

## **Change in Pastoral Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Self-reflection, and Social Desirability Across a Unit of CPE**

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*Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is experiential learning of the art and science of pastoral care. CPE students increase capacities in psychological strengths such as self-awareness and empathy, and improve skills in interpersonal and inter-professional relationships. Previous research has documented different kinds of change and experiences for students depending on the length of the CPE unit (short/intensive vs. long/extended). The current study involves CPE students who have taken either an intensive unit or an extended unit and compares the average amount of change in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and insight while controlling for the influence of social desirability. Intensive and extended unit students were different from each other in terms of age and experience, beginning level of pastoral skill, and amount of change in the measured abilities. Limitations and strengths of this study and the need for future research are discussed.*

**KEYWORDS** *clinical pastoral education, education, emotional intelligence, pastoral care, pastoral skills, self-reflection*

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## INTRODUCTION

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is theological experiential education for students interested in developing their identity, authority, and skills as pastoral caregivers in a variety of settings. Conducted under the auspices of an Association Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) Certified Supervisor, students engage in the actual practice of ministry and process their experiences through an action-reflection model of education. The framework for the student's learning includes individualized learning goals, learning objectives and outcomes, and the dynamics inherent in adult-experiential process small-group settings. "Through the practice of ministry reflection thereon with supervisor and peers, the experiential learning that is CPE takes place." (ACPE, 2009). The aim of CPE programs is to create a learning environment where students can develop insight and competence in their ability to self-reflect, identify issues in learning and ministry, and improve in competencies related to pastoral function, skills, knowledge of theology, and the behavioral sciences. A major component of CPE is self awareness and management of the self so that a person can enter into consistent and authentic relations with others and engage in a case-study method of understanding "living human documents" (Anton Boisen, as cited in ACPE, 2005).

### Major Studies of CPE

Many studies have documented the personal change and growth of CPE students with respect to their development of identity and authority as pastoral caregivers. These studies report improvement in attitudes, behaviors, and personality attributes that are desirable in a self-aware person who is able to attend to another person's pastoral needs. In a comprehensive review of 39 studies documenting the impact of CPE on students, Derrickson (1990) concluded that CPE students gain, among other benefits, autonomy and self awareness from their CPE experience. He noted the need for more research documenting the translation of self-awareness into solid pastoral skills.

In an early study, Greary (1977) evaluated four groups of individuals who were enrolled in a CPE class: 31 first time CPE enrollees, 31 church people outside of CPE, 21 individuals in their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th unit of CPE, and 18 individuals who had taken a previous CPE class but were not currently enrolled. Using a pre-test/post-test design, Greary found advanced CPE individuals exhibited higher post-test scores on empathy and inner direction, whereas first time CPE students exhibited higher post-test scores on self-acceptance and inner-directed existentiality. These gains diminished for all students after a period of about five months.

Subsequent studies have looked at a variety of different outcome measures. For instance, VandeCreek and Valentino (1991) found that

self-actualization, general efficacy, and long range problem solving all increased by the end of an intensive unit of CPE. A few years later, Fitchett and Gray (1994) looked at specific pastoral skills using a pre-test/post-test study design. In the self-report study, supplemented by peer-reports, 39 extended unit CPE students showed positive change across many pastoral abilities, such as: counseling resources, facilitative relations, problem resolution, and non-judgmental acceptance.

A more recent study by O'Connor et al. (2001) focused on creating and assessing a program evaluation measure of a CPE program—the Hamilton SPE Evaluation Tool (HSET). The study found that CPE students scored highly at the end of the unit on almost all pastoral skills measured. Self-reports by the students occurred at the end of the unit and students typically agreed that they developed ministry skills, developed new goals, and learned about their personal functioning.

