasia* is set to capture, for example, the Skype window. It will capture all the activities in that screen area, record the conversation, and when the online session is done, it can be assemble into a video. This video later is used to evaluate and assess the counselor’s performance. It can be edited again, adding comments, evaluations, suggestions by the peer group, or by the instructor.

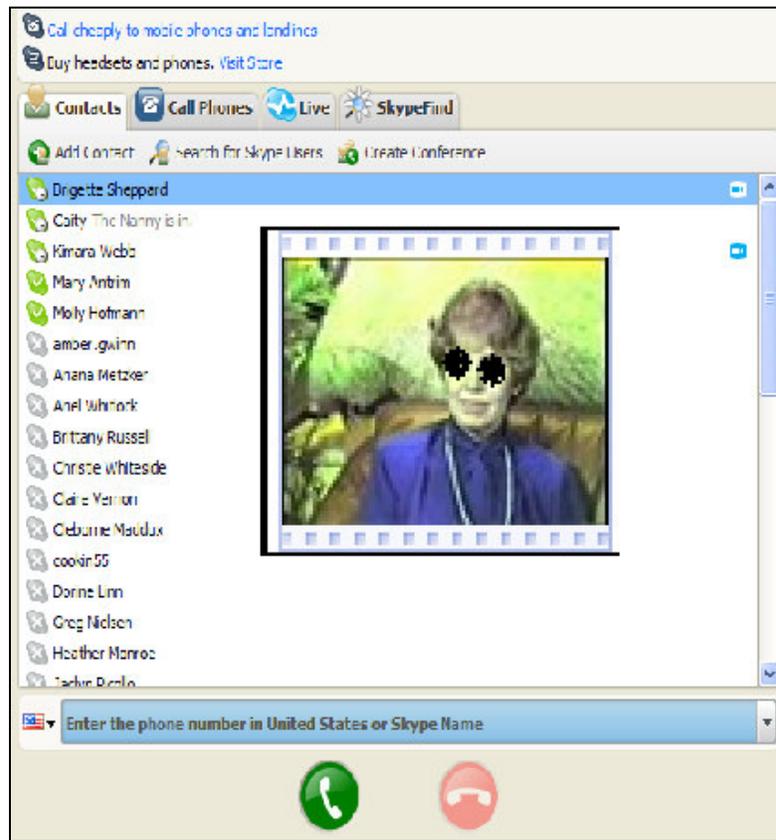


Figure 1. Video Conference Tool

Evaluate Counseling Session Video

The evaluation of counseling sessions usually is performed with the counseling session video in three procedures: (a) students self-evaluation, (b) the instructor's evaluation, and (c) summary of the evaluation. A simple tool is Microsoft Movie Maker. In the first procedure, students used this program to evaluate if the counseling skills were performed appropriately, where was the moment that certain skills were presented. They added text comments and audio comments to the video clips. In the second procedure, the instructor would evaluate the session video and students' self-evaluation, adding more comments (text comments and audio comments) to the video. Then, the video was returned to the students. This is the third procedure, in which students summarized their self-evaluation comments with that of the instructor, formulating documentation with the video as the supplementary material. Figure 2 is an example.

Summary

The online counseling project is part of an online counseling skill training class. From this project, students not only learned the skills and technologies for online counseling, they also experienced some real world issues when conducting an online counseling session. Almost all students felt positive about using the video applications. They realized that, compared with the traditional face-to-face counseling, online counseling has a great potential to serve better to those client who are shy, at remote location, or have scheduling problems.

