DISSERTATION

THE MEANING OF EVALUATION IN THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP FOR COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2008

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE MEANING OF EVALUATION IN THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP FOR COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING

Evaluation is an important component in the training programs of counseling students. Evaluation in the context of supervision experience may be best defined as a process that includes factors such as the supervisory relationship, the scope of evaluation, and the style of communicating supervisory feedback to supervisees. Previous research in the area of counselor education and supervision has not adequately addressed the topic of students' experience of evaluation in supervision and how that may impact supervisees. There was a need for a more detailed inquiry about the supervisees' perceptions about the meaning of evaluation in the context of their training and supervision experience.

The overarching research questions for this study were "What is the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training?", and "What are the underlying contexts that account for a counselor-in-training to experience different meanings for evaluation in the supervisory relationship?" A phenomenological approach in qualitative research was adopted for this study in order to describe, understand, and discover the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationships for 20 students who had experienced evaluation in practicum or internship.

Inquiring about the in-supervision cognitions of the students interviewed suggests that the supervisees' meaning of evaluation may be influenced by their understanding of the purpose of evaluation, methods of evaluation, and more importantly the supervisory

relationship. Similarly, the majority of the interviewees indicated that they had experienced intense feelings of being evaluated during their supervision. In general, students seemed to recognize evaluation as part of their professional and personal development. The students also shared many insights which should be considered in order to improve the overall objective of supervision programs.

The findings of this research suggest the interaction of several different factors seemed to influence the students' experience of evaluation. Most of these factors involved conditions that were more directly related to the supervision setting, including different supervisors, classmates, and the client. In addition to a stage-based model of supervision, the findings from this study suggest that supervisors be sensitive to the impact of evaluation on their supervisees and to adopt a relationship-based approach when conducting supervisory evaluation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"

First, I need to acknowledge that there is no way for me to be able to remember the names of all the people who have contributed to my personal or professional growth, which I can only hope would continue. This awareness creates a sincerely humbling experience for me. The greatest change for me may have come from reading a small yet thought provoking sentence in a book, or through a brief encounter with another person. Perhaps, I have been impacted the most through the combined influence of my spiritual values and ritual behaviors.

I would like to mention the names of my respected committee members who have shown to have the characteristics of a model supervisor. Dr. Nathalie Kees, Dr. Laurie Carlson, Dr. John Littrell, and Dr. Jenn Matheson. I am very thankful to have come to know these individuals who have demonstrated to be able and willing to put forth all the necessary professional and personal effort in order to provide a very attractive learning environment at Colorado State University.

I would also like to thank members of my family for their continuous support and encouragement. My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Azadeh Bolhari, who despite working on her own doctorate studies has shown me a lot of love and patience. I also need to thank the following individuals: My lovely parents: Mehdi and Zahra Madani; my sister: Samaneh; my brothers: Meysam (twin), Mohammad-Hossein, and Hassan-Ali; and my supportive parents-in-law: Dr. Jafar Bolhari and Soheila Moniri-Javid.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Research Problem

Evaluation is an integral part of many graduate counseling programs which is also reinforced by the guidelines of many accreditation bodies. The important phenomenon of evaluation calls for a more detailed exploration of the interplay between various aspects that may be involved in the process of evaluation. Evaluation process may include such factors as supervisory style, supervisory environment and relationship, scope of evaluation, objective vs. subjective evaluation, forms of evaluation, and situation or stage-specific evaluation. The content which the supervisee should learn and later be evaluated on in supervision can be mutually agreed upon by the supervisor and the supervisee. This section concludes with a brief description for the need to do more research that would contribute to the development of evaluation-based models of supervision.

Available research in the area of counselor education and supervision offers a rather disorganized presentation of information about the role of evaluation in the supervision experience of counseling trainees. Similarly, no qualitative research was found that addressed the issue of students' experience of evaluation in supervision and how that may be influenced by variables such as the supervisor's characteristics, or has an impact on other variables such as the student's counseling efficacy.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study is "what is the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training?" Another question is "what are the underlying contexts that account for a counselor-in-training to experience different meanings for evaluation in the supervisory relationship?" Because of the

qualitative and emergent nature of the study there may arise a need to modify or enhance the above mentioned research questions. Responses by the participants of the study may make such changes justifiable. The methods section contains more information about some of the procedures that may be used in the collection, organization, and presentation of relevant data.

Definition of Terms

The two terms of supervision and evaluation are central to the focus of the current study. Therefore, it is important to try to define these terms according to what has been presented in the field. Following the descriptions of the terms supervision and evaluation, a brief description is presented for some of the other important terms that are used in this exploratory study.

Supervision is defined as an effective training tool that serves the purpose of continual learning and professional development of the supervisees (Rose & Boyce, 1999). According to Eye (1975) supervision involves analysis and evaluation, the giving and receiving of help, it is expected to make improvements to the quality of education for students, and has the purpose of achieving coordination of efforts by synchronizing the conditions that surround learning through the acts of monitoring, directing, and stimulating. Also, supervision is believed to offer educative, supportive, and normative functions (Rose & Boyce, 1999), and to be an important system in ensuring that not only change in education occurs, but that it will provide a supportive environment for the emerging educational changes (Eye, 1975).

Evaluation has been defined generally in the field of counselor education and supervision as implementation of systematic procedures for assessing each student's

professional development (Choate, Smith, & Spruill, 2005). Choate et al., (2005) acknowledge that there is a lack of more clear means for assessing such development, but hint to the importance of future research to study students' perspectives regarding the development of professional attitudes, adding that "students' first supervisory relationships typically occur during practicum and internship, and it is these experiences that form the foundation of student attitudes towards supervision as a process that can facilitate development" (p. 395). Muraskin (1993) defines evaluation as "the systematic collection and analysis of data needed to make decisions, a process in which most well-run programs engage from the outset" (p. 4). She outlines three dimensions for evaluation. Process evaluations refer to the assessment and examination of program materials and activities that is likely to occur during program development. Outcome evaluations are concerned with more immediate effects of a program on the participants. And finally, impact evaluations refer to the long-term and unintended effects of a particular program, sometimes in conjunction with other program contexts.

Below is a list of some other important words that are used throughout this research. A brief definition follows each of these terminologies in order to help clarify their intended purpose in the study:

Competent Person: A competent person has been defined as one who is able, skillful, and properly qualified (Shaw & Dobson, 1988).

Developmental Model of Supervision: Developmental model of supervision is a commonly cited model that takes into account various stages of a trainee's professional and personal development for a more effective supervision (Stoltenberg, 1981).

Emotional Intelligence: Counselors with higher emotional intelligence were more effective in managing their own emotions as well as those of their clients during the session (Martin Jr., Easton, Wilson, Takemoto, & Sullivan, 2004).

Evaluation Anxiety and Performance Anxiety: Evaluation anxiety is the concern about the supervisor's evaluation while performance anxiety is the supervisees' efforts to live up to their own standards (Liddle, 1986). Supervisory observation during the training process of beginning counselors is believed to cause evaluation apprehension which is recognized as an important source of student anxiety (Schauer, Seymour, & Geen, 1985).

Live Supervision: Refers to a number of ways (as in phone-ins, and co-therapy) to provide immediate and on-the-spot feedback to the supervisees.

Self-Efficacy: Is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Therefore, counseling self-efficacy refers to a counselor's conviction that he or she will be able to conduct a successful session.

Solution-Focused-Supervision: An approach in which supervisees' existing strengths and resources are appreciated, acknowledged, and used in the process of supervision (Juhnke, 1996).

State Anxiety and Trait Anxiety: State anxiety is generally situation specific, while trait anxiety is more related to personal characteristics and attributes that comes in reaction to stress (Daniels & Larson, 2001). Increased anxiety levels may interfere with effective counseling (Schauer et al., 1985).

Supervisee Satisfaction: Refers to supervisee's perception for the general quality of the supervision experience as it meets his or her motivational and practical needs (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, & Molinaro, 1999).

Study Limitations and Delimitations

A limitation that is commonly seen in many studies, such as this one, that use a relatively small number of participants relates to the issue of transferability or applicability of the findings to a similar population other than the study's participants. The use of phenomenological qualitative research for this study and the issue of transferability to larger populations are discussed in more detail in the methods section of this paper. In the case of this study, the scope of the research is limited to graduate counseling students who have been exposed to various forms and amounts of supervision experience. In addition, the participants for this study would be limited to those who have attended a graduate program at one or more universities in the Rocky Mountain region. The third limitation relates to that each participant was interviewed at a specific point in time during their training process, and that ideally, it would be better to interview each participant at various stages of their professional development in order to be able to make stronger comparisons based on the amount of the supervision the students receive. Participants' report on the amount of supervision they have received was recorded as part of their general demographical information.

Despite the above mentioned potential shortcomings, the qualitative nature of the research allowed for a much deeper and more detailed account of the participants' experience of being evaluated that may provide a more balanced inquiry into the research questions. Qualitative design is said to be more useful than experimental designs in

analysis of a process (such as evaluation) that includes large amounts of contextual data (Albaek, 1998).

Evaluation is at the core of supervisory relationships, and it can be expected to be a very sensitive topic for students to openly discuss during interviews. Similarly, participants may find it personally difficult to disclose their own expectations of their evaluation or evaluators, including their supervisors. Worries about confidentiality by participants may also play a role in their honest discussion and sharing of their experiences with evaluation. Reassuring participants about respecting their confidentiality during and after interviews was very important. This was especially true because the majority of participants were enrolled as counseling students in their programs when they were interviewed. The informed consent contained a statement about safeguarding participants' confidentiality and that their identities were concealed in any publications, for example by using pseudonyms.

Another potential limitation that I was aware of while conducting this research was the possibility of introducing myself as an additional, interfering evaluator. Through the use of rapport, open-communication, and an informed consent, I hope to have been able to keep this potential bias factor to a minimal level. I would have liked to be able to obtain supervisors' experience with their students for comparison purposes. However, for the reason of honoring student confidentiality, and in order to keep the efforts of this study in accordance with the research objectives, the main emphasis was placed to inquire the supervisees' perspectives about evaluation in supervision.

I also tried to be aware of any potential biases I could have about supervision and keep my objectivity, so that I would arrive at impartial and accurate interpretation, while

at the same time stay curious, open, and sensitive to perceive subtle meanings and to recognize conceptual relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this, I followed the guidelines for phenomenological research proposed by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (1998) and discussed further in the data collection and analysis sections of this paper. Additional issues that would be seen as possible limitations are appropriately explored, acknowledged, dealt with, and accounted for in throughout the study.

Need and Significance

It is reasonable to expect that counselor training and supervision programs employ evaluation as an important component of their design. Furthermore, it is intuitive to think that making judgments about other people is essentially an unavoidable part of everyday life (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). The prevalence of evaluation in the process of training counseling students, plus the scarcity of qualitative research that tries to explore supervisees' cognitions and emotions in relation to their evaluative experience, adds to the value of this research. The need for exploring the supervisory interaction in light of the presence of evaluative components has been recommended (Holloway & Wampold, 1983).

What became evident during review of the literature was a relatively obvious level of doubt and ambivalence about the role evaluation played for counseling students. The paradox created by the conflict in findings was especially noticeable in two of the studies. Anderson, Schlossberg, and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) argued that heavy emphasis on evaluation was a major contributor to the participants' worst supervision experience. It would be interesting to explore supervisees' view of what may correspond to "heavy" versus "balanced" emphasis on evaluation. The same study suggested that evaluation and

feedback would be part of the students' best experience if the supervision experience involves respect, openness, and flexibility.

Wong (1997) addressed both the potential benefits as well as possible pitfalls of live supervision, which can be viewed as a form of evaluation. Some of the potential negative aspects of live supervision included encouraging imitation, inhibiting autonomy, and increasing confusion. The primary benefit for using live supervision was its supply of immediate feedback for the supervisee (Wong, 1997). The method of evaluation delivery to the supervisees is also important. For example, it was reported that an early practicum student may interpret a supervisor's use of the phone during a session as a way to communicate warning for his or her mistakes (Liddle et al., 1988). It is crucially important to explore some of the factors that can influence supervisees' meaning of evaluation in their training and supervision program. I believed that this research contributes some very valuable information and insights about improving the experiences and training of counseling students. The research would especially be of benefit to training sites, supervisors, and supervisors-in-training. Counselors-in-training would also benefit from knowing that many of their experiences may be normal and that there may be different factors that influence their level of training satisfaction and success.

Despite research that shows clinical supervision is necessary for the growth of counselors, many counseling students currently do not receive appropriate supervision (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001), which may be a reflection of the lack of adequate research in this area. Schauer et al. (1985) gives an overview of only a few qualitative researches that addressed the issue of "evaluation apprehension" as it related to observation of beginning counselors. Cashwell and Dooley's (2001) short article used a 37 item Counselor Self-

Estimate inventory (COSE - Larson et al., 1992) to suggest that participants who received regular clinical supervision showed higher counseling self-efficacy than those who did not receive regular supervision. They defined counseling self-efficacy as a measure by the counselor about his or her competence as a counselor. Cashwell and Dooley (2001) limited the scope of their self-efficacy study to successful handling of only a few factors such as dealing with difficult client behaviors, cultural competence, counseling process, microskills, and values.

One group of researchers have focused their attention on developing models of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), while others have attempted to produce competency scales that measure competency judgments in the training and evaluation of psychotherapists at various developmental stages (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). The developmental model of supervision appears to be the most widely used model that also has some empirical backing in the current literature (Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, & Kolocek, 1996). There are studies that examine trainees' perceptions of their counseling and supervision behavior (in and out of session cognitions), with focus on levels of self-awareness, autonomy, acquisition of counseling skills and theories (McNeill & Worthen, 1989).

Despite many studies done about the concept of evaluation, almost all the studies have taken evaluation as a way to assess, and so have overlooked the potentially significant role of evaluative relationships that is present in all graduate counselor training programs. In short, an evaluation-focused study is needed that implicitly and explicitly explores the role of evaluation in relation to counseling students and the meanings that those students give to their experience of being evaluated within the

supervisory relationship and under different circumstances. Supervisory experience is often marked by a strong evaluative relationship between the supervisee and his or her supervisor. Therefore it was attempted that the current qualitative study be open to supervisee's discussion of their experiences about their experience with evaluation in the context of their supervisory relationship. A qualitative approach would make it possible to look at the experience of evaluation in more abstract and subjective manner that would make transferability of the findings more plausible (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Furthermore, there has not been any considerable qualitative research with the primary goal to explore counseling students' understanding of their program's strong evaluative component. Part of the difficulty in finding an adequate number of qualitative studies that attempt to understand supervisees' meanings of their evaluation experience may be due to the generally ambivalent attitude that exists towards the concept and act of evaluation. For example, there seems to be a general ambivalence about role of evaluation in general and about live supervision in particular. Despite a positive inclination toward live supervision for its immediate feedback, beginning counselors experienced increased levels of anxiety when they were given evaluation under live supervision (Liddle et al., 1988).