### Effects of CPE Unit Length

Although prior research has demonstrated that students make progress toward important pastoral skills in CPE, a closer look at the literature suggests that this progress is not the same for all students when the length of the CPE unit is considered. CPE can be experienced in an intensive weeks-long format or an extended months-long format. Student growth appears to be different in studies where “intensive unit” and “extended unit” students were compared. Thomas, Stein, and Klein (1982) found, for example, that CPE increases self-awareness and acceptance and those students became more “person-centered.” Extended unit students showed a greater increase in defensiveness and a lower level of peak experiencing compared to intensive unit students. O'Connor, Fox, Meakes, Empey, and O'Neill, K. (1997) also evaluated student growth in units of different duration: an intensive eleven-week unit and a six-month extended unit. Intensive unit students rated their personal growth, professional growth, and theological reflection slightly higher than extended unit students did.

Differences in long-term memory of the CPE experience are also apparent between intensive and extended unit students. Derrickson and Ebersole (1986) asked students five years out of CPE what they remembered most often and what helped them the most from their CPE experience. Intensive unit students reported that they remembered CPE most when they engaged in personal reflection. For extended unit students, visiting the sick in their current placement made them remember their CPE experience most often. Intensive unit students also remembered many didactic seminars across a wide range of topics while extended unit students mostly remembered medical seminars. Moreover, intensive unit students recalled their supervisor more often as a therapist, in contrast to the extended unit students who saw their supervisor more as a mentor.

## Current Study

The current study compares the personal growth of the intensive and extended unit CPE students using a number of psychological measures, controlling for demographic differences between intensive and extended unit students. Specifically, this study looks at CPE student growth in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, and self-reflection, while controlling for social desirability and other important demographic variables. It was hypothesized that all CPE students would improve in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness over the course of their CPE unit. Social desirability was measured as a control variable, so that growth could be evaluated outside of natural inclinations to respond positively to desirable growth questions.

## METHOD

### Procedure

The study was conducted as part of an ongoing effort to evaluate HealthCare Chaplaincy's CPE Program. Pre-test questionnaires were distributed to all CPE students within the first two weeks of each CPE unit, beginning in the summer of 2006 and concluding in the summer of 2008. Post-test questionnaires were identical to pre-test questionnaires and were distributed to all students at the end of each course. The questionnaires contained items to determine students' demographic characteristics as well as instruments that assess pastoral skills and confidence, emotional intelligence, self-reflection and insight, and social desirability. The demographic items included: age, gender, level of education, religious denomination, prior units of CPE, years of experience in professional ministry or pastoral care, and years of theological study.

### Participants

A total of 144 CPE students (72 males and 72 females) completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of their units. The average age of the students was approximately 43 years (see Table 1). All participants were graduates of high school, and 60% had a Masters degree or higher. Most of the students were Roman Catholic, Jewish, Anglican, or of other Protestant denominations. On average, students had four and a half years of theological study, and six years of experience in professional ministry. Fifty-five percent were intensive unit CPE students and the remaining were extended unit students. For most students this was their first CPE course (N=106). Twenty-one students were in their second unit of CPE and seventeen students were in their third or higher unit.

**TABLE 1** Means (Standard Deviations) and Percentages for Demographic Variables

Variable	Mean (SD)	Percent
Age	42.90 (12.38)	
Years of Professional Ministry	6.05 (10.12)	
Years of Theological Study	4.64 (5.48)	
Education		
Associates		1.4
Bachelors		43.1
Masters		46.5
Doctorate		6.3
Other		2.8
Religious Affiliation		
Anglican		16.7
Roman Catholic		16.7
Jewish		27.1
Muslim		1.4
Protestant		31.9
Other		6.3

## Measures

### PASTORAL SKILLS

The scale used to measure pastoral care skills (“Pastoral Skills Scale” [PSS]) has been used at a number of CPE centers, but we were unable to trace its origins or development. The scale asks students to evaluate and rate their ability to use their own theological/spiritual knowledge and perspectives to help patients and their families. Examples of statements are “Please rate your ability to: Identify spiritual/existential issues with patients and families” and “Help others use resources within their own spiritual/cultural tradition.” Students rated their abilities on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from “None at all” to “Excellent.” There were 26 questions, and total possible scores could range from 26 to 130, with higher scores indicating greater pastoral skills.