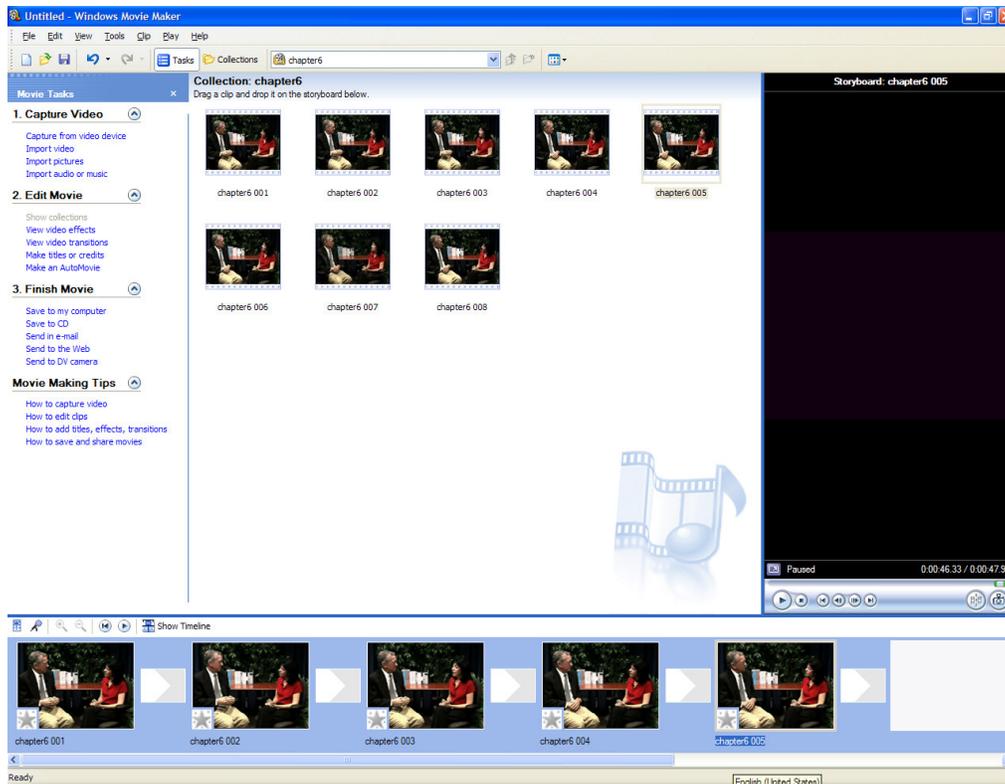


Figure 2. Sample of Counseling Video Evaluation

Some students showed certain level of anxiety depending on their technology skill level and previous experiences on technology. In our Counselor Education program, most students only mastered basic computing skills; they rarely touched multimedia applications. They did report that (1) a well devised training program that includes everything from camera use to software instruction to final tape production is crucial; (2) technology assistance in the form of personnel made available to the students in the editing facility was also deemed to be invaluable to them; and (3) access to the video lab must be made readily available as the various work schedules of students prohibit editing at regularly scheduled times.

We view this effort as an initial step and recognize the limitations of our designs and experiences. We hope that other educators and researchers can use this first step in designing further studies and practices. We will present some examples, the online counseling videos, the video editing programs at the conference.

References

- Bassoppo-Mayo, T. C. (1997). Digital video interaction technology: The world's new frontier in education, training and development? *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 24(4), 305-314.
- Berry, T., Srebalus, D. J., Cromer, P. W., & Takacs, J. (2003). Counselor trainee technology use, skills, learning styles, and preferred modes of instruction. *Journal of Technology in Counseling*, 3(1). Available: http://jtc.colstate.edu/vol3_1/Takacs/Takacs.htm
- Bornas, X., Tortella-Feliu, M., Llabres, J., & Fullana, D. (2001). Computer assisted exposure treatment for flight phobia. *Psychotherapy Research*, 11(3), 259-273.
- Canabiss, K. (2002). Computer-related technology use by counselors in the new millennium: A Delphi study. *Journal of Technology in Counseling*, 2(2). Available: http://jtc.colstate.edu/vol2_2/cabaniss/cabaniss.htm