Researcher's Perspective

In retrospect, my attention to others' evaluations of me may have started from the moment I was born into this world. Or, going a little back in time, when I was still in my mother's womb, I could have still experienced my mother's care, as well as my twin brother's companionship as evaluative. I have cried (from the time I was born), laughed, nagged, and experienced a wide range of positive and negative emotions in response to

the countless number of evaluations I have received throughout my life from an increasing number of people who I have come in contact with. Although I may have forgotten many of the evaluators involved in my life, I am aware of their important role in impacting me personally and professionally and in having guided me to where I am at today. I am therefore humbly thankful to all known and unknown evaluators whose direct, indirect, intentional, careful, and skillful evaluations and feedback I have received.

As I have grown older and I have gained more experience and my cognitive abilities have developed, I have learned to take into account more of the personal and social characteristics of my evaluators. I have become more curious about my evaluator's intentions or motivations to evaluate me. It has also become easier to recognize similar patterns of evaluation.

Interpreting other people's intentions both adds to the complexity of one's evaluation efforts and at the same time gives meaning to our experiences. The reciprocity and trade of evaluations is what makes feedback possible. Therefore I understand feedback to be one step higher than evaluation by requiring an active engagement with society. I would rather receive feedback than to be evaluated. If I were only to receive others' evaluations (positive or negative) without having an opportunity to evaluate back (or give them feedback), I would probably feel judged, abused, or helpless.

In my opinion, human evaluation is a process, not an outcome. Therefore, I have my reservations about the true evaluative worth of our grading system in schools which are too often used to give students "sticky" labels such as "he is lazy, not interested, or does not pay attention." I would rather take more time and be willing to explore different factors that may have played a role in a particular student's evaluation process that has

earned him or her certain performance grade. An evaluation may again be transformed into a process when we start questioning, challenging, or disputing its accuracy and fairness. With some self-exploration on my part, I may find a significant role for myself for influencing another person's evaluative process (thinking) and outcome (convictions/decisions). The sense of empowerment that is the result of this realization may be enough to hold me back from evaluating my students in a "hit-and-run" manner. Instead of avoiding or not approaching my students about their reactions to my evaluations of them, I would try to check with them about their evaluation of my evaluations. Showing them my willingness to listen to their questions and concerns about my image of them can effectively change their meaning of their experience with my evaluation and help them and myself to find more satisfaction in our roles.

The best way that I can define a supervisor is in terms of teaching, guiding, mentoring, counseling, consulting, leading, advising, and as one whose artful evaluations would lead to increased supervisee engagement at cognitive, emotional, and physical levels. Interest in the supervisee or supervisor satisfaction would normally require an attention to exploration of their expectations in relation to one another. Dissatisfaction in supervision can often indicate a problem in communicating such expectations. When the healthy and enriching cycle of feedback is broken through avoidance, denial, or externalizing the locus of control, the reciprocity and mutuality of giving and receiving feedback changes into the unhealthy and dissatisfying experience of being evaluated, judged, or punished. The impact of this should not be minimized by simply expecting the supervisees to change their perceptions about the supervisory relationship, but often requires the supervisors to also fulfill their responsibility to initiate a discussion with the

supervisees who are more vulnerable in the relationship. I was not surprised to learn that many supervisees whose reports indicated dissatisfaction with supervision are more cautious to self disclose and share them with their supervisors. I do, however, think that many of these supervisees wish they would be given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts (evaluations) about their experience of being evaluated.

With my background in psychology, counseling, as well as in counselor education and supervision, I have personally experienced supervision from the perspectives of both a supervisee as well as a supervisor. I appreciate and like to learn more about ways to reduce supervisees' anxieties about discussing their evaluative concerns with their supervisors and at the same time, to encourage supervisors to become more interested and able to inquire about such information from their supervisees. Unfortunately, the vast majority of research in the area of supervision has quantified their approach in exploring evaluative concepts, and therefore, has limited power to offer perspectives that are more deeply engrained in human interactions in the obviously evaluative environment of counseling supervisees.

Construing Meaning

Contemporary trends have lead to developments in theories of social and human sciences that have introduced different models of meaning-making into research. Meaning making has been largely presented as an act of authorship of one's own life experience that are primarily conveyed to others in form of oral narratives, stories, or presentations (Mahoney, 2003). When intentionality in narratives is considered in social and cultural contexts, the issues of authority and voice arise (Hoshmand, 2005). Similarly, it has been said that we are not simply vehicles of our lives, but that we are

also authors of our life (Mahoney, 2003). According to the constructivist view, life is viewed as a project, with the person as both the subject and the object which is integral to this ongoing project (Goncalves, Neimeyer, & Mahoney, 1995; Mahoney, 2003). Constructivism views change and meaning making as an important and ongoing process. Furthermore, it proposes that what changes when we experience any psychological transformation are meanings, and these reconstructions of meaning are usually nonlinear in form (Mahoney, 2003).

Hoshmand (2005) has observed a general shift from interest in linguistic and structural characteristics of narrative accounts to an increased interest in the meanings and relationships that takes place in different transactional or dialogical contexts. In addition, from a more dialectical constructivist point of view it is important to acknowledge the reciprocity of self-and-other in the interpretation or comprehension of meaning. According to Hoshmand (2005), it can be expected that our interpretations and understandings change according to cultural contexts and change in what is known, either cognitively or affectively. It can be concluded that narrative data gathered from interviews within phenomenological perspective can be used in research about counseling process, professional identity development, and some other life experiences and transitions where there is an inquiry to illuminate meanings (Hoshmand, 2005).

The phrase "meaning" has been commonly defined by dictionaries as "what is intended to be, or actually is, expressed or indicated; signification" or "the end, purpose, or significance of something: What is the meaning of life?" (meaning, n.d.). From the above definitions, it becomes clear that someone's descriptions about the "meaning" of

an experience can include overt ("expressed") or implied ("indicated") information that would mainly relate to intentions, significance, and purpose.

Summary

Considering the importance of supervisors' role in the complex experience of supervision and the impact it can have on supervisees and the client outcome, it is especially important that the many supervisory inconsistencies and concerns mentioned throughout this paper be addressed appropriately. Currently, there is a lack of a comprehensive model of supervision which takes into account the various evaluative factors that obviously exists in the supervision experience of counselors-in-training. The current search of the supervision literature did not yield any results that would adequately address an evaluation-focused model of supervision, despite the generally agreed upon fact that evaluation is an important part of supervision. Unfortunately, an academic discussion about evaluation as a crucial personal as well as professional need has generally been ignored by researchers, maybe because the act of evaluation carries a negative connotation when it often is equated with making judgments about other people (Shaw & Dobson, 1988).

The purpose of this section is to review literature in the area of counselor education and supervision for the possible impact of different factors in the supervisory environment that may influence the meaning counseling students can give to their experience of evaluation. For this, emphasis was also placed on the content and the process of evaluation which suggested that the interplay between the two may be dependent on a host number of factors in the counseling student, client, supervisor, and the peers. There was an apparent lack of significant research with an emphasis on

evaluative components in supervision. One of the goals of this paper was to establish the need for a comprehensive qualitative study that explores various aspects of evaluation, especially in the field of counselor education and supervision.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The majority of articles that were reviewed discussed different implications and suggested different approaches to supervision and evaluation of counselors-in-training. For example, results of one study showed that counselors-in-training altered their counseling self-efficacy according to the performance feedback they received, with positive feedback increasing their level of self-efficacy (Daniels & Larson, 2001).

For the purpose of the literature review, many research articles from popular journals in the field of counselor education and supervision and other sources, such as books were used. There seems to be an insufficient number of research studies that directly explored the meaning or possible impacts of evaluation in the overall student experience, in the context of counselor training and supervision. Only a few articles seemed to consider an interplay between factors such as the counseling student's personality, self-efficacy, and levels of anxiety as potentially influencing students' evaluation experience (Lopez-Delgadillo, 1981). Some of the factors mentioned, including the working alliance between the counseling student (supervisee) and the supervisor, developmental considerations, and more effective ways to inquire about the students' experience of evaluation are in need of further research.

Assessing Counseling Students' Competency

A competent person can be defined as able, skillful, and properly qualified (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). It is in the best interest of the public and the profession as a whole that those in the fields of mental health maintain high standards of competence (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). Competency refers to the capability or skill with which the therapist can

apply the learned procedures in accordance with the prescribed standards; and the evaluations of such competencies in a professional is generally examined through an assessment of the individual's function in the role of an agent for psychological change (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). According to Bandura (1977) self-efficacy is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce outcomes" (p. 193).

Most accreditation standards require that practicum students' knowledge and competence be evaluated during weekly supervision meetings as well as throughout the entire course (Bradley & Fiorini, 1999). Counselors or psychotherapists should only provide services and use techniques for which they are experienced and qualified by training. Usually, professional competence is determined by some formal academic training and supervised experience that may lead to a licensed status that shows the person is now able and responsible for the majority of his or her own evaluation (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). Interestingly, the majority of supervisors (68%) in a study indicated that factors such as their intuition and "gut feelings" do actually play a role in the evaluation of their students (Bradley & Fiorini, 1999). Ethically and legally, most professionals in the mental health services need to recognize the boundaries of their competence and the limitations of their techniques. Competency evaluations often include an observation of level of skillfulness which refers to the extent to which a therapist, within a specified theory, can collect, organize, and integrate information that is relevant to the formation of a better conceptualization of the client's most important problem. Furthermore, a counselor is expected to have knowledge about the major theories and models of human behavior and be skilled in the use of the specific strategies from those models (Shaw & Dobson, 1988).

Most of the emphasis for training programs is on skill development, and consideration of personal factors is secondary, at best. As part of the trainee's skills, the three areas of perceptual, conceptual, and executive abilities are commonly assessed. Perceptual skills help the counselor to accurately identify relevant information. Conceptual skills are related to a trainee's understanding of what was observed as they relate to client's problems. And for the executive skills, the counselor or therapist is able to effectively demonstrate concepts such as accurate empathy, warmth, and genuineness (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). As part of the evaluation process, supervisors need to take into consideration counselors' successful integration of all abilities that may improve client outcome.

Impact of Competency Evaluations on Trainees

The judgment of one's competence as a counselor or psychotherapist understandably has an impact at an emotional (anxiety) as well as a cognitive (self-efficacy) level. The most common impact may be that of evaluation anxiety experienced by the supervisees in a supervision environment. Shaw (1988) acknowledged that external evaluations of competence can create anxiety in the evaluated. He also briefly pointed to the task of evaluation as a difficult task. He equated it to making judgments about other people, and adds that despite its difficulty, making judgments about other people is essentially an unavoidable part of everyday life (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). Indeed, the initial counseling practicum experience is often described as anxiety provoking and unusual or unfamiliar (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1988).

In a study by Daniels and Larson (2001) the influence of positive and negative feedback on counseling self-efficacy and levels of state and trait anxiety experienced by

counselors-in-training was studied. State anxiety is generally situation specific while trait anxiety often involves more personally oriented abilities in handling stress. Results indicated significant differences in reports of anxiety depending on the feedback that was received. Positive feedback significantly lowered state anxiety while negative feedback increased it. Interestingly, while positive feedback significantly increased levels of counselor self-efficacy, negative feedback seemed to have an even greater impact on reducing counselor's levels of self-efficacy.

Factors that May Influence the Impact of Evaluation

Haverkamp (1994) suggested that trainees who are low in self-monitoring, although generally perceived to be genuine and congruent, are at higher risk of becoming dogmatic or rigid in response to the needs of their clients. Counselors-in-training who are high in self-monitoring, may wrongly appear to be manipulative. This observation calls for a more accurate way to evaluate trainees' characteristics. Haverkamp (1994) found that those low in self-monitoring tended to be less conforming and less willing to follow directions and imitate their supervisor's behaviors. Those high in self-monitoring appeared to have lower tolerances for ambiguity because they tend to get confused more easily when they are presented with too many cues in counseling and supervision situations (Haverkamp, 1994). With this information, it appears that counselors-in-training who are high in self-monitoring may learn counseling skills more easily and efficiently than those who are low in self-monitoring skills (Crews et al., 2005).

Crews et al. (2005) suggested that some of the counselors-in-training may experience higher self-monitoring levels as a result of the great emphasis on skills training. This can happen when the trainees become more sensitive to the social

appropriateness of their counseling techniques and become more concerned about their roles in the counseling relationship. Additionally, the counseling self-efficacies of students with higher levels of self-monitoring (or with more self evaluative concerns) were more likely to suffer in the course of their training (Crews et al., 2005). When counselors-in-training feel threatened in supervision they seek coping strategies to reduce their anxieties, some of which interfere with their learning process and may be seen by the supervisor as resistance. Unfortunately, use of the term resistance implies that the supervisee is uncooperative who has the goal to resist learning (Liddle, 1986).

Confusion, ambivalence, and cognitive fluctuations are common marks of a counselor-in-training with only moderate amount of training and supervision. This trainee is believed to be displaying signs of transitioning between two stages and hence can make it harder for supervisors to accurately evaluate. It is important to note that the supervisees find it difficult at first to acknowledge the cognitions, behaviors, and affective responses that is characteristic of this level. In a relationship of trust, however, the trainees tend to discuss the existence and importance of their conflicting and fluctuating feelings of competence (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1988).

Supervisors and supervisees need a common language that helps them explore the unique dynamics of their relationship. It is important to discover the sources of threat and anxiety for the supervisees through mutual brainstorming of alternative coping behaviors that would be less interfering with learning (Liddle, 1986). Evaluation anxiety and performance anxiety have been identified in the literature as possible sources of threat in supervision for counselors-in-training. Evaluation anxiety is the concern about the supervisor's evaluation while performance anxiety arises from the supervisees' efforts to

live up to their own standards (Liddle, 1986). Evaluation anxiety is categorized as a major subtype of social anxiety which begins with primary fear of negative evaluation or impressions of social self-presentation by others (Leitenberg, Yost, & Carroll-Wilson, 1986).

Schauer et al. (1985) suggested that supervisory observation during the training process of beginning counselors would cause evaluation apprehension which is recognized as a significant source of student anxiety. According to their research, beginning counselors are especially motivated to avoid failure, and the evaluative presence of others can heighten anxiety levels that may interfere with effective counselor responses.

Research in the field of teacher education has suggested that it is possible that an individual changes his or her behavior if the person is aware of being observed or judged by someone else (Lopez-Delgadillo, 1981). Introduction of supervision, like evaluation, produced noticeable amounts of uncertainty and anxiety for the involved school faculty. Furthermore, the teaching literature found sources of anxiety for supervised teaching students to include evaluations by supervisors, methods of conducting evaluations, qualities of the supervisor, and compatibility of the personality between the supervised teacher (teacher-in-training) and his or her supervisor (Lopez-Delgadillo, 1981).

Review of the literature to find other variables that may play into the experience of evaluation in supervision point to possible influences from evaluators other than the supervisor. De Graaf (1996) suggested that regardless of whether counselors-in-training reported high or low levels of confidence in counseling, they were likely to experience

weekly shifts in their counseling self-efficacy because the students may be dependent on and influenced by various external sources for validation and performance evaluation.