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

“Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test” (SSEIT; Schutte, et al., 1998) was used to measure emotional intelligence. The SSEIT is a 33-item measure of three aspects of emotional intelligence: appraisal and expression of emotions, emotional regulation, and utilization of emotions. Students indicated if they agreed with statements that claimed emotional skills and abilities from a first-person perspective on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” A total score was derived after reverse coding some items. The total score for this scale could range between 33 and 165, with higher scores reflecting greater emotional intelligence.

#### SELF-REFLECTION

The Self-reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS; Grant, 2002) was used to measure the degree to which participants were self-reflective and had self-insight. The SRIS has 20 statements that students rated themselves on, using a 5-point Likert Scale. The respondent is asked the degree to which they rate the item as true for themselves. The responses ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” A total score was derived after reverse coding some items. The total score on this scale could range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater self-reflection and insight.

#### SOCIAL DESIRABILITY

The Marlowe-Crowne Short Form (MC-SF; Reynolds, 1982) was used to measure social desirability. The MC-SF is a measure of social desirability that contains 11 items from the original 33 item Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960). Items assess the tendency to endorse statements that would make the self “look good” all the time. For example, agreeing with one statement can reflect the respondent’s belief that they are always compassionate and caring at every moment even with unpleasant people all the time. Responses to the statements are either “Yes” or “No.” A total score was derived after reverse coding some items. The total score for the MC-SF could range from 0 to 11, with a higher score indicating a greater desire to look good to others.

## RESULTS

Three hundred ten students completed a pre-test, only 144 participants were included in this report. To be included in the analyses, participants had to have fewer than twenty percent of the items missing on any one measure, and they must have had data on both the pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Missing responses for participants were replaced with the mean response for that participant for each scale. There were no patterns to the missing data on the surveys or by type of CPE course.

Years of theological study and years of professional ministry were significantly skewed and kurtotic. Untransformed values of these variables were used for descriptive analyses, for inferential analyses these two variables were changed to dichotomous variables. Professional ministry was dichotomized, and defined as either less than one year of ministry or one year or more. Using a median split, theological study was defined as either three or fewer years or three and one half or more years. To measure change in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, and self-reflection change scores were created. All change scores were derived by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score. Higher change scores indicate improvement in the variables measured over time. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 17.

## Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 contains the means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients of internal consistency reliability for each scale, and the range of scores for each of the measures on the pre-tests and post-tests. The means and internal reliability coefficients are comparable to previous research samples on the measures of emotional intelligence (Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003), self-reflection (Roberts & Stark, 2008), and social desirability (Reynolds, 1982). The internal reliability for all scales in this sample was good to very good.

The inter-correlations among the scales are presented in Table 3. The only scale that correlated with Social Desirability was Pastoral Skills scores at both pre-test and post-test ( $r = .21, p < .01$  and  $r = .28, p < .01$  respectively). Pastoral skills were positively correlated with emotional intelligence scores at both the beginning and end of the CPE unit. Pastoral skills and self-reflection were not correlated with each other at the beginning of the unit, but they were by the end of the unit. Emotional intelligence was positively correlated with self-reflection both at the beginning and end of the unit. Participants with higher scores on any one scale were more likely to have higher scores on the other scales excluding social desirability.

Table 4 shows the correlation of the pre-test/post-test change scores of each of the four scales with students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Marlowe-Crowne. The change scores indicate the amount of change in each student's scores across time, with positive change scores indicating an increase in the characteristic measured. Scores on the Social Desirability MC-SF pre-test or post-test measure are significantly negatively associated with pastoral skill and emotional intelligence change scores indicating that higher social desirability scores are associated with less change in pastoral skill or emotional intelligence. Positive change in emotional intelligence scores was associated with positive change in pastoral skills scores. Positive change in emotional intelligence was also associated with positive change in self-reflection and insight. Change in self-reflection was not related with change in pastoral skills.