- Casey, J. A. (1999). Computer assisted simulation for counseling training of basic skills. *Journal of Technology in Counseling*, 1(1). Available: http://jtc.colstate.edu/vol1_1/simulation.htm
- Downing, T. K., Smaby, M. H., Maddux, C. D. (2001). A study of the transfer of group counseling skills from training to practice. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 26, 156-167.
- Granello, P.F., (2000). Historical context: the relationship of computer technologies and counseling. *Counseling and Personnel Services* (CGO 30192), 1-11.
- Harris-Bowlsebey, J., (1984). High touch and high technology: The marriage that must succeed. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 24(1), 6- 16.
- Liu, L. (2007). Design and Implementation of an Online Course in Counseling and Information Technology. In C. Crawford, R. Carlsen, I. Gibson, K. McFerrin, J. Price, R. Weber & D. A. Willis (Eds.), *Technology & Teacher Education Annual 2007* (pp. 2404-2409). Charlottesville, VA: AACE.
- Liu, L., & Maddux, C. (2008). An online course to prepare school counselors for online career counseling. In K. McFerrin, R. Weber, R. Carlsen, & D. A. Willis (Eds.), *Technology & Teacher Education Annual 2008* (pp. 3035-3040). Charlottesville, VA: AACE.
- Liu, L., Maddux, C., & Smaby, M. (2006). Integrate Digital Video Technology into School Counseling Training. In C. Crawford, R. Carlsen, I. Gibson, K. McFerrin, J. Price, R. Weber & D. A. Willis (Eds.), *Technology & Teacher Education Annual 2006* (pp. 625-630). Charlottesville, VA: AACE.
- Liu, L., & Johnson, L. (2003). A new approach of design: Technology integration as information system development. Presented at: SITE (*Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education*), Albuquerque, NM, March 28, 2003.
- Liu, L., & Johnson, L. (2003b). Structure-based versus function-based method in multimedia courseware design. Presented at: SITE (*Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education*), Albuquerque, NM, March 28, 2003.
- Liu, L., & Velasquez-Bryant, J. (2003). An information technology integration system and its life cycle: What is missing? *Computers in the Schools*, 20(1-2), 93-106.
- Maddux, C. D., Johnson, D. L., & Willis, J. W. (2001). *Educational computing: Learning with tomorrow's technologies*, 3rd Ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Myrick, R. D. (1997). Traveling together on the road ahead. *Professional School Counseling*, 1(1), 4-8.
- Neukrug, E. S. (1991). Computer-assisted live supervision in counseling skills training. *Counselor education and Supervision*, 31(2), 132-139.
- Newman, J. (2006). *Voice and video communication using Skype: Manual*. University of Nevada, Reno.
- Sampson, J. P., Kolodinsky, R. W., & Greeno, B. P. (1997). Counseling on the information highway: Future possibilities and potential problems. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 75(3), 203-212.
- Schafle, S., Smaby, M. H., & Liu, L. (2006). Counselors' attitudes toward video editing technology. *Vistas*, 3(1), 1-9. Online journal by American Counseling Association.
- Smaby, M. H., Maddux, C. D., Torres-Rivera, E., & Zimmick, R. (1999). A study of the effects of a skills-based versus a conventional group counseling training program. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 24, 152-163.
- Sturges, J. W. (1998). Practical use of technology in professional practice. *Professional Psychology*, 29 (2), 183-188.
- Waltz, G. R., Harris-Bowlsebey, J., Dinkmeyer, Jr., D, Carlson, J., Nelson, R. C., Krockover, G. H. (1990). A technological world. *Counseling and Personnel Services* (CGO22269), 1-13.
- Watson, J. C. (2003). Computer-based supervision: Implementing computer technology into the delivery of counseling supervision. *Journal of Technology in Counseling*, 3(1). Available: http://jtc.colstate.edu/vol3_1/Watson/Watson.htm
- Zimmick, R., Smaby, M. H., & Maddux, C. (2000). Improving the use of a group counseling scale and related model to teach theory and skills integration. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 39, 248-295.