Suggestions for Reducing Evaluation Anxiety

To cope with the evaluation anxiety, the supervisees may hide areas of weakness and not ask questions that can help them improve their skills. Liddle (1986) made several suggestions to effectively lower student evaluation anxiety. It is recommended that structural changes in the supervisory setting be made, for example by reducing or eliminating the amount of formal evaluation by the supervisor. Supervisor's willingness to receive constructive feedback may result in increased use of facilitative conditions or increased positive evaluations in comparison to negative evaluations of the supervisee. Setting clear performance standards, and to encourage openness and risk-taking as part of the grade may help minimize evaluation anxiety. In helping trainees with performance anxiety, various cognitive restructuring approaches have been recommended that may provide tools for disputing, modifying, or replacing anxiety producing self-statements. Supervisor self-disclosure about early experiences of discomfort when using some of the counseling techniques may be helpful (Liddle, 1986).

Counselors use their theories as cognitive maps that influence their counseling self-efficacy and direct their goals and behavior. Most counselors may benefit from some cognitive challenge during the supervision to initiate change in their self-perceptions and behavior (Worthington, 2006). Masters (1992) believed that supervisors sometimes can make use of the same skills with supervisees that they use with clients. He recommended, for example, the use of positive reframing in the context of supervision to offer a different perspective on the supervisee's behavior that allows the supervisee to create a

different meaning about his or her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about a supervisory situation. This can, in turn, increases a supervisee's sense of empowerment and confidence (Masters, 1992).

The necessity for evaluation must be discussed with advanced practicum students, and their fears of failure reduced by reminding them that they should not worry about failure in the course. Patterson (1964) has noticed that discussing grades with students lowered the inhibiting factor and threat of grading for his students and instead they realized that the emphasis was to help them develop as counselors. Blocher (1983) suggests that a "pass" grade be based primarily on the presentation of evidence by the student of considerable progress with three or more client cases and on attainment of goals chosen in collaboration between the supervisee and the supervisor.

Developmental Perspectives in Supervision

Most developmental theories of supervision are based on thinking that supervisees move through a series of different stages in the process of becoming effective counselors, and that different levels of supervisee growth require qualitatively different supervisory environments (Pearson, 2001). Baker, Exum, and Tyler (2002) recommended that supervisors ask themselves questions that pertain to their supervisory role, affective focus, cognitive or skills focus, and role of being supportive and confrontational. They believed this can help supervisors determine their status in relation to the changing needs of their supervisees. Stoltenberg (1981) has suggested that counselors in training who are in the early stage of their development lack experience, have low confidence, and are less aware of their impact on clients. They tend to want more advice and directions from their supervisors and to seek the "correct ways" to behave.

The beginning supervisees are characterized by black-and-white thinking, linear problem-solving, and lower levels of self-awareness; they often doubt their competence and tend to be highly self-critical, and depend on their supervisors to tell them what is the "right" thing to do in counseling (Borders, 1989). Supervisees in the middle stages are more confused and show conditional dependence. They are more confident about their skills, including their treatment plans and client conceptualizations (Stoltenberg, 1981).

Supervisees are said to grow and improve when the supervision environment is matched to their developmental needs. Stoltenberg's (1981) theory, for example proposes that an environment that "matches" the supervisee's developmental level would provide a more satisfying growth experience. As level of experience increases, the developing supervisee perceives supervision to be changing from a more task-oriented focus to a more interpersonally focused experience (Chagnon & Russell, 1995). The structure is believed to provide the beginning counselor a safe environment to develop his or her autonomy. The counselors with a little more experience who are struggling with the issue of autonomy and dependency are offered new advice and skills to choose from. As the counselor gains even more experience, the supervisee experiences more collegial sharing by the supervisor (Stoltenberg, 1981).

In a study by Starling and Baker (2000), when each student reflected on the beginning of the supervision experience they indicated their dependence on the supervisor. During later interviews, participants showed increased sense of personal identity and professional self-confidence was now higher. These characteristics appear to match Stoltenberg's (1981) third level of counselor development: "conditional dependency." The counselor who has reached this level can be said to have mastered the

necessary skills, whose increased insight makes it possible for him or her to distinguish between healthy and normal dependence versus one that can hinder the counselor identity development.

The results of another study that used a self-report instrument (McNeill, Stoltenberg, & Pierce, 1985) confirms that trainees appear to move from a dependent state to a more autonomous role as a counselor with less need for external direction in both counseling and supervision. Her self-confidence is increased, she can critique her own skills, and she works more effectively with a variety of clients. The trainee finds it increasingly easy to apply acquired skills and theory and to translate these abilities into a consistent, clear, and personalized rationale in her counseling session with clients. This development appeared to occur concurrently with increased counseling experience, education, and supervision; thus, suggesting that more qualitative changes in conceptual development take place along with quantitative changes in level of experience. In addition, the study showed that trainees moved from initial levels of anxiety and dependence to increased self-awareness and independence (McNeill et al., 1985).

Debate over the Developmental Model

As early as 1981, Hill, Charles, & Reed had indicated that previous counseling experience did not actually accelerate students' progression in a training program. These results suggest that "a general model of trainee development may not be governing the supervisory experience but rather that other aspects of training such as philosophy of training programs and characteristics of supervisors may be the most influential factors on trainees' learning experiences" (Holloway, 1988, p. 214). Additionally, the findings may imply that a lot of the changes in the trainee depend more on the particular

relationship context of the supervision than on the process of establishing a professional identity.

In their response to Holloway's criticism of the developmental model's rather exclusive structure, Stoltenberg and Delworth (1988) acknowledged that previously established cognitive structures do influence a trainee's progression through a learning experience. The authors added, however, that prior general cognitive development influences the speed with which trainees progress through the counselor developmental stages. They furthermore indicated that a trainee with a high level of conceptual development would move through the developmental stages of becoming an effective therapist more quickly. This person would still need a supervision environment that is appropriate for that specific area of development.

In addition to considering trainees' conceptual levels, Hill et al. (1981) suggested a relatively simple model that appeared to more appropriately address trainees' cognitive characteristics as they seemed to relate to issues of self awareness, locus of control, and generalizing. The first stage involves self-consciousness of the counselor with attention to their internal experiences, which is sometimes so much that it can cause exclusion of understanding the clients' experiences. The second stage is characterized by the counselors' adoption of a more professional stance in which some standard approach to counseling is used. At this stage, most therapeutic failures are explained in terms of the counselors' inability to correctly use a specific theory. The third stage spanned late practicum, internship, and extended into the professional experience. During this last stage, the counselor succeeds in reducing the level of confusion related to the problems in

his or her more rigid theorizing by favorably adopting, internalizing, and consistently implementing a more eclectic approach (Hill et al., 1981).

Reflecting on the debate between Stoltenberg and Delworth (1988) and Holloway (1988) about the developmental model of supervision, Romans and Worthen (1989) blamed some of the argument on the semantics by suggesting that the term "development" has different meanings, definitions, or interpretations based on each person's operational assumptions. He recommended that we try to clarify the terms used to define "development" or developmental in the context of counselor supervision.

Focus of the Supervision

Review of the literature pointed out to a possible shift in the supervisory focus for different supervisory activities in relation to the supervisees. For example, supervision of beginning counselors may primarily focus on the students' self-referenced thoughts and feelings that often reflect high levels of insecurity and low levels of self-confidence. The focus seems to move more towards the supervisory relationship at intern-level supervision (Worthington, 2006).

It should be clear that it is important to explore counselors' thoughts about factors that they consider to be important for the process of evaluation of their competencies by their supervisors. Supervisors need to be prepared to adjust their supervisory strategies and roles according to the occurrence of different phenomena that is common to the complex and dynamic process of supervision. Examples of these phenomena include counselor or supervisor anxiety, parallel processes, transference, and countertransference. For example, the supervisor may need to choose between the roles of a teacher, a counselor, or a consultant (Pearson, 2001).

Efstation and Patton (1990) reported that there is often a difference between perceptions of supervisors and trainees about what goes into a supervisory relationship. When many students seem to emphasize their rapport with their supervisors to better understand the client, these authors raised the question of whether the beginning trainees may value the rapport dimension over the focus on the client.

Interaction of Expectations

Research suggests that some of supervisee dissatisfaction may be related to unclear role expectations, and more interestingly to inadequate performance evaluation by supervisors (Ladany et al., 1999). The study, for example, found that supervisees who are unclear or are not aware of their roles and responsibilities may show behaviors that are often not consistent with their supervisors' evaluative expectations. Students come to supervision with certain expectations about the focus during their supervision experience. A supervision contract that addresses a mutually agreed focus for the supervision experience can help reduce the number of disappointments (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993). A better communication of practicum expectations to counseling students can lead to more effectively organized training efforts which ultimately leads to better trained counselors (Bradley & Fiorini, 1999).

Again, the beginning student is typically eager to learn specific skills, so supervisors who are not aware of this can often disappoint their students. Additionally, evaluative support, method of supervision, structure, and rapport with an emotionally supportive supervisor was sought by beginning students (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993). A supervisor needs to be aware of and be willing to address the impact of performance anxiety, fear of failure, and possible experience of future tensions in the supervisory

relationship (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993). A genuine teamwork with an element of mutually respectful engagement will provide both the supervisor and the supervisee with a satisfying sense of enlightenment and understanding (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993).

Psychoanalysts have recommended that increased attention be given to the processes and meanings that are embedded in the supervisory relationship. The supervisory relationship is characterized as mutually enriching, where the unconscious of both the supervisor and supervisee interact (Driver & Martin, 2005). The pattern seen in the interaction between supervisors and their trainees has been characterized as negotiation and collaboration, in which the trainees try to present themselves as competent and cooperative (Ratliff, Wampler, & Morris, 2000).

Advantages of Supervision for Trainees

Although counseling is based on a reasonably solid empirical foundation (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004), there is not much research conducted about the effect of clinical supervision on trainees (Starling & Baker, 2000). Students' initial limited perspective about counseling seems to become broader and more mature with supervision. Interestingly, students' self-confidence also showed an increase. This may, in part be because trainees will have more ways to look at a counseling session. In addition, the students indicated that positive reinforcements made it easier for them to critique their own counseling sessions and see that they are developing professionally (Starling & Baker, 2000).

Crews et al. (2005) presented a good overview of the three major traditional counseling training programs which include those that tend to focus on trainees' thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations (Kagan, 1975), basics skills of attending,

active listening, and empathy (Carkhuff, 1987), and higher level counseling skills of self disclosure, immediacy, confrontation, decision making, and contracting (Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morrill, & Haase, 1968). With some rather minor updates, these training models are still popular today. Inclusion of each one of these training approaches in the education and supervision program of counselors-in-training appeared to contribute to an increase in trainees' level of counseling self-efficacy (Crews et al., 2005).

Styles of Providing Supervisory Feedback

One may view supervision as an approach to training which may put the supervisor in different roles such as that of an educator, motivator, and a leader (Borders & Fong, 1994). Some of the studies that were mentioned earlier indicated that supervision in general was beneficial for the development of counselors-in-training. The following section provides brief descriptions about different types of supervision that are commonly used in the training programs of counselors-in-training.

Live Supervision

Live supervision, as the name implies, often refers to various ways in which one or more persons in the role of a supervisor would provide the supervisee with real-time feedback about the quality or betterment of a particular technique, practice, or event during counseling or supervision. The use of a one-way mirror, a telephone, or a "bug-in-the-ear" are some of the commonly used methods for providing live supervision in the training of counseling students.

Liddle et al. (1988) suggests that there seems to be some level of ambivalence about evaluation in general and about live supervision in particular. They found that live

supervision aroused responses of anxiety in beginning counselors, despite a positive inclination towards it for the close attention and the feedback it provided.

Phone-ins were also seen by supervisees in their early practicum experience as warnings by their supervisors for their mistakes. The students' interpretations of the phone-ins became gentler as they began to think of them as guides which they gradually welcomed into their session. The trend changed again as students moved towards the later stages of their training, when the supervisees increasingly showed a desire for more opportunities to conduct unprompted, independent sessions (Liddle et al., 1988). In this study, most trainees who participated had clear ideas about effective and ineffective supervisor behavior. The authors concluded that supervisors simply need to ask and check with their trainees to get a more accurate picture of their supervisory work.

Studies conducted in the field of family therapy supervision (Wong, 1997) showed that trainees expectations to be evaluated behind the mirror and under live supervision created anxiety prior to and during the early stages of their practicum experience. It was also noted that many of the same students welcomed live supervision and that of being watched as part of their learning and educational experience after they had more experience and felt more comfortable in their counseling (Wong, 1997). An important possible contributor to this apparent shift in supervisees' perceptions about live supervision is believed to be related to the establishment of a trusting relationship with the supervisors, and trainees' involvement in the therapeutic and supervisory process (Wong, 1997).

Wong's (1997) research resulted in various literature that question the effectiveness of live supervision in the training of family therapists, because it may

encourage imitation of supervisors, inhibit autonomy, create dependence on the supervisory team, and increase confusion caused by different supervisors' theoretical orientations. The conflict between the supporters and opponents of live supervision is reflected in the same article because it contains one study that claims higher ratings by both supervisees and supervisors for delayed feedback and another study that cites immediate and on-the-spot feedback in live supervision as the most common advantage.

The inconsistency which is evident in the current literature about the feasibility of live supervision in counselor training may be explained to some degree by one of the participating supervisees in the above study who pointed out that although live supervision seemed to be working for him or her, it would not necessarily be the same with another supervisor. Attention should be given to conditions or variables that can make evaluation of counseling students more desirable and effective.

Peer or Group Supervision

Peer supervision is defined as an opportunity for a small group of colleagues or trainees from closely related fields to learn from the experiences and behaviors of others, and through mutual interaction with the members which calls for rotating between the roles of a supervisor and a supervisee (Zorga, Dekleva, & Kobolt, 2001). In structured peer group supervision, three to six counseling students and one trained supervisor meet weekly or biweekly to help with supervision. The supervisor functions as a moderator, facilitator, and process observer who summarizes the feedback and discussions by the peers and ensures an atmosphere that is supportive, open, and honest (Borders, 1991). When evaluation is viewed as a learning process, the process of internal evaluation and

feedback inherent in group supervision may be seen as an important component for training more effective future supervisors (Zorga et al., 2001).

Initially, the practicum supervision groups were structured to reflect Stoltenberg's (1981) first level of optimal supervision environments in which supervisees are more dependent on supervisors. Stoltenberg (1981) has suggested that supervisees in this stage lack experience, have low confidence, and are less aware of their impact on clients. They tend to want more advice and directions from their supervisors and to seek the "correct ways" to behave. The beginning supervisees are characterized by black-and-white thinking, linear problem-solving, and lower levels of self-awareness; they often doubt their competence and tend to be highly self-critical, and depend on their supervisors to tell them what is the "right" thing to do in counseling (Borders, 1989).