**TABLE 2** Means, (SD), Test Reliability and Range for Pre-test and Post-test Scores on Measures

Measure	Pre-test	Post-test	Alpha		Range	
			Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Pastoral Skills*	78.10 (15.23)	94.17 (11.72)	.94	.91	42–115	59–128
Emotional Intelligence*	125.79 (9.93)	128.56 (10.60)	.87	.86	102–157	100–163
Self-reflection	80.32 (8.04)	78.36 (12.21)	.90	.93	62–100	50–100
Social Desirability	5.00 (3.04)	4.68 (3.03)	.80	.80	0–11	0–11

\*Difference between Pre-test and Post-test significant at  $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 3** Correlations Between Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Measure		PSS		SSEIT		SRIS		MC-SF
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test
PSS	Post-test	.42 <sup>†</sup>						
SSEIT	Pre-test	.30 <sup>†</sup>	.25**					
	Post-test	.11	.49 <sup>†</sup>	.61 <sup>†</sup>				
SRIS	Pre-test	.11	.26**	.52 <sup>†</sup>	.48 <sup>†</sup>			
	Post-test	.14	.39 <sup>†</sup>	.27**	.57 <sup>†</sup>	.55 <sup>†</sup>		
MC-SF	Pre-test	.21*	-.01	.12	-.07	-.01	-.08	
	Post-test	.28**	.04	.13	-.02	.05	-.03	.68 <sup>†</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, SRIS = Self-reflection & Insight Scale, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form.

### Differences in Scores over Time and Groups

The mean social desirability score decreased somewhat over time (*ns*), and the average self-reflection score significantly decreased over time,  $t(143) = -2.28$ ,  $p < .05$ . The average pastoral skills score significantly increased from the pre-test to the post-test,  $t(143) = 13.00$ ,  $p < .001$ , as did the average emotional intelligence score,  $t(143) = 3.66$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Exploration of group differences in terms of prior experience with CPE indicates that there were significant differences in experience characteristics (see Table 5). Post hoc analyses compared three groups of CPE students (first, second, third, or more CPE units) using a Bonferroni correction. Considering a Bonferroni correction to significance levels for multiple comparisons, a significant result would be found at  $p \leq .004$  (12 comparisons). Post hoc analyses indicated that compared to students with one prior CPE unit or two or more prior units, students with no previous CPE experience were significantly younger and had significantly fewer years in professional ministry,  $F(2, 141) = 8.47$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $F(2, 141) = 14.13$ ,  $p < .001$  respectively. First time students had fewer years of theological study,  $F(2, 141) = 3.67$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There were no other significant differences in the other measures by number of CPE units completed.

**TABLE 4** Correlations Between Social Desirability and Change Scores

Measure	MC-SF Pre-test	MC-SF Post-test	PSS $\Delta$	SSEIT $\Delta$
MC-SF Post-test	.68 <sup>†</sup>			
PSS $\Delta$	-.22**	-.25**		
SSREIT $\Delta$	-.21*	-.16*	.44 <sup>†</sup>	
SRIS $\Delta$	-.09	-.07	.11	.44 <sup>†</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, SRIS = Self-reflection and Insight Scale, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form,  $\Delta$  = Change Score.

**TABLE 5** Mean (SD) of Age and Experience by Number of CPE Units

Unit	Age <sup>†</sup>	Years of ministry <sup>†</sup>	Years of theology*
First CPE Unit	40.50 (11.79)	3.72 (6.91)	3.92 (3.66)
Second CPE Unit	48.81 (12.10)	14.93 (15.37)	6.24 (6.09)
Third or More CPE Unit	50.59 (11.29)	9.62 (12.40)	7.12 (11.00)

\* $p < .05$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ .

Table 6 presents the means and standard deviations for the measures by number of CPE units. Post hoc analyses indicated that students in their first CPE unit had significantly lower pastoral skills scores at pre-test,  $F(2, 141) = 9.56$ ,  $p < .001$ , than students with more units of CPE. There were no significant differences between groups in terms of emotional intelligence and self-reflection and insight. However, self-reflection and self-insight increased for students with three or more units of CPE compared to those with less CPE experience. Social desirability decreased with more units of CPE.

Previous research has documented differences between intensive and extended CPE unit students across different psychosocial measures. Table 7 provides means and standard deviations for demographic variables by type of CPE unit. As seen in the table, intensive unit students were significantly younger,  $t(142) = 4.02$ ,  $p < .001$ , and had fewer years of professional ministry,  $t(142) = 4.48$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Table 8 gives the average scores on all the measures in this study by type of CPE unit. Intensive students had significantly lower pastoral skills pre-test scores,  $t(142) = 3.51$ ,  $p < .001$ , lower emotional intelligence pre-test scores,  $t(142) = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ , and significantly higher self-reflection post-test scores,  $t(142) = 3.82$ ,  $p < .001$ . Extended unit students showed a significant decrease in average self-reflection and insight scores over time,  $t(64) = 3.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . Considering a Bonferroni correction to significance levels, a significant result would be found at  $p \leq .003$  (13 comparisons).

**TABLE 6** Means (SDs) of Measures at Pre-test and Post-test by Number of CPE Units

Unit	PSS		SSREIT		SRIS		MC-SF	
	Pre-test <sup>†</sup>	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
First CPE Unit	75.01 (14.19)	93.45 (12.12)	126.15 (10.43)	128.90 (11.05)	80.74 (8.59)	78.31 (12.49)	5.07 (2.93)	4.63 (3.10)
Second CPE Unit	85.19 (16.39)	94.76 (11.28)	123.81 (9.30)	126.86 (8.96)	77.67 (6.32)	74.62 (11.62)	5.48 (3.23)	5.19 (2.42)
Third or More CPE Unit	88.65 (12.92)	97.88 (9.27)	126.00 (7.25)	128.59 (9.89)	81.00 (5.80)	83.29 (9.79)	4.00 (3.45)	4.35 (3.39)

<sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, SRIS = Self-reflection and Insight Scale, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form.

**TABLE 7** Means (SDs) of Age and Experience by Type of CPE Unit

Unit	Age <sup>†</sup>	Years of ministry <sup>†</sup>	Years of theology
Intensive N = 79	39.33 (12.59)	2.69 (6.69)	4.12 (6.11)
Extended N = 65	47.24 (10.69)	10.14 (11.97)	5.26 (4.58)

<sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ .

Differences were also observed in some measures based on gender. As can be seen in Table 9, males had more experience in general. They had significantly more years of theological study,  $t(142) = 2.31, p < .05$  and more years of professional ministry,  $t(142) = 3.45, p < .001$ . Table 10 shows average pre-test and post-test scores of males and females on all four of the measures. Males and females differed from each other on several measures of interest. The average score on the Pastoral Skills Scale was higher for males at pre-test,  $t(142) = 3.40, p < .001$ . The average change in pastoral skills was higher in females than males,  $t(142) = 3.11, p < .01$ . On average, females had higher scores on the Self-reflection scale at pre-test,  $t(142) = 2.27, p < .05$  and post-test,  $t(142) = 2.16, p < .05$ . Average score on the social desirability scale was higher for males than females at post-test,  $t(142) = 1.99, p < .05$ .

As expected age and experience variables were significantly correlated with one another. Age was significantly positively correlated with years of professional ministry ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ) pastoral skills at pre-test ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ), and social desirability at pre-test and post-test ( $r = .18, p < .05$  and  $r = .21, p < .01$  respectively). Age was significantly negatively correlated with change in pastoral skills ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ) and change in emotional intelligence ( $r = -.16, p < .05$ ). Older age was associated with higher social desirability scores, more experience, pastoral skills, and lower rates of change. Years of theological study was positively related with pastoral skills at pre-test ( $r = .31, p < .001$ ) and negatively with change in pastoral skills ( $r = -.28, p < .001$ ). Years of professional ministry was positively