An important implication of group supervision was that participants seemed to be less confused and anxious, and their goals had become clearer than at earlier supervisions. Their level of confidence was also increased with group supervision. Starling and Baker's (2000) study indicated that the trainees' self-knowledge was increased, and that the students were generally satisfied by receiving feedback from peers which added to the quality of their experience more so than with individual supervision. Moreover, the impression of the supervisees after completing the structured group practicum supervision experience was more upbeat and positive.

Peer supervision may help teach counselors-in-training assessment of self and peers, and increase independence and interdependence, as well as help with their professional and personal growth. The peer supervisors use their resources to offer help to the peer supervisees about common concerns such as normal issues relating to their

relationship to the site supervisor or working with clients. Using peer supervision seems to help students to think of supervision as something that is done with them and not something that is done to them (Wagner & Smith, 1979).

Supervision group leaders need to encourage beginner counselors to express their reasoning processes by verbalizing how information was selected and what decision-making rules were used to identify and use particular skills in the counseling process (Hillerbrand, 1989). The strategies for eliciting these behaviors include case conceptualization, goal setting, and problem solving. The expected outcomes of these activities are increased perception of self-efficacy, improved information processing, enhanced skill development, increased cognitive rehearsal, continued motivation to learn, and a better understanding of when to generalize and adopt the skills to new situations (Hillerbrand, 1989). The group supervision provides an opportunity to reduce beginners' anxiety for the supervision experience and in the counseling session. The supervisee may undergo less evaluation anxiety when being evaluated in the context of group supervision.

Borders (Borders, 1991) observed that peer groups provided an environment that was supportive, reassuring, and normalizing because it presented examples from others who have similar experiences, feelings, and concerns. Most students placed an important emphasis on the role of peer feedback on their self-confidence and skill development, making structured group practicum supervision a valuable process. Honest and constructive feedback from peer group members is crucial to the trainees' success; this is further supported by the findings of a qualitative interview study (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997) which showed that participants in peer supervision groups rated feedback from

peers as helpful. An important skill of the supervisor relates to his ability to clearly communicate feedback and encourage trainees to take reasonable therapeutic risks. Additionally, supervisors need to be aware that their supervisees place a lot of importance on their level of trustworthiness (Guest & Beutler, 1988).

Starling and Baker (2000) observed that the structured counseling practicum supervision groups can provide a supportive atmosphere where students are encouraged to test hypotheses, try new approaches, and work toward developing their own unique counselor identities. Furthermore, because the group supervision experience included interacting with other peers, the concepts of sharing and modeling were put into practice. Starling and Baker (2000) argued that more data is required to be gathered from related studies in order to more accurately determine if structured peer group supervision enhances supervisee development of counseling self-efficacy.

Solution-Focused Supervision.

Juhnke (1996) described solution-focused supervision as a practical approach in which supervisees' existing resources and strengths are utilized in producing resolutions to some of the counseling concerns. As part of this approach, the supervisor may help the supervisee identify exceptions to a recognized problem behavior in counseling session. Each supervision session can begin by the supervisor asking the supervisee to report on any improvements in use of their abilities or skills since they last met. This can help foster a sense of ongoing development and increase trainee's confidence in counseling (Juhnke, 1996).

Other authors (Presbury, Echterling, & McKee, 1999) have also presented solution-focused supervision as an effective way to help supervisees develop an inner

vision that portrays them as empowered, competent, and developing counselors. Adopting a solution-focused supervision would also help facilitate the emergence of trainees' innate and hidden potentials. Finally, these authors try to make the point that a solution-focused model of supervision makes use of basic and therapeutically proven skills of mutual respect, affirmation, and listening to make supervision more productive.

Similar to the goal of increasing supervisee's confidence and empowerment through solution-focused supervision, other factors have also been recognized that would serve to this end. Presbury, et al. (1999)suggested that the supervisor's attention to the structure of the language used during supervision can help facilitate feelings of empowerment for the supervisees. For example, the use of presuppositional language where the supervisor conveys to the supervisee a confidence that a desired experience has probably occurred already can create a positive mindset in the supervisee as well as in the supervisor (Presbury et al., 1999).

Supervisor as Supervisee's Co-Therapist

A model of supervision for group therapy was proposed by researchers Tuckman and Finkelstein (1999) in which the supervisor would take on both the roles of the supervisee's co-therapist as well as his or her supervisor. The co-leadership team that is created when a supervisor helps his supervisee as a cotherapist can also provide an opportunity for the supervisor to act as a role model to the supervisee. For example, supervisor's expressions and reactions may help normalize many of the supervisee's internal feelings. Additionally, the supervisee may experience an increased sense of safety because the supervisor is in the situation with the trainee and can help in case a significant incident was to occur. Finally, through this model, the supervisee is believed

to gain experience while the client also benefits from the presence of the experienced supervisor in the session (Tuckman & Finkelstein, 1999).

Counselor's Emotional Responsiveness

Personal Characteristics

A counselor's personality characteristics and emotional well-being are also important and influence his or her emotional reaction about being evaluated. It is clear that the skillfulness and competence of an individual counselor enables him or her to facilitate creation of an interpersonal context in which the client can benefit. As such, a counselor's personal problems should not be so overwhelming to him or her that it interferes with judgments about appropriate interventions. According to Borders (1989), the higher level counselors were less concerned about controlling their personal reactions to clients and so seemed to be more in control.

Training

Therapists are normally trained to recognize and highlight client reactions in order to facilitate therapy. Negative client reactions seemed to be more difficult for therapists to recognize, maybe because clients tend to better hide such reactions, or that therapist may be familiar with fewer verbal or non-verbal cues for clients' negative reaction (Thompson & Hill, 1991). It is said, though, that therapists may become anxious if they perceive clients' response as negative. This increased anxiety may affect their ability to be helpful. These authors argued that there is a need to better prepare and train therapists in recognizing and responding to client negative reactions.

Professional Development

Some researchers have mentioned a link between the counselors' level of competence or stage of professional development and their increased insight about the thought process of themselves and their clients. Borders (1989), for example, stated that supervisees progress through sequential stages that are hierarchical as they get more advanced conceptually and behaviorally in the counseling profession. This leads to counselors who are more insightful about themselves as well as their clients.

Emotional Intelligence

Martin et al. (2004) looked at the association between students' emotional intelligence and their counseling self-efficacy and found it useful for trainees to be able to accurately understand and interpret clients' feelings and feedback. In addition to identifying the emotions, counselors with higher emotional intelligence were able to more constructively manage those emotions within the therapy session. The management of one's own emotions in relation to others' can help with managing the occurrence of transference and countertransference in therapy (Martin Jr. et al., 2004).

Supervisee Satisfaction with Supervision

Supervisee satisfaction refers to the supervisee's perception of the general quality of the supervision experience as it meets the counselor's motivational and practical needs in the growth process (Ladany et al., 1999). Again, a good supervisory working alliance has been shown to be related to greater supervisee self-efficacy (Efstation & Patton, 1990), less confusion and conflict about the roles, and a working alliance that is positive (Ladany et al., 1999).

Supervisor's Adherence to Ethical Guidelines

Supervisors who exhibited greater adherence to supervisor ethical guidelines helped create a stronger supervisory working alliance, which in turn, tend to lead to greater agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision as well as to a stronger emotional bond. Furthermore, the more satisfied the supervisees are, the more likely they are to learn from supervision (Ladany et al., 1999). The ethical issue of dual relationships has also been addressed in some literature. According to Bowman and Hatley's (1995) research about student perceptions regarding dual relationships, trainees are often viewed as the most vulnerable who are unable to voluntarily give their informed consent about participating in a dual relationship with the faculty. More effort is needed to include input from the students in order to address the potentially significant role of dual relationships such as in mentoring and other social interactions on students' overall experience in graduate training programs (Bowman & Hatley, 1995). Biaggio, Paget, and Chenoweth (1997) found that many times problematic dual relationships account for the majority of difficult faculty-student relationships. They reported that such dual relationships have the potential to cause significant emotional stress for the students and are likely to interfere with their educational experience (Biaggio et al., 1997).

Supervisee's Best and Worst Supervision Experience

In one of the few studies that have attempted to learn about counseling student's perspectives about supervision (Anderson et al., 2000), supervisees were asked to describe their "best" and "worst" supervision experiences. The supervisors' personal attributes that were perceived to be important to supervisees were interpersonal attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Also, supervisees thought that it was

important for supervisors to include in their supervision the following behaviors: encouragement and communication, promotion of an open supervisory environment, attention to personal development, and provision of guidance and direction about conceptualizations and skill acquisition. Otherwise, few counselors would tend to prefer their work to be assessed by their supervisors (Worthington, 2006).

A "heavy emphasis on evaluation" was cited by many supervisees as part of their worst experience. Supervisees reported poor experience when supervisors were avoidant or communicated indirectly, or when they emphasized supervisees' shortcomings. On the other hand, providing feedback in a clear manner, encouraging experimentation, showing openness, support, respect for individual differences, and providing more frequent supervisory contacts were included in reports of best experiences by the supervisees (Anderson et al., 2000).

Inclusion and competent discussion of multicultural issues in supervision, in addition to being an important ethical responsibility, is believed to have positive effect on the supervisory relationship and lead to higher levels of supervisee satisfaction (Burkard et al., 2006). Other topics that may be related to the students' cultural experience would include prejudice, discrimination, and feelings of being evaluated, judged, or ignored in the supervision process. Considering and inclusion of these subjects in the supervisory discussions with the supervisees may help facilitate and increase multicultural competencies.

Supervisory Relationship

Another study (Hutt, Scott, & King, 1983) that investigated supervisees' perspectives about their supervision experiences found that a facilitative relationship that

also allowed for discussion of tasks and showed sensitivity toward the supervisee was perceived as a positive experience. Most negative emotional experiences focused primarily on the relationship with the supervisor, suggesting that a problem with the relationship may seriously hinder the professional learning process.

Supervision is More Than Training

Client outcome and therapist competence are not perfectly correlated because despite highly skilled counselors, some clients do not seem to do well (Shaw & Dobson, 1988). Therefore, client variables, in conjunction with supervisees' ego and cognition development, need to be explored because they also reflect learning, influence performance, and illustrate how supervisees process information about clients and themselves (Bernier, 1980). On the basis of the presented information, developmental stages in supervision should be defined not only by the amount of counseling experience, but also by the levels of conceptual and ego development. The varying cognitions of supervisees then reflect differences in their developmental levels. And as such, "even inexperienced supervisees may form relatively complex and differentiated conceptualizations of their clients and the counseling process, and experienced counselors may still have relatively simplistic and rigid perceptions of their clients" (Borders, 1989, p. 163).

Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982) identified eight critical issues that developing counselors need to resolve before mastering the profession. The issues are competence, emotional awareness, autonomy, theoretical identity, individual differences, purpose, personal motivation, and professional ethics. Additionally, they believed it is the responsibility of the supervisor to assess the supervisee on any of these issues and to help

promote growth through the three stages of stagnation (unawareness), confusion (ambivalence), and integration (self-confidence).

Supervision has been said to be only one component in the more broad and comprehensive training program and the training program itself as only one aspect of the student's life (Holloway, 1988). Through this global and holistic view, one is encouraged to also inquire about other sources for developmental growth or impediments. If indeed these changes require qualitative shifts in a counselor's growing professional identity, then they should also be influencing other contexts of life. Actually, it has been frequently proposed that the counselors' professional identity is an integral part of their personal identity, and that without such a congruency between the two (behavior of counseling and self-concepts) the counselor would lack the authenticity that is necessary for an effective counseling relationship (Holloway, 1988).

Professional identity cannot be held separate from other areas of one's self, and changes must be considered outside of the supervisory situation in order to confirm the developing trainee's learning process. Neither the models nor the research sufficiently address this consideration and thus has not yet dealt with the underlying constructs of a developmental model (Holloway, 1988). In line with the more holistic view, some research (Kissinger, 2004) indicates that the working alliance in supervisory relationships is perhaps influenced by many of the counseling students' existing relational patterns, many of which may be evident in students' current family environment. Singer and Lane (1990) defined supervision as an art and supervisors as providing a hands-on teaching in order to strengthen the students' effectiveness by offering them experienced assistance and oversight as their ethical duties for the protection of the clients.

Supervisor Development

Blocher (1983) argued that it is the ethical duty of supervisors to appropriately help supervisees with learning any or all of the counseling skills. In order to be able to discuss supervisor development, it becomes important to explore why supervisors do what they do (Pearson & Brew, 2002). Some concern has been raised, for example, because "the possibility always exists that an immature, inadequate, and insensitive supervisor may intimidate, bully, and even damage a supervisee" (Blocher, 1983, p. 30). Unfortunately, little attention is given to the development of supervisors (Borders & Fong, 1994). Some of the researchers who have tried to explore the cognitions of supervisors-in-training observed the difficulty, especially for newer supervisors to assume the role of a supervisor or to effectively handle the supervisory relationship (Borders & Fong, 1994).

Parallels to Counselor Development

Novice supervisors, like beginning counselors are quite self-conscious, formal, task-oriented, and prefer to focus on issues that are more concrete. They may, therefore over identify with the counselor, be overly critical, and show more demanding behaviors while worrying about being evaluative or confrontational (Borders & Fong, 1994). Similar to the propositions about counselor development (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987), beginning supervisors tend to be highly anxious, self-focused, prefer structure, and worried about making mistakes.

A study that looked at the communication in typical supervision meetings (Holloway & Wampold, 1983) indicated that supervisors appreciate when trainees ask for their opinions or suggestions as well as when they avoid becoming defensive and instead

uncritically accept their behavior. Similarly supervisors seem to feel uncomfortable with silence during the supervision, as well as when the trainee asks them a question after they had just asked a question. The trainees reported discomfort by supervisors' defensiveness or critical comments. Both the supervisor and the supervisees seemed more satisfied when the supervisee was asked for further elaborating on their expression of ideas. Apparently the supervisor role as one who solicited ideas from the trainee and the trainee being encouraged by being asked for elaboration worked best for making the supervisory relationship more satisfying. Holloway and Wampold (1983) suggested that the supervisory interaction be reviewed in light of persistent evaluative components in the supervisory relationships.

Emotional and Cognitive Mirroring

Steward (1998) made an observation that supervisees' level of self-efficacy seems to be a reflection of their supervisor's self-efficacy and competence. He identified some of the supervisor concerns that impede supervisor self-efficacy to be anxiety related to evaluating others who may have more knowledge, feelings of inadequacy, and concerns about giving and receiving feedback to supervisees or their cohort group. A "feedback loop" made it possible for either the supervisee or the supervisor to experience increased self-efficacy when either one of them became more self-efficacious and competent. In addition to the parallel process involved in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, Steward (1998) attempted to convey that the profession of supervision involves both a component of teaching and a component of learning on part of the supervisor and the supervisee. This information adds to the importance of working on the supervisory relationship as a unit of reciprocal influence.

Suggestions for Inquiring About Supervisees' Cognitions

Borders (1989) emphasized a need for more detailed description of supervisees' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at various stages of their professional development. Borders, Fong, and Cron (1988) utilized an open-ended recall procedure to obtain a full account of in-session cognitions. For example, a first-practicum supervisee was asked to "think aloud" while watching a videotape of an actual session, and the reported thoughts were assessed on dimensions of time (about past, present, or future events and feelings), place (in-session or out-of-session), locus (external and observable or internal, inferred trait, opinion, or value), orientation (professional or personal perspective), and mode (cognitive, or affective - positive or negative terms). Borders, et al. (1988) found the open-ended recall procedure as revealing a wider range of cognitions than the more structured tools that were previously used when assessing thoughts. The supervisee's in-session cognitions showed patterns of intense self-scrutiny and self-doubt, a strong sense of responsibility, and a reliance on supervisors' suggestions to decide on the "right" response (Borders, 1989). For this procedure, supervisees were encouraged to use present tense and describe what they were thinking and feeling as they were counseling, including the materials they considered to be irrelevant or not very important (Borders, 1989). Almost all the supervisees were preoccupied with issues of competence, were highly attentive to the current task, were primarily focusing on immediate events and people, and wanted to find out about the next response. For supervisees at higher ego levels, the issue of emotional awareness did not seem to disrupt the flow of counseling.

Again, the open-ended recall procedure used in this study provided a rich measure of supervisees' in-session cognitive processes. Borders et al., (1988) and Holloway

(1987) have suggested that the more structured self reports of in-session cognitions and developmental models of supervision may restrict and bias the finding. The thinking aloud approach appeared to produce a more detailed account of what supervisees actually think during their counseling sessions. Borders (1989) appropriately suggested that similar studies of master counselors' in-session cognitions be conducted in hopes of being able to perhaps teach supervisees about the more effective thought processes. Costa (1994) acknowledged a need for more advanced research methods to address issues such as supervisee anxiety during live supervision and a more effective match between the styles of supervisors and counselors in training. I believe the results from this qualitative study provide important insights that would serve this purpose.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Introduction and Background

This section provides information about the study's participants, sites, research strategies, data collection procedures, data analysis, and presentation. The rationale and justifications for use of specified frameworks as they relate to the exploration of the research questions as well as ways to safeguard the study's trustworthiness is also discussed. Below is a summary review of the topics that are discussed and elaborated upon further throughout this section.

Through this phenomenological study, I am trying to explore and better understand the meanings that counselors-in-training ascribe to their experience of evaluation in the supervisory relationship. Adopting a phenomenological perspective, I would assume that human experience makes sense to the people who have lived through the experience (Dukes, 1984). Thus, this philosophical orientation guides the efforts of the study to explore the phenomenon and concept of evaluation and to study participants' meaning of the evaluation experience in their supervisory relationship. I conducted extensive interviews with 20 counselors-in-training that had experienced evaluation during their practicum or internship experience. Then, I analyzed the interviews according to the steps recommended by Moustakas (1994), Creswell (1998), and other qualitative research authors. It was important that I clarified for myself and tried to be aware of my own responses and experience of evaluation (Creswell, 1998), before I began to read through all of the participants' statements to select significant statements about their meanings of evaluation (Moustakas, 1994). I interpreted the meanings of their statements and clustered these meanings into themes. While I was conducting, reading,

and analyzing the interviews, I separated ("bracketed") my own assumptions about evaluation and instead depended on the statements given by the participants to inform my understanding of the concept. Being aware of the meanings of the experiences for myself, I tested this understanding with other individuals to establish "inter-subjective" validity (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas' (1994) reflection about the fluidity of the verification process is evident when he states: "A continuing alteration of validity occurs as people articulate and describe their experiences" (p. 57). As I understand his elaboration on the subject, he is suggesting that the researcher's own perceptions need not to be invalidated or ignored in order to be able to be receptive or to understand others' perceptions, feelings, ideas, and judgments. Instead, it was important to be aware of my own position on things before turning outward to establish "intersubjective validity" through my interactions with the study participants.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe, understand, and discover the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training. The meaning of evaluation by participants was sought in the context of their experience in the supervisory relationship. The meaning of evaluation was defined generally as experiences that were perceived as either being helpful or unhelpful by participants. Because the questions were non-directional, open-ended, and evolving (Klinger, Cox, Cox, & Klinger, 2004), I tried to avoid asking participants questions that could be interpreted by the participants as guiding their responses in any certain direction.

The overarching research questions of this study were "what is the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training?" and "what are the underlying themes and context that account for a counselor-in-training to experience different meanings for evaluation in the supervisory relationship?"

Rationale for the Qualitative Design Used

The problem statement or the rationale for a study is often based on personal experience or follows from a documented need in the literature that calls for further elaboration in order to fill a void in the existing literature, or establishing a new way of thinking that can help improve the assessment and understanding of an understudied issue or population (Creswell, 1998). Both, the review of the literature, and my personal experience as a counseling student pointed to the need for a more detailed and coherent qualitative study in regards to exploring the evaluation experiences of counselors-in-training in their supervisory relationship.

There were only a few, mostly quantitative studies, which often only addressed very limited aspects of evaluation in the supervisory relationship. These studies, though helpful, did not tend to capture the interconnected features of evaluative forces involved in supervisory relationships. Daniels and Larson (2001), for example, used mock counseling sessions and false performance feedback in a quantitative study to explore its effect on counselor's self-efficacy and anxiety. It is generally agreed that qualitative design is more useful than experimental designs in the analysis of a process (such as evaluation) that includes large amounts of contextual data (Albaek, 1998).

Creswell (1998) views qualitative research as a process of inquiry that adopts a complex and holistic view by reporting detailed views of informants in order to explore

and increase our understanding about a human issue. In contrast to quantitative questions that ask *why*, qualitative research questions often ask *how* or *what* so that it encourages an exploratory inquiry that seeks to describe what is going on from the participants' perspective rather than the "expert" researcher passing on judgments on the participants (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research uses strategies that are especially appropriate in uncovering and addressing meanings of participants about their experiences by making deeper processes or by entering their field of perception (Hoshmand, 2005).

The phenomenological study is used to explore the structures of experience that helps us understand and describe the "meaning of the lived experiences" for a number of individuals about a particular concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). A phenomenological approach in qualitative research is suitable for making sense of a concept in terms of the meaning people bring to their experience with the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I conducted a phenomenological study that is appropriate for my effort to interpret and make sense about the phenomenon of evaluation in terms of the meanings counselors-in-training bring to their experience of supervisory relationship. The topics of qualitative studies usually address issues that are close to people, emotion-laden, and practical. As suggested by Creswell (1998), I asked open-ended questions, listened to participants, and used some additional questions from participants to reflect my increased understanding of the problem during the research process (Creswell, 1998).

Theoretical Stance

Compatible with Mahoney's (2003) constructive psychotherapy is my understanding that humans are able to choose the direction of their lives; that we are "authors of our lives" and are able to initiate change when we think it is necessary.

George Kelly believed that a person chooses among a limited set of behavioral alternatives (Maher, 1969). I have an optimistic view of human capabilities. I believe that people have many resources available that can help facilitate growth.

I can relate to the concept of "costly will" (Mahoney, 2003, p. 34) in describing the payoff for utilizing our attention and effort in trying to retrieve or remember our unconscious experiences. We might need to pay a high price for such a realization, especially at times when the revisited mental experience is neither "refundable" nor "exchangeable" for a less costly construct or meaning. Constructivism addresses this issue rather accurately: anxiety is the result of making wrong predictions when there are no alternatives to take its place (Corsini & Marsella, 1983). A person's willingness to deeply look inside himself or herself in face of fear of finding both sweet and bitter memories requires courage and integrity (Mahoney, 2003). I agree with Mahoney's assertion that affirmation is a style of relating to others that is fundamentally encouraging and hopeful. I relate with constructivism view that personality continues to develop as a process throughout life.

I also agree with object relations theory for the role of interpersonal relations as source of personal development (Corsini & Marsella, 1983). This perspective implies that personality, as relatively enduring patterns of social situations, do not exist independent from other people. Also, I relate to object relations view that describes human behavior as a reflection of the individual's past and present relationships. Not incongruent with personal construct theory or object relations theory is my current belief (Madani, 2006) that human behavior involves the self in relation with others primarily for the purpose of bringing meaning to our mental constructs. We seek evaluations in the form of feedback

that can result in us experiencing a sense of affirmation, reassurance, and encouragement, which can, in turn help us keep, modify, or replace our current evaluative constructs and decisions. I believe this process of seeking evaluation from others serves to fulfill a core human need that continues throughout life – *I think, therefore I evaluate…*

The theory that guides my research inquiry and methodology is that of the phenomenological approach in qualitative research. This research perspective allows the flexibility to make modifications to the study if the need arises during the process of research, and hence should be an appropriate fit to my understanding of the constructivist views about the supervisees' ongoing and dynamic experience of evaluations.

The Role of the Researcher

Authors of qualitative research methods believe that qualitative researchers approach their studies with some personal beliefs, assumptions, or worldview that guide the process of their inquiry (Creswell, 1998). The five areas that are influenced by these philosophical assumptions relate to the understanding about the nature of reality (ontological issue), the relationship between the researcher and those being researched (epistemological issue), the role of values in the study (axiological issue), the process of research (methodological issue), and finally the researcher's language in the study (rhetorical issue). To address the ontological domain, the researcher needs to report on the existence of reality as constructed by individuals involved in the research experience. As such, the realities of the researcher, the informants, and those of the readers who interpret the study are all respected (Creswell, 1998). Extensive use of quotes from participants and reporting on their significant statements helps represent these diverse perspectives (Moustakas, 1994).

Regarding the relationship between the researcher and the participant (epistemological issue), I tried to reduce the distance with the person being researched, for example, through my collaboration and interaction during the process of data gathering and interviews (Creswell, 1998). The "closeness" between me and my interviewee made it more important that I be willing to acknowledge and openly discuss the values and biases that would be present in shaping the interpretations and the final narrative (axiological issue). As the researcher, I followed the steps recommended by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (1998) in order to eliminate or reduce as much as possible any interjection of my biases into the research process. I used the suggested qualitative procedures such as use of quotes, bracketing, and reflective journaling. In other words, I did all of this in order to allow myself to be informed by the participants as much as possible, and try to avoid diluting or in other ways influence their responses to my questions. In addition, I transcribed all of the interviews in order to increase my exposure to the interviewees' information and to help minimize the unintentional insertion of my own personal biases in the data that was collected.

Methodological assumptions could also play an important role that relate to the research process and the issue of controlling for the role of values in the study. I paid careful attention and wrote down the participants' statements in detail before trying to get to their meanings or clusters of meanings (Creswell, 1998). The research methodology involved an inductive approach that lead to development of categories from informants that were not specified in advance of the study. The inductive approach indicated the emergent character of the qualitative study design and helped me to begin with general research questions and continually revise them according to the information from

participants. As the researcher, it was important for me to try to note the participants' descriptions of the context of their experience with the phenomenon of evaluation than for me to include my own account of their context (Creswell, 1998).

Finally, the language of research (rhetorical issue) generally refers to a qualitative researcher's ability to use specific approaches in the writing and reporting of the study. For example, I made use of metaphors, and used the first-person "I" as part of my report and the narrative descriptions. Similarly, words such as meaning, discovering, and understanding are examples of words that are appropriate (Creswell, 1998) and that were used in this qualitative study. To be true to the recommendations and in order to distinguish my own perspectives in the study, I was comfortable owning my personal views on issues as they continued to come up throughout the course of this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection refers to a process of engaging in activities that include locating individuals, gaining access and making rapport, purposeful sampling, as well as the collection, recording, and sorting of information (Creswell, 1998). For a phenomenological study, the researcher gains access to one or more sites, locates individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (criterion sample) who can articulate their conscious experience, establishes rapport with them, and starts the process of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998).

According to Creswell (1998), qualitative researchers generally rely on a few participants and many variables. Furthermore, because evidence must substantiate claims, the researcher needs to show multiple perspectives; many times involving writing long passages that include quotes representing participants' points of view. The primary

source of collecting information in a phenomenological study is through in-depth interviews (up to 2 hours) with a small number of individuals (about 10 individuals) who have experienced the phenomenon. As recommended by Polkinghorne (1989), I paid attention to my self-reflections during the process of handling an increasing amount of information which was obtained through the interviews. As part of the initial sorting of the data, I made note of my immediate reactions to the original transcript, which included ideas or key concepts, in form of memos and reflective notes. For the category formation, I moved from reading and reflecting to describing, classifying, and interpreting in light of the participants' view and within context of their setting (Creswell, 1998).

I conducted one-on-one interviews with 20 counselors-in-training that had experienced evaluation in their supervisory relationships and that were enrolled in either practicum or internship programs. Interviewees came from three graduate schools in the Rocky Mountain region. A demographic questionnaire was distributed in order to collect information on participants' gender, age, types of supervision experienced, current practicum or internship status, ethnicity, school setting, highest level of education completed, and if a counseling degree was received. The participants were reminded about the respect for the confidentiality of their information in order to minimize any compromise of their identities.

A digital voice recorder was used to record and a computer system was used to store, retrieve, transcribe, and code original interviews. Participating students were interviewed in a quiet location, all near or on the sites where they received their practicum or internship supervision experience. Ethical guidelines required me to get participants' consent for their help with the study, and the protection and maintenance of

their confidentiality and anonymity. Before beginning each interview, I collected each participant's completed consent form that addressed issues such as the participant's right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, the main purpose of the study, protecting their confidentiality, a statement about known risks, and the expected benefits for participating in the study. Each interview consisted of five main questions and several possible additional questions. As anticipated, most of the twenty interviews took between 45-60 minutes to complete. I was aware of Creswell's (1998) assertion that the phenomenological interviewer may face challenging issues because they rely on their interviewees to discuss the meaning of their experiences, try to ask appropriate questions, and need to be patient (e.g., saying little) during the interview process.

Hoshmand (2005) stated that "human inquiry and the knowledge enterprise must be sensitive to context in order to be meaningful" (p. 27). In order to best understand the phenomenon as experienced by the participants in their own context I needed to set aside or "bracket" my preconceptions and prejudgments until they were established on the new information (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). To this end, and in order to increase my direct exposure to the original narrative data, I personally took on the challenging task of doing the verbatim transcriptions for the 20 interviews.

After information was gathered through in-depth open-ended interviews, I followed Moustakas's (1994) general steps for treating the data:

1. The researcher reads all the verbatim transcriptions and other forms of documents.
2. Significant statements (non-repetitive) are then extracted from original descriptions.

3. Meanings are formulated from significant statements. This is done by thoroughly reading, and reflecting upon original significant statements considering their context.
4. These formulated meanings are clustered into common themes that have emerged from all of the participants' descriptions.
5. An exhaustive narrative description of the phenomenon is written which integrates the results of the analysis. This narrative is a "description of the meanings and essences of the experience" (p. 122) that is a fair representation of the group as a whole.

Interview Questions

The main purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training. For this qualitative research, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 graduate students. In order to ensure a more accurate examination of the main phenomenon being investigated and to seek participant's own perspectives regarding their experience with evaluation, the interview consisted of five main open-ended and non-directive questions. The main interview questions were:

1. What is your general understanding of evaluation in the context of your supervisory relationship?
2. What thoughts or feelings come up as you reflect on your supervisory relationships? What thoughts or feelings come up for you when you think about being evaluated by your supervisor?
3. What are your expectations of your evaluation?