**TABLE 8** Means (SDs) of Measures at Pre-test and Post-test by Type of CPE Unit

Unit	PSS		SSREIT		SRIS		MC-SF	
	Pre-test <sup>†</sup>	Post-test	Pre-test*	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test <sup>†</sup>	Pre-test	Post-test
Intensive N = 79	74.22 (14.39)	94.49 (12.20)	124.33 (9.62)	129.80 (9.19)	80.80 (7.96)	81.85 (9.32)	4.57 (3.00)	4.41 (3.28)
Extended N = 65	82.83 (14.98)	93.77 (11.19)	127.57 (10.09)	127.06 (12.00)	79.74 (8.17)	74.12 (13.93)	5.52 (3.03)	5.02 (2.68)

\* $p < .05$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, SRIS = Self-reflection and Insight Scale, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form.

**TABLE 9** Means (SDs) of Age and Experience by Gender

Gender	Age	Years of ministry**	Years of theology*
Males	43.72 (13.30)	8.86 (12.00)	5.67 (6.41)
Females	42.08 (11.41)	3.25 (6.81)	3.60 (4.16)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

related with pastoral skills at pre-test ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ), and social desirability at pre-test and post-test ( $r = .17, p < .05$  and  $r = .18, p < .05$  respectively), and negatively related with change in pastoral skills ( $r = -.47, p < .001$ ), and change in emotional intelligence ( $r = -.24, p < .01$ ). In conclusion, more years of theological study and professional ministry experience were associated with higher pastoral skills at pre-test and lower pastoral change scores. Years of professional ministry were positively associated with social desirability while years of theological study were not associated with social desirability.

### Regressions to Predict Change

To identify predictors of improvement in skills over time, multiple regressions were planned to identify the variables that best predicted change in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, and self-reflection. However, it is important to note that greater individual change is possible for individuals who begin the CPE unit low in an ability or skill. Average pastoral skills and emotional intelligence scores were significantly lower at pre-test in intensive unit students. It is important to identify the variables associated with lower pre-test scores to better understand future regressions on change scores. Pastoral skills and emotional intelligence pre-test levels were examined in separate sequential multiple regressions to determine what variables predicted pre-test scores.

Pastoral skills pre-test scores were regressed onto variables that were identified as significantly correlated with pastoral skills or significantly different across CPE unit. Table 11 presents the regression model and

**TABLE 10** Means (SDs) of Measures at Pre-test and Post-test by Gender

Gender	PSS		SSREIT		SRIS		MC-SF	
	Pre-test**	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test*	Post-test*	Pre-test	Post-test*
Males	82.26 (13.98)	94.60 (12.28)	124.33 (10.71)	127.03 (11.83)	78.82 (8.02)	76.19 (13.15)	5.18 (3.08)	5.18 (2.80)
Females	73.94 (15.38)	93.74 (11.20)	127.25 (8.92)	130.10 (9.03)	81.82 (7.83)	80.53 (10.86)	4.82 (3.02)	4.18 (3.19)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 11** Regressions on Pastoral Skills and Emotional Intelligence Pre-test Scores

Variable	PSS Pre-test		SSEIT Pre-test	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	.08	.08	.10	.07
Sex (Male = 0, Female = 1)	-.13	-.13	.19*	.19*
Years of Ministry (0 or 1)	.37 <sup>†</sup>	.37 <sup>†</sup>	.15	.12
Years of Theological Study (0 or 1)	.17*	.17*	-.01	-.02
Prior CPE (0 or 1)	.21*	.21*	-.10	-.11
Pre-test Score MC-SF	.15*	.15*	.09	.08
Intensive or Extended (0 or 1)		.03		.12

\* $p < .05$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form.

standardized beta weights of individual predictors of pastoral skills and the  $F$  tests for each model. The first step in the regression on pastoral skills was significant,  $F(6, 137) = 18.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , and accounted for 42% of the variance in pastoral skills pre-test scores (Adjusted R square). The addition of type of CPE course, intensive or extended did not add to the model,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 136) = .19$ ,  $p = \text{ns}$ . Regardless of which unit the student was enrolled in, higher Pastoral Skills pre-test scores were associated with more experience in ministry, more theological study, previous CPE units, and more socially desirable responding.