4. Please share some examples of things your supervisors said or did that impacted you either positively or negatively. What thoughts or feelings came up? What meanings did that have for you? What else?

5. At what point, if any, during your supervision experience, did the meaning of evaluation change for you? What caused that change to happen? What happened next?

The interview questions used in this study are the result of a small number of pilot interviews that were conducted with some graduate counseling students. The students used in the pilot interview agreed that these questions were essentially good in capturing their meaning of evaluation experience in the supervisory relationship. The appropriateness of the interview questions was confirmed even further by other participants. For example one of the interviewees talked about the interview in the following way:

> I think that, you know, it was good that you asked about feelings and thoughts, because I think it's easy for something like this to really intellectualize it or rationalize it, or to think a lot about the feelings. But I think it's nice to try to get both aspects of it, because I think they can provide a lot of rich information about how somebody is creating meaning.

What becomes evident from the above statement is that there can be many aspects or dimensions to the experience of evaluation by different individual trainees. Again, the main research question is "what is the meaning of evaluation in the supervisory relationship for counselors-in-training"? The different aspects that are evident from the

research question, which were also considered in formulating the interview questions, relate to concepts such as meaning, evaluation, supervision, supervisory relationship, and counselors-in-training.

For the purpose of this research, and in order to encourage more data, the participating counseling students were told that they could also reflect on all of their supervisors during their practicum or internship experience when responding to the interview questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

Creswell (1998) confirms the complexity created by the interconnectedness of data connection, data analysis, and writing the report in a qualitative study. However, guidelines have been recommended to make these activities clearer for researchers and the readers of these studies. For the data analysis, I primarily employed Moustakas' (1994) specific and detailed template for phenomenological analysis. As a phenomenological researcher, I began the process of analysis by first describing my own experience of the phenomenon. I then started reading and re-reading through all the information that was collected in order to obtain an overall sense of the data (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002).

While reading the interview transcriptions, I found significant statements that address how counselors-in-training are experiencing evaluation in the supervisory relationship. Moustakas (1994) refers to this as "horizontalization" of the data. Duplicate statements are removed from the list. Treating each statement as having equal worth, I carefully read the significant statements from the original transcriptions to arrive at the meanings of evaluation for counselors-in-training who participated in the study. This lead

to a textural description that addresses what happened. In the next step of data analysis, I reflected on the above descriptions, sought evidence for presence of different perspectives, and tred to represent all possible meanings in my structural descriptions that were organized in form of clusters of themes that were common to all of the participants' descriptions.

In order to further validate these thematic descriptions, I referred back to the original descriptions and examined if there would be a need to add to the clusters of themes and to verify that all of the propositions by the existing clusters were supported in the original text. Finally, I provided several exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon that was based on the integration of the results of the analysis, the statements, and the descriptions. This was an overall description and narrative of the meaning and the essence of evaluation for the participating counselors-in-training who had experienced evaluation in their supervisory relationships. As suggested by Polkinghorne (1989) this report should leave the reader with the feeling that he or she has gained a better understanding of what it is like for someone to experience the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) refers to this written section as "a brief creative close that speaks to the essence of the study" (p. 184).

I used computer based word processing software (Microsoft Word) to transcribe all the interviews word for word (verbatim). A generic audio transcription software (Express Scribe) was used to help me with the transcription of the interview recordings. I also used a data analysis software (NVivo) to help me with more effective handling and coding of various forms of data related to the study. Use of computer programs made it possible to quickly and easily retrieve certain words or a string of words. For example,

the process of data analysis became more efficient with use of the computer software that allowed me to "tag" the text to be identified as significant statements, as quotes, or to be placed into appropriate categories or under a relevant code. Most of the computer programs worked together in synchronization, which increased the accuracy of handling the data.

Methods for Verification

Wolcott (1994) argued that "a preoccupation with validity (verification in qualitative research) may be as much a distraction to our collective efforts at qualitative research," (p. 368) and at the same time recommended that in order to better understand the research a more broad perspective is needed. Furthermore, he views a good research study as one that leaves an impact or that which provokes further thought. "Research is a means of organizing our thoughts to reach understanding, not an end in itself" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 37). Creswell (1998) views the extensive time, the detailed thick descriptions, and the closeness to the participants in a qualitative research study as adding to the value (worth) and strength of these studies. He also recommended use of the term verification over validity, because it more appropriately captures the procedures necessary to establish the general credibility by employing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity throughout the research.

Qualitative studies need to be evaluated using qualitatively appropriate criteria (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Denzin and Lincoln (1985) have used alternative terms for traditionally quantitative studies. They used terms such as credibility (for internal validity), transferability (for external validity), dependability (for reliability), and conformability (for objectivity). To ensure credibility of the study, they proposed use of

"triangulation" of data (use of multiple sources of data or different theoretical perspectives). My general approach to this study involved my background with such theoretical orientations as constructivism, objects relations, and phenomenological perspectives. Thick description (detailed explanation and description of events and observations) were utilized to ensure that the findings may be transferable between researcher and participants. Saturation was achieved to ensure that results provided predictability and stability across situations. Finally, as the researcher, I looked for conformability to establish the efficacy and value of the data. As the researcher, I was also aware of being the primary "instrument" for data collection through my interviews of the supervisees, my observations, and my documentation and presentation of information.

Polkinghorne (1989) approaches validity in phenomenological research more generally. He mentions three levels of argument in defense of the validity or trustworthiness of the findings. According to him, a "sound" argument is able to resist challenges, a "convincing" argument is stronger and can silence disagreements, and a "conclusive" argument can put an end to any doubt or debate. In light of this, the more convincing, persuasive, and supported the findings (or the concluding descriptions) are, the easier it would be to perceive it as valid. For the verification process, Polkinghorne (1989) asks some more practical questions:

1. Did the interview influence the contents of the subjects' descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects' actual experience?
2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?

3. In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? And has the researcher identified and discussed in support of why one is more convincing than the other?
4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
5. Is the structural description situation-specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 57).

Summary

The interview questions were written that seek to *explore* the meaning of evaluation by asking counselors-in-training to describe their lived experiences. The participants in the phenomenological study are chosen carefully in order to make sure they have in fact experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 1998). Next, data was collected during the in-depth interviews that were strengthened with my self-reflection (Polkinghorne, 1989). For the data analysis, original transcripts were used for significant statements and their implied meanings. The detailed and condensed descriptions of the experiences are expected to help the readers of this study to have a better understanding about the essence of the experience. The data analysis section provides more information that presents more details about the course of this study. Additionally, following phenomenological guidelines was helpful in ensuring the overall credibility of the research finding.

For this phenomenological study, I studied 20 counseling students who reported to have experienced evaluation by their supervisors in their practicum or internship

program and in the context of their supervisory relationship. My working title was "The Meaning of Evaluation in Supervisory Relationship for Counselors-in-Training." My philosophical orientation inspired me to explore the meaning of the students' experiences with evaluation. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. My analysis of the data from the interviews was done by following the steps described by Moustakas (1994) which are mentioned in the data analysis section of this paper. As part of the analysis, I read through all of the interview transcripts and identified significant statements about the students' meanings of evaluation. I inferred the meanings of the participants' statements and clustered these meanings into themes.

Finally, I summarized my new understanding of the phenomenon of evaluation in the form of short narrative descriptions that captures the "essential structure" of the participants' experience of evaluation. Thus, the closing descriptions addressed *what* they experienced with evaluation and *how* they experienced it. The textural descriptions are those parts of the final narrative that addresses *what* was experienced while the more contextual structural descriptions answer questions of *how* the phenomenon was experienced by the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). In order to increase the "trustworthiness" of the study I "bracketed" my personal perspectives about evaluation and instead relied on the information from the participating students. As Moustakas (1994) has indicated about phenomenological researchers, I acknowledged my own interest in learning about the meanings of evaluation. I was then ready to establish "intersubjective validity," mainly by seeking the participants' feedback about this new understanding (Moustakas, 1994).

I think that this phenomenological qualitative study can help increase our understanding of the experience of evaluation by counselors-in-training and offer theoretical as well as practical recommendations that would improve the desirability, quality, and effectiveness of counselor education and supervision training programs.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The findings of this study are presented in this section. These findings were obtained through the interview questions that were used in semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews with 20 participating counselors-in-training. The two main thematic categories that were also reflected in the interview questions were the student's general understanding of evaluation and the student's thoughts and feelings. The category about the general understanding of evaluation resulted in the two themes of the purpose of evaluation and the methods of evaluation. Similarly, the category of the supervisees' thoughts and feelings produced the two main themes of experience of being evaluated and the supervisory relationship.

General Outline

This chapter consists of mainly descriptive data as well as the findings that have emerged from the data collection and analysis. The findings are organized around the research questions that resulted in the themes that have emerged from analysis of the responses to the interview questions. Every interview question used in this research has, to some degree, helped obtain a lot of rich and useful information that related strongly to our understanding of the phenomenon of evaluation in the context of the supervisory relationship. Similarly, many of the themes that have emerged throughout this research seem to have been formulated, addressed, or elaborated further by one or more of the interviewee responses.

The following sections begin by a general category or theme that was included in the initial interview questions. However, a larger portion of the subsequent segments will

be a presentation of the more specific and deeper level thematic findings that emerged during the coding and data analysis.

Demographics

All of the 20 interviewees for this qualitative research identified themselves as being counselors-in-training. They were working towards their graduate degree in counselor education and supervision or in counseling psychology. Out of the 20 students who were interviewed, only six reported they had completed their practicum and were doing their internships. However, the majority of the remaining 14 students had only recently started their supervised practicum experience. The participants varied in age, race, gender, and stage in training. However, the majority of participants identified themselves as white Caucasian females in their late twenties or early thirties. The ages ranged from 25 to 53, with an average age of about thirty. The interviewees came from three different graduate schools that offered clinical training and supervision as part of their training program. All three schools were four year colleges. One of the schools was a private, not-for-profit institution. Two of the schools had total student enrolment size of about ten thousand and were designated as medium size, while one had about twenty thousand enrolled students which made it a large urban institution. The three schools were located across the Rocky Mountain Region. Most of the participants had started their practicum experience recently, while six of them reported to have completed practicum and started their internships. Three of the participants were doctoral level students.

General Understanding of Evaluation

One of the two main thematic categories from the analysis of the data which was gathered from the interview questions related to participants' expressions about their initial reactions to the concept of evaluation in their supervision experience. These initial reactions were more descriptive and seemed to fall under the two main themes of the purpose of evaluation and the methods of evaluation.

The students seemed to start responding to each of the interview questions in more general terms before discussing more specific examples and disclosing more personal experiences. For example, the students responded to the question that asked about their general understanding of evaluation by giving a rather short description of their initial reaction about the concept of evaluation. However, almost everything that was mentioned was discussed further and much more personally later throughout the interview. The frequent reappearance of certain themes and their further elaboration of the concepts and experiences by respondents were seen both within each question as well as many times by a completely different question. These expansions of ideas by the interviewees lead to the emergence of the findings in this study.

Several students talked about how their experience with supervision actually changed their understanding of evaluation from that of a simple letter grade to a more complex experience. One student said,

> I think of evaluation much more as actually going through a checklist and saying she does this well, and she doesn't do this. It seems like that being more of an opportunity for primarily positive feedback and kind of reinforcing the students. But again I think every supervisor handled it differently… I had thought of it

much more as kind of like what letter grade do I get, and it was much more than that, so that was interesting.

Many of the students talked about wanting to learn from their supervisors. For this, supervisors are seen as having knowledge and experience that is transferable to the students to make learning happen. One student said,

> We are learning to be counselors. So it's not, and there isn't just a natural personality that comes out in it, but also strategies, what you do with the clients, how you may word something to get the client to open up about something or just to create, you know, good rapport with the client. I mean they really give you strategies and enhance ideas. They just are very knowledgeable about this because they have been there. They have experienced certain things.... I mean a lot of it is learning through your personal experience, but if you could also learn through their personal experience, it's just a big learning experience.

It became evident early in the interview process that many of the students used qualifying statements to distinguish between different conditions that played into their different understandings of the concepts being explored. For example, one student tried to differentiate between the grades students receive from teachers and what his understanding of evaluation in supervision was. This student separated supervision from evaluation by saying,

> I think that they (supervision and evaluation) are somewhat related...particularly when you are in a school program, and obviously you are receiving some type of grade, which is an evaluation of your skills. But I think supervision is something a little bit different in that I think there is more reciprocity there, and that there is

more of a sense of I can go to my supervisor and say here is what I need from you at this point, you know, I'm needing some guidance in this area or some feedback about this. And that is different than evaluation, I think.

Another student said, "When I evaluate somebody, I am judging them." These two quotes are clear indication that evaluation, especially if taken out of the supervision context may be perceived to be more closely related to the assignment of grades and viewed by the students as engaging them less in a reciprocal learning opportunity. The student's involvement as an integral part of the supervisory evaluation was also evident when one student said, "I take it as a more of a relationship that is really benefiting me and is more questions asked, the more feedback I get. It's definitely beneficial." Here, the student talked about her asking of questions as having an impact on the learning process and the benefits received from evaluation in the context of supervision.

Several students pointed out that they are constantly aware that evaluation is an integral part of their supervision experience. Some of these students seemed to have noticed the ongoing nature of evaluation throughout their counselor training program. One of the students said, "There is definitely an evaluation. Part of it, however, throughout the semester, you know, they'll give us feedback in terms of how they think we are doing and what not. So, it's definitely there." Another student also addressed the continuity of evaluation by saying, "I feel that throughout my relationship with my supervisor during my training at my practicum that there probably is an ongoing evaluation of my skills and my competencies." Another student went even further by saying that, "the process of evaluation I think is one that's going to be ongoing, it's not going to just stop at the end of this internship." This student seemed to reflect what

several other participants also stated about their understanding of the need for evaluation in order to continue with the growth process. Another student described practicum as a very safe place to practice counseling skills and to receive supervision. She seemed to feel missing the experience of working with that particular supervisor. She said, "I'm not sure I'll ever have that opportunity again."

In considering supervision as a learning opportunity, many of the students talked about how their understanding of the evaluation process involves reciprocity between them and the supervisor. One student stated that "the main goal of evaluation is to help me develop my skills as efficiently as possible but also to use the experience of the supervisor in that.... Part of the supervision process I believe is also the didactic piece." It is clear here that the student's understanding includes a relationship between learning from the supervisor and the need for their own involvement in their evaluation process. Another student also clearly pointed to the importance of reciprocity by saying, "in my understanding, reciprocity is really important because you come in having your own sense of what your strengths and weaknesses are and then having the freedom to discuss that with your supervisor and getting feedback on that as well." Here, the student is bringing up the use of feedback by the supervisors as a way to receive evaluation. In addition, the student mentions discussing that evaluation with the supervisor, thus making it reciprocal.

While some students' understanding included more dynamic and interactive aspects, others responded with more basic descriptions of the evaluation. For example, one student stated, "So what are on those forms is how I am evaluated. And by the end of the semester, you know, I have to meet certain criteria in order for my supervisor to say

that I am okay to graduate." Or another student said, "To make sure that we are effective counselors. And that we are appropriate to be counseling without supervision.... Part of the practicum is you get assigned a grade. So part of the evaluation is, I'm assuming to decide what grade to assign to a counselor."

Purpose of Evaluation

When I asked the interviewees about their general understanding of evaluation in the context of their supervisory relationship, many of them also started talking about what they thought about the goal or the purpose of having to experience evaluation in their counselor training and supervision. This observed overlap indicates that there may be a mental link that exists between the perceived goal or purpose and the understanding of evaluation, specifically in the context of the supervisory relationship.

When talking about the purpose of evaluation in supervision, many students suggested that their understanding of the rationale for the evaluation was influencing their evaluation experience. For example, if the student understood the purpose of evaluation to include such functions as offering guidance, support, help, comfort, and additional ideas, then that appeared to influence the overall evaluation experience. For example, one of the students said,

> We talk about different ways, you know, different techniques that I could try; it's much less evaluative. And I don't really get the feeling that we are, you know, or he is necessarily evaluating my performance. He is just trying to help me make sure that I'm feeling comfortable and give me ideas of different things that I can do.... I would describe it as more of a support; so it has nothing to do with the grade. It's more how can I develop and become a better therapist.

In this quote, the student mentions talking with the supervisor about different techniques that she can try, and by doing so, she reported feeling different about the evaluation piece. Apparently, understanding evaluation and its purpose as being supportive seemed to bring about a clear distinction between students' possible experience of evaluation and that of being graded.

The responses from the students addressed a diverse range of issues that would best fit as the purpose of evaluation. Some of the statements included, "an opportunity for primarily positive feedback and kind of reinforcing the students," "to be sure that I meet the needs of the clients, and that I act professionally and ethically," "checking in, seeing where your growth has happened and then the areas where you can work on," "brings in a different perspective," and "them trying to help us facilitate our learning." The above quotes indicates that many of the students see evaluation as serving many purposes that sometimes goes beyond helping them to learn or act appropriately, but that also helps the clients.

The students viewed practicum as an opportunity to receive support in order to become increasingly prepared to more independently handle different counseling situations. One of the interviewees described her understanding of the practicum process as such,

> I think that is why we are here, to basically do it on our own. You still have that support, like practicum is like a transition I think. Before practicum it's all your supervisors and teachers and telling you what works best or what to do and how to handle situations. It's all that and then you know, after practicum you are all on your own.... So practicum is like a transition to be, you know, on your own but

> still with that safety net right there.... And then after practicum you got to go out without that safety net. I guess maybe that's a good way to explain it. I think the supervision is like your safety net.... If you fall they are going to be there to help you to get up, you know, figure out how to fix whatever you did.... And if you fall they catch you. They don't let you get hurt. And they help you get back up. Which helps build that confidence that you need to go out there and do it without that safety net.

Here, the student used the elaborate metaphor of a safety net to describe her understanding of the purpose of supervision in practicum. This student reflected what many of the other interviewees also reported and that is a view of the practicum experience as an important part in the ongoing process of transition and change into a state of greater personal and professional autonomy. Although subtle, this student's mention of confidence shows the complexity and interconnectedness of different parts that may play into the students' general understanding of evaluation in the context of the supervisory relationship.

Methods of Evaluation

A second theme that emerged from the question that asked the students about their general understanding of evaluation was that of the methods of evaluation. This theme addressed the participants' descriptions of their understanding about the various manners by which they were evaluated by their supervisors.

A small number of the students interviewed appeared to be a little confused or uncertain in their understanding of how evaluation within their supervision experience would be conducted in their program. For example, one student said,

> I'm not understanding how the grades will be given out, yet. And so my guess would be that if you have been open to suggestions, if you are improving as your skills go in counseling, and if you are showing up and being here and being reliable, I am assuming that that would be the evaluation stuff...that you are getting the paperwork done.

Another student also said,

> I don't know if we get a pass/fail or if we actually get a letter grade. I should know that. I'm not really sure, if we get a letter grade or not. Because we have to complete a certain amount of hours and then kind of the evaluation from our supervisor.

These students had indicated that he had not yet received any formal evaluations, which may also be a reason for the uncertainty about how they would be evaluated. In addition, these supervisees were at an early stage of their practicum experience which may have also played a role in not having a more accurate expectation of how the evaluation would be conducted. This may also be apparent by their emphasis about the letter grades as well as their reference to the few simple and uncomplicated reasons for the evaluation.

Most of the students interviewed seemed to have a relatively clear idea about the way in which they were going to be evaluated by their supervisor and the areas of focus for that evaluation. One of the students who was receiving both live and one-on-one supervision in practicum described the manner in which she was evaluated as such,

> We are observed live during the session. We go in half way, the supervisors asked us how it's going and if you have any concerns or questions and they help us if we do. And then they usually give us some ideas of what they are seeing and

> maybe what we are lacking or what we are doing wonderfully. And then they say perhaps you can go back into the room and try this. And so the suggestions usually could be a strategy or a way of just being.

This student was one of several interviewees who indicated a preference for supervisors to offer their ideas in a way that takes on the form of a suggestion, recommendation, or proposal, as opposed to a direct instruction or order about what to do. Another student provided a good example of how the way of presenting a feedback by the supervisor can have a different impact on the supervisee.

> When they say like I was thinking as I was watching this that you could also do this. Or I mean, they really presented as maybe you could try this next time, or you know, something that you could do next time, or sometimes they say like, you know, I might do this in this situation. So it's more of like a learning tool than necessarily saying that wasn't right. So it's not as judgmental.... The way that she presented it actually, I mean it felt that oh, I am doing something wrong, so it felt critical.

Another student reported to have experienced higher levels of anxiety when the supervisor's delivery of the information was not very clear. The student said, "It makes me nervous sometimes. Because my supervisor in particular, sometimes I can't tell when she is telling me I'm doing something wrong or if she is just trying to just give me more information." This student seemed to feel confused because she had not been able to identify enough verbal or non-verbal cues from the supervisor that would have suggested to her about the supervisor's intentions for making the comments. The student gave an example of how the supervisor would have made her point clearer.

> Just say directly – and this is my idea for you, say it how it's comfortable to you, you don't need to say it exactly what I'm saying. It's saying that, you know, here is my idea but I realize that you are different from me and I'm respecting that difference. And I'm not going to tell it's wrong if you might change my wording.

By using descriptions such as those mentioned above, interviewees indicated that the supervisors' adoption and way of expressing information influenced how they had interpreted the meaning of the information that was presented to them, or the way they had reacted in response. In general, supervisees seemed to interpret supervisors who used more tentative language as communicating respect for possible individual differences with the supervisees.

Another area that was brought up in interviews was that many of those interviewed for this research reported noticing different approaches to evaluation by different supervisors, which sometimes included the supervisor or supervisors who watched them live during a counseling session and their personal one-on-one supervisor who often met with students once a week for individual supervision. The students seemed to have mixed feelings about having different supervisors approach evaluation differently. For example, one student said, "Each supervisor has their own style, and I like that, because the supervisors kind of come from various theoretical orientations… They pick on my orientation and help me with really kind of clarifying those skills in the orientation that I'm going for." While some of the students seemed to have a favorable view of the different evaluative styles from different supervisors, others described it as a lack of congruence or communication between different supervisors that lead them to feel

more confused and anxious for having to sometimes navigate through contradictory expectations. A beginning practicum student explained her thoughts about this as such,

> I mean you are trying to figure out your own theoretical orientation, balanced by the theoretical orientation of the supervisor that's behind the glass and what their evaluation is, and the cotherapist that I'm working with, and my individual supervisor – Lots of chiefs, not enough Indians!

Another finding of this research is that many times the students saw other sources for evaluation which often seemed to be related to their overall understanding and experience of evaluation. For example, an interview said,

> There were always other students back there watching… it's good, you know, I'm in the position where I want all sorts of feedback, and I feel comfortable with the practicum group (classmates) that I am with. Like I know everybody pretty well, so I think that helps knowing people giving the feedback. So you can be more accepting of it and know that they're on the same position as you, being a practicum student… Most of the time they just give you positive feedback, so you don't see a lot of you should have done this and this from the students; it's more supportive.

From this quote, it is clear that at least some of the students may be noticing sources of evaluation other than their primary supervisors. This student made it known that she is often accepting of the feedback from her classmates which she mostly perceived as supportive.

A small number of the students indicated that they were receiving supervision in other settings. For example, one student indicated that she was also being supervised at

her work by a private supervisor who supervised her when seeing her individual clients as part of her private practice.

Another student expanded the list of sources for her evaluations. He said, "We also get more supervision when we go to the classes, our class on Monday night, when all the interns meet with our college professor... We bring something that we need help with to the table, so that we can get feedback from everybody... Our professors, you know, if they're hearing something that's incorrect they're going to tell us, you know, right away." Here, the student included professors and other classmates as also providing her with additional evaluations. This view was shared by more students. For example, another student also said, "Our teachers are basically our supervisors too... We have two, you know, supervisors on site, and a supervisor in class."

Thoughts and Feelings

The second general thematic category primarily involved the interview questions that asked for the students' cognitions and feelings as they reflected on the evaluation by their supervisors. The effort was to seek as much descriptive data as possible that would address the students' experiences, understandings, and meanings of evaluation in supervision. Information that was gathered from all of the interview questions were coded which produced the two main themes of the students' experience of being evaluated as well as the student's perceptions about the qualities of the supervisory relationship.

Most of the statements given by the participants who described their experience of being evaluated seemed laden with more intense, usually negative feeling than those statements which were expressed to explain the experience of the supervisory

relationship. Another observation was that there were frequent references to the supervisory relationship, even when the question was asking about the experience of being evaluated, which indicated the possibility of a strong inter-connectedness between the two themes of evaluation and relationship.

Experience of Being Evaluated

As mentioned earlier, participants tended to disclose a lot of their feelings when they were asked about their thoughts or feelings of being evaluated in supervision. In addition, the stated feelings were not given in a vacuum. Instead, there were often one or more underlying thoughts which were either subtle or sometimes more explicitly recognized by the participants. The strong relationship between what was thought and that which was felt by the students made it difficult to isolate the thoughts from feelings. This was especially true because this study tried to acquire a better understanding of the meaning counseling students give to their evaluation experiences within their supervision experience.

One of the students who had recently completed her practicum experience and was now receiving supervision at her internship site said,

> Thinking of evaluation, I think when that time comes around I always do get more nervous and also critical and wonder what are they really thinking. Are they criticizing as well? And with some supervisors I think I would be more anxious, I just tend to have supervisors that are pretty easy going, but I have one now that I just know that she does have very high expectations and so when I'm thinking about being evaluated by her I do feel nervous about that, and I know I learn a lot from it, but I think some anxiety does come up.

Many of the interviewees echoed what this student stated about an obvious increase in feelings of being nervous and anxious in reaction to being evaluated. According to this student's statement, it is apparent that the feeling of anxiety or nervousness was intensified especially when the student perceived that the time for her evaluation was approaching. Also, many students mentioned that various aspects about their supervisors played an important role in increasing or decreasing the level of anxiety they experienced in response to being evaluated.

The same student continued to say, "I don't like it (the anxiety), but I think it is part of the process. And it's not too bad, but yeah it apparently comes up a lot." While this student clearly did not like to feel anxious during the evaluation, she reminded herself about the purpose of evaluation in the context of her supervision experience which apparently was helpful to alleviate some of the anxiety. She also accepted this to be part of her learning process. Another student put it this way,

> So it's the stretching, growing thing that might feel uncomfortable and that I may get emotional about because it is like, oh you should know better than that, you know… So they are also challenging me and pushing me to growth. And then another part of that is that then from what they're saying then of course then I am going to question my own abilities and my own ego is going to be bruised, not because the way they said it but because they have to challenge me.

Many of the students interviewed for this study, acknowledged at some point during the interview, that some anxiety was to be an expected part of their learning process. It is evident from the above quote that this student is acutely aware that there will be challenges as well as feelings of being pushed, which she thinks will almost inevitably

make her experience some negative emotions. Similarly, some students indicated trusting their supervisors to have the skills and ability to share and convey negative feedback in such a way that would minimize the negative emotion that might usually be associated with it.

Another subject that came up several times during the interviews was again related to some aspects in the supervisors. For example, interviewees reported positive feelings when their supervisors were perceived to be present, warm, supportive, open, honest, and strengths-based. One student said, "He just had a really warm presence, and he always supported and seemed to be appreciative and that was nice. It really increased my comfort to be honest." The idea of being able to more comfortably and honestly approach supervisors was also echoed by several other interviewees. Another interviewee said,

> I really enjoy meeting with my individual supervisor. And you know, she is very supportive and gives really good constructive criticism and you know, it does seem constructive and I think is a big piece of why I like my supervisor. Because she gives me ideas about how to grow and how to better my skills; which is really what a supervisor should do.

It is clear that this interviewee is satisfied with the evaluation he received from his supervisor. It also appeared that because the supervisor was perceived to be supportive, that her ideas were more likely to be taken as constructive feedback that encouraged growth.

While most students interviewed characterized their supervisors as helping them feel at ease to approach and talk with their supervisors about their questions and

concerns, several of the students indicated experiencing negative feelings when thinking about being evaluated by their supervisors. For instance, one of the interviewees who perceived her supervisor to focus more on correcting her stated, "I feel that my personal supervisor is, maybe a little more critical than some of the other supervisors, and so I probably have some fear about the evaluation process." He added, "I think it's just a matter of personal style. The supervisor doesn't appear to be very open. Her delivery of feedback which is part of the evaluation is not, it's not very good."

It is worth noting that the majority of counselors-in-training who were interviewed in this research seemed to believe in being able to be open with their supervisors in order to maximize the benefits of their supervision experience and to seek feedback that worked as answers to the many questions they had. Having said this, it also becomes important to investigate the conditions that may impede this interactive process. Several students offered more insights into possible reasons for a level of hesitation by the students to be more open with supervisors. One student clearly acknowledged, "I'm not going to show her when I screw up," because she did not know how her supervisor would react. Another student talked more about this when she said,

> We're getting into my insecurities usually and areas that I don't feel very comfortable in and then watching videotapes of clients and so forth and kind of cringing at myself, you know, because you don't always show the best things that you do. You show kind of the things that you struggled with and then having supervisors see that is difficult... and they're very affirming but it's just this feeling of I'm never going to get there and I should already be mastered this, I should already be really good at this... So, it's hard.

In this case, the interviewee seems insightful by noticing how her feelings of insecurity may have played an important role in how comfortable she was with the supervisor's evaluations of her.