Emotional intelligence pre-test scores were also regressed onto the same experience and social desirability variables, and the regression model and information is also found in Table 11. Neither steps of the regression predicted a significant amount of the variance in emotional intelligence pre-test scores. Being female was associated with higher pre-test scores on the Emotional Intelligence scale with all other predictors in the model.

To assess the predictors of change in pastoral skills, emotional intelligence and self-reflection and insight, a series of sequential regressions were run. Relevant demographic variables related to the measures were entered simultaneously in a first step. Also in the first step the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability pre-test score was entered. In the second step the variable of CPE unit length (intensive/extended) was added to the regression model to identify additional influence of this variable. Standardized Betas for three regressions can be seen in Table 12.

The first step of the pastoral skills regression was significant,  $F(6, 137) = 13.16$ ,  $p < .001$ . Significant predictors of change in pastoral skills were years of professional ministry, previous CPE units, and social desirability scores at pre-test. Higher values on these variables were associated with lower pastoral skills change scores. Thirty-four percent of the variance in pastoral skills change scores was explained by this model. Adding CPE course length to the regression did not result in an improvement in variance

**TABLE 12** Regressions on Change Scores

Variable	PSS $\Delta$		SSEIT $\Delta$		SRIS $\Delta$	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Age	-.06	-.04	-.15	-.09	.03	.12
Sex (Male = 0)	.11	.12	-.03	-.02	.07	.08
Years of Ministry (0 or 1)	-.38 <sup>†</sup>	-.35 <sup>†</sup>	-.19*	-.12	-.02	.07
Years of Theological Study (0 or 1)	-.14	-.12	-.01	.02	.04	.08
Prior CPE (0 or 1)	-.15*	-.14	.07	.08	.05	.06
Pre-test Score MC – SF	-.16*	-.15*	-.14	-.11	-.09	-.05
Intensive or Extended (0 or 1)		-.10		-.30**		-.40 <sup>†</sup>

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; <sup>†</sup> $p < .001$ ; PSS = Pastoral Skills Scale, SSEIT = Schutte Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, SRIS = Self-reflection and Insight Scale, MC-SF = Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Short Form,  $\Delta$  = Change Score.

predicted, and previous CPE was no longer a significant predictor ( $p = .06$ ). Lower social desirability scores and fewer years of CPE and professional ministry were associated with more positive change in pastoral skills scores.

In the multiple regression model for change in emotional intelligence (after the removal of one outlier identified with a high residual score (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), demographic variables accounted for a significant portion of the variance in emotional intelligence change, Adj.  $R^2 = .06$ ;  $F(6, 136) = 2.44$ ,  $p < .05$ . Having more years of ministry was associated with lower emotional intelligence change scores. In the second step, an additional 7% of the variance in emotional intelligence change scores was accounted for by CPE unit length,  $F(7, 135) = 3.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . Years of professional ministry was no longer a significant predictor, while CPE course length was a significant predictor, with more change in emotional intelligence occurring in students in intensive units.

In the regression model on self-reflection, demographics and social desirability do not account for a significant portion of the variance in the self-reflection and insight change scores,  $F(6, 137) = .40$ ,  $p = \text{ns}$ . The addition of CPE unit length in the second step resulted in a significant model, with 10% of the variance accounted for:  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 136) = 20.75$ ,  $p < .001$ . CPE unit was the sole significant predictor of Self-reflection change scores. An increase in self-reflection change scores was seen in students in intensive CPE units.

## DISCUSSION

Clinical Pastoral Education can be experienced in two distinctly different ways: in an intensive, weeks-long short course or an extensive months-long course. Students coming into CPE anticipate they will learn skills relevant to being an empathic and efficacious provider of pastoral care. Some of

the skills worked on in CPE are pastoral skills, emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and self-insight. The results of this research study support and extend previous research findings.

As a whole, students in this study showed significant increases in their pastoral care skills and emotional intelligence over the course of their CPE training. However, some groups of students experienced more improvement than others. For pastoral skills, students with fewer years of professional ministry, no prior CPE experience, and lower scores on a social desirability scale experienced more positive change in their skills. The sole significant predictor of improved emotional intelligence and improved self-reflection was participating in an intensive course. In a surprising finding, there was a significant decrease in average self-reflection and insight scores in students in the extended course. In contrast, while not significant, there was a slight improvement in self-reflection in students in their third or fourth CPE unit. These are unique findings and invite further research exploration.

This study has a number of limitations. The most obvious of these is the fact that so few students completed the post-test. Although more than 300 students completed the pre-test, less than half of them completed the post-test, which leaves the sample subject to self-selection bias. In addition, the reduced sample size provided inadequate power to test for possible interaction effects in the regressions analyses. Another serious limitation of the study is the absence of a control or comparison group which was not exposed to any CPE training. Such a control group is needed to assess whether the observed changes are truly attributable to the CPE experience or to something else (Campbell, 1957).

Differences in characteristics between intensive unit and extended unit students were notable. Namely, intensive unit students were younger with less ministry experience, and fewer years of theological education. It is possible that intensive students changed more as a result of their characteristics and not as a result of something inherent in an intensive course. Multiple regression analyses were conducted in an attempt to control, statistically, the differences between CPE units in experience. While the demographic and experience variables were predictors of pre-test scores they did not always predict change scores. Future research with larger sample sizes and matched groups is needed to better identify and understand the contribution of demographic variables and length of CPE unit to learning in CPE.

Despite the limitations, the current study makes a substantial contribution to the CPE research literature by providing an example of a systematic attempt: (1) to evaluate the level of pastoral skills students bring to a unit of CPE; and (2) to measure improvement in those skills as a result of participating in CPE. The Pastoral Skills Scale used in this study had good reliability and discriminated between students with different levels of experience and numbers of prior CPE units. This demonstrated that it is a useful measure to document pastoral skills and confidence, and has potential to help students become

aware of their pastoral strengths and weaknesses over the course of a CPE unit.

This study used published and well-known instruments to measure psychological abilities and their change over time, and applied a multiple regression approach to the data analysis. The multiple regressions allowed for an examination of explanatory relationships in measures of growth, such as the influence of variables such as age and ministry experience in relation to growth in pastoral skills. The regressions allowed for the identification of important predictive relationships while controlling the influence of other variables.

This study strongly indicates that groups of CPE students are different depending on the length of CPE unit, and replicates previous research that found different kinds of growth in different types of CPE units. While pastoral skills increased over time for both intensive and extended unit students in this study, emotional intelligence and self-reflection increased only for intensive unit students, and self-reflection decreased for extended unit students. The reason for these differences between the student groups remains unclear. Derrickson and Ebersole (1986) found that intensive unit CPE students remembered their supervisor more like a therapist, while extended unit students remembered their supervisor more like a mentor. This study did not ask the students how they viewed their supervisors. However, if intensive students in this study also viewed their supervisors as a therapist, this might explain the increase in emotional intelligence and self-reflection in the intensive unit students. Additional research is needed to test this hypothesis.

In conclusion, the benefits of a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education continue to be documented in the research literature. This study extended the literature by using a scale that specifically measured pastoral skills. CPE students improved in pastoral skills over the course of their unit. Students' pastoral skills improved the most in the first unit, with additional increases in subsequent units. Average Emotional Intelligence and Self-reflection and Insight scores improved for intensive unit students but not significantly for students in extended units, and self-reflection and insight significantly decreased in extended unit students. Future research is needed to further our understanding of the process of these changes and to extend these findings so that we may better understand the educational impact of the different types of CPE units.

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