Many of the interviewees seemed to be aware and sometimes worried about the negative impact of evaluation anxiety. In addition to understanding the evaluation anxiety as a normal part of their learning process that also related to the supervisor's characteristics, some students seemed to be more aware of their own role in controlling this feeling. For example, one of the interviewees said,

> If I'm being aware of myself, then may notice that I am giving it a lot of importance. But if it (anxiety) takes over, I probably think that I am just not, maybe I'm not able to do this. Maybe this isn't the right place for me; I won't ever be good enough. Those are the thoughts that would tend to bring too much anxiety and is not okay.

This student seemed to have gained some insight when he recognized that his pattern of thinking and focus on anxiety provoking events had increased his anxiety which resulted in decreased confidence and increased self-doubt.

In addition to the negative emotional responses, some noticed additional undesirable consequences that they thought were caused by their evaluation anxiety. For example, an interviewee said, "I was just like scared to death and I'm the type of person that I don't do good on tests. Just like you give me a test and I know how to do it but I'll almost always fail this stupid thing. Some kind of test anxiety or something, because I can know the information." Another interviewee stated,

I think that it was very nerve-wracking in the beginning, especially knowing that there was someone evaluating you behind the glass. That I felt really hyper-aware of myself and less able to feel really present in the counseling room experience…

I think that sometimes fear of evaluation can actually impede supervision. This notion was emphasized even further by another student who said, "I think that if you are too aware about the evaluation that's going on that you might be less likely to be as honest or as candid about certain things, perhaps." This was an interesting finding that showed a possible relationship between the students' increased anxiety as a result of high self-awareness and their ability to be open in discussing their experiences with the supervisors.

Throughout the interviews, many of the students indicated high levels of nervousness that was caused by a fear of not knowing how the supervisor was going to evaluate them. Interestingly, in many of such cases, the interviewee concluded his description of the experience by including a reference to his own role in having the feeling. One interviewee stated that, "I'm not so much nervous of her, but just what she is going to say. Am I like really screwed up this time? Just afraid of that happening, not that it has happened." The same person added, "I don't know why I'm so worried about that. I think that's more of a personal thing than anything she is doing." This tendency to take on the responsibility, especially for negative feelings was common by most students.

Another student differentiated her feelings according to the type of supervision. She reported to be more nervous during the live supervision, because "it is not measurable." In this case, the student felt more comfortable about being evaluated on more specific items that were measured more objectively. In addition to this comment

about the use of live supervision and the one-on-one supervision, another interviewee suggested that she often found herself distracted, confused, and embarrassed when her supervisor used the phone to call her in the session with a client. She appreciated when her supervisor tried to keep the call-ins to a minimum.

Three of the 20 students interviewed had finished their master's degree and reported to be working towards their doctoral degrees. It would therefore be important to learn about any possible differences based on the participant's highest level of education completed. One of the doctoral students reported that he was in practicum and was receiving live, one-on-one, and group supervision. This student reported that he was experiencing a lot more anxiety about being evaluated in the doctoral program than during his master's program. He contributed the heightened anxiety to the significantly higher expectations by his doctoral level supervisors. When he was asked about the thoughts or feelings that came up when he thought about being evaluated, he responded,

> Feelingwise, I still do feel very anxious. In fact I am going, my next supervision will be my evaluation for the quarter, so it's right there, and I do feel anxious because, number one – it does impact my grade. I think more importantly it says something about who you are as a counselor. So I put a lot of emphasis on the evaluation because it means this is where you are at as something that I'm going to do for the rest of my life, that's very important to me.

This student first talked about being anxious. He then went into her thinking which included giving a lot of importance to the results of his evaluation as he thinks that would impact him for the rest of his life. This student's thoughts about the possible ramifications of an undesirable evaluation seem to influence his feelings about the

evaluation. It is noteworthy that despite of having more supervision experience than the majority of other interviewees, this student displayed rather a high level of evaluation anxiety.

Supervisory Relationship

As mentioned earlier, the question that asked interviewees about their thoughts and feelings about being evaluated produced many responses that overlapped with the information that was obtained when the question about the supervisory relationship was asked. The response from one of the participants seemed to do a good job in capturing the essence of many other responses to this question. This student used the metaphor of a womb to describe her experience of the supervisory relationship,

> We have a team called supervisors here and I am consistently watched by four different supervisors at this time, and then one of them happens to be my supervisor that I check in with every week. And the words that come up are support and I'm coming up with a visualization instead of a word, ... in being in this very supportive womb that there's going to be growth within this womb but that you are going to be so nourished and so safe and warm inside of it. So that's the way that it has been for me so far. So, nourishment, support, and warmth.

This student used the metaphor of a supportive womb to describe her feelings of safety, comfort, support, connectedness, protection, sustainability, patience, effort, and growth. By using this metaphor, this student seemed to have effectively summarized what the majority of other students said on the issue of the supervisory relationship.

Students talked about additional conditions that described why they experienced a certain way in regards to their supervisory relationships. For example, one student talked

about the importance of the way an evaluation was shared with supervisees. He said, "depending on how they're shared...and also their response to the feedback, they could improve the relationship between the people sharing their feedback to each other."

The importance of sharing disclosures between the supervisor and the supervisee was among the topics that came up frequently during the interviews. Many of the interviewees recognized the importance of having open communication in their supervisory relationship. For example, one of the interviewees said, "I think disclosing with each other more about where we are coming from, where our ideas are coming from or even our mental state that day.... I think disclosure, sharing disclosure with each other helps to build relationship."

There appeared to be a desire by many of the students to see a continual level of self-disclosure by the supervisors. One of the students explained the reason as such,

> There is a lot of self-disclosure. We always talk about self-disclosure with the clients and how he self disclosed a little bit, it just makes you more human to them and sometimes really helps them facilitate their understanding and just the working relationship. So the supervisors will definitely self-disclose to you. I mean you get into conversations about a work environment that was similar to their work environment.... We know they are definitely like our supervisor, but they are also people here to just see how we are doing and to just check in with us.

The above quote contains several important points that were also reflected by other participants. The student drew a parallel with the use of appropriate self-disclosure in counseling sessions to enhance the relationship and increase understanding. This student

suggested that supervisors and supervisees check in with supervisees when they get into conversations and discuss, for example, similarities that they see exists between them. Even more importantly, this student stated that such a disclosure and discussion can help humanize the relationship with the supervisors.

Most of the interviewees seemed to especially appreciate when the supervisor was thought of as putting in extra efforts to establish and keep this line of communication open. An important finding was that supervisors were perceived by the supervisees to be "making the effort to be honest" and "to connect" when they took the initiative to self-disclose. One master's level interviewee said,

> In the subsequent one-on-one meeting with my supervisor she took the initiative to disclose to me about being in a bad mood the previous week or two weeks or that day she had a bad conversation or an unpleasant conversation.... So she told me about that, you know, she took initiative to do that. And for me, I appreciated her efforts to connect with me and to understand each other.

This self-disclosure happened, for example, when the supervisor talked about the "theoretical reason" or the "underlying reasons" that according to one interviewee "would include the evaluator's way of thinking" and "what they value". This interviewee said that having a "person-to-person communication" helped her see the supervisor's evaluations to be more "accurate" and "more sincere," which in turn made her "more inclined to listen." This interviewee described her thoughts about this as such,

> So for me, accurate means the supervisor or evaluator correctly presumes my thinking or my process or whatever is going on inside me. They accurately perceive the details that I see as well, even though they might not think it's

important from their theoretical framework. The accuracy also includes correctly seeing the relationship between myself and the client.

One of the participants talked about how respect, trust, and support were essential in shaping the supervisory relationship. He said,

> We need to be able to have some trust in them because if something is really bothering us about, you know a client, we need to be able to come and tell them about it. And you know, that's where the respect and support come through. It's definitely essential to the relationship.

This student's remarks were based on his expressed belief and assumption that the supervisors "really want you to do well." According to this student, one way to increase the trust in the supervisory relationship is through an uncomplicated act of talking with the supervisors, sharing of self-disclosures, and by a mutual effort to get to know one another better. Another student put it this way,

> When you learn more about somebody's opinion or their sense of things then you get to know them better and vice versa. So you get to know each other better and just the act of sharing that kind of information is also just an emotional experience that strengthens the relationship, I think.

This student recommended that there be exchange of feedback between the supervisees and their supervisors. She added, "Seeing a piece of paper that somebody wrote their evaluation on, that's not such a personal interaction." This student also suggested more of a verbal conversation to accompany the written evaluation in order to increase the personal interaction and strengthen the supervisory relationship. The idea of more time allocated for discussing the results of student evaluations together came up many times

during many of the interviews. Another student stated that there is a need for the supervisee and supervisor to know each other, because "Without knowing each other more intimately than just on the surface, it just makes room for error and misinterpretation."

In addition to the student's spoken assumption about the supervisors really wanting to help supervisees, another student added, "I expect that it will be fair… I assume that it would be fair. So it's not an expectation, it's just assumed." Immediately after she talked about expecting fair evaluations by supervisors, this student said he thought it was important to receive feedback, especially when the supervisor brings up areas that need improvement. He said, "I think it's even more important when you get the areas of improvement – This is why I think you need to improve on this, here is some examples of what I have seen and maybe what you might want to do." This Ph.D. student also articulated that,

> I also expect that my supervisor really explain that to me, that it will be gone over in person and that we'll go over it together and that they will elaborate on the things that they write both good and bad. And that they will seek my feedback on the evaluation too – "Does that fit for you? Does that not seem right to you? Because, I think in the end you're the one who is in your session." I kind of hope that they ask for my opinions about the evaluation as well…. I would hope that my supervisor would see me as somewhat of an expert on myself or that they would trust that I could make a good self-evaluation so that they would seek my feedback as well.

This doctoral level student was more direct in communicating concerns that seemed to be important that were commonly mentioned as being important for the other interviewees, including many who had more recently started their supervised practicum experience. Many of the interviewees said they wished to receive feedback that accompanied the written evaluation forms. These students liked for the feedback to take on a mutual form, where the supervisors also sought the supervisee's own opinions and ideas on those evaluations.

From the description of many of the interviewees it became apparent that the quality of supervisors' feedback was improved when it contained a "balance" and the 'right' amount of both positive and negative evaluations. For example, one student said that she felt great when a supervisor told her, "You did it okay; you could have done this one thing differently but you did all these things good." Another student said that he thought most of his supervisors were aware of this, because they would normally say, "You are doing this well; I would make it better by doing this," which again came across only as suggestions. It became apparent from the data that the students thought an important factor in balancing out the evaluations from the supervisors also had to do with the manner in which it was communicated to the supervisee. For example, one of the students said,

> I don't like if they just said you did a good job, this is good, this was good, this was good. You know, it makes me feel nice that all that stuff was good, but I want to learn something from that session and what I could have done different or better. So I like soft, positive affect with the constructive criticism attached...

because it's helpful having that outside perspective, instead of just the good stuff. Give me feedback.

According to this interviewee, constructive criticism is when the supervisors "pick out things that sounded funky or that (she) could have said better" or "you could have done this better." However, this student, like all the other interviewees emphasized that "as a student and a counselor-in-training you definitely need to hear what you are doing well."

Another finding was that most of those interviewed seemed to prefer to receive positive evaluations and things their supervisors thought they are doing well first, before being offered any suggestions in the form of constructive criticism. One student who was new to practicum experience put it this way,

> Especially when you are first starting out and you are so nervous about doing the job anyway that you can forget everything that you learned. So being able to go there and have her remind me of some of the stuff... I take that with me. It makes me feel a little more confident when I go into a session with the client.... So it's a good thing, and when she finally did give me, when she said you are doing a good job, I mean it gave me more confidence, instead of thinking – oh, there are always things that I have to change or work on. Her saying that I am doing a good job is kind of like a strong base, that I am not coming from nowhere; that I am doing something good and then all that other stuff can build on that... It made me feel good. It made me feel like – oh, I am doing well even though I have all of these areas to improve. At least I'm doing something right.

The above statement is a clear indication that the student is acutely aware of having to continuously make improvements. An interesting and potentially very important part of

this student's statements is that she noticed an increase in her level of confidence after she received positive evaluations from her supervisors. Also interesting was this student's recognition of the link between her increased confidence from positive feedback and the subsequent increase in her ability to more effectively work with constructive criticism or internal fears.

Another finding from this research was that several interviewees identified different roles that their supervisors would take in their supervisory relationship. From the perspective of these interviewees, these suggested roles would be completely compatible with their understanding of the supervisor's responsibilities. In fact, some indicated that these roles would further enhance the effectiveness of their supervisor's efforts in helping them become better counselors. One of the interviewees who was still in practicum and was receiving both live and one-on-one supervision said,

> I have one main supervisor that I have a relationship with because, you know, she takes responsibility for working with me and advising and coaching me on how to improve my skills and also what the best thing is for the client. The other supervisors will only see me in session, and so it's a brief encounter and communication around the specific session.... And also to have a really good supervisor that I can, after I finish practicum and my internship, is to have a supervisor who I can really work with; who is a mentor to me.

It is worth noting that this student seems to highlight her relationship with the main, individual, one-on-one supervisor, because she finds this supervisor to also take on the roles of an advisor, a coach, and a mentor. The above quote clearly demonstrates what other students also expressed about putting more emphasis on their relationships with the

main supervisor for different reasons, which included taking different roles, assignment of final grade, and more time discussing with the student. Similarly, a general sense of disappointment was reported about lack of enough time for more individualized attention and feedback, especially by the supervisors who had the responsibility of watching the students live during their counseling practice. Similarly, some of the students expected their individual supervisors to increase the amount of observing their work with clients live. One student described her thoughts about this as such,

> I had the impression that it was a little different; it was more personal because it's an individual supervisor. So I guess I imagined that it would be more of a close relationship where we share more of each other's thinking and ideas with each other. However my individual supervisor does not observe any of my sessions live. We only discuss videotapes or other things. And to me personally, that felt weird to have to discuss more with somebody who sees me less. And I'm pretty sure that that has affected our communication, and how I was not sure how to organize that kind of a relationship. And we have had, actually had conversations about our possible miscommunications or possible disconnect.

This student's statement helped clarify some of the relational aspects that may exist between the students and their live versus individual supervisors. The important finding here was that the students may feel confused when they are scheduled a longer discussion time to discuss counseling skills with the individual supervisor than with the live supervisor who often ends up seeing more of the actual session, and who can offer more immediate feedback. Wong (1997) had addressed the advantages of immediate feedback for supervisees.

The importance of more time for developing a better supervisory relationship was brought up by several interviewees. It became obvious, from those who talked about the amount of time they spent with their supervisors, that they wanted to have longer meetings with their supervisors. This was especially true about the individual supervisors, who some also expected to spend more time observing them live. One of the interviewees said,

> Ideally, I think I would have more contact with my (individual) supervisor, both discussing and also being observed. But because of the practical aspects of not spending that much time with each other I don't find that to be realized; it's not happening. So, I feel I'm still in the process of navigating or developing my relationship with my individual supervisor. And we both discussed, we're both trying to develop that relationship in a positive direction.

It became apparent that the students assumed there was a connection between the amount of time for supervision and the quality of supervisory relationship. Students suggested that the time for supervisory meetings be increased to give ample time for sharing disclosure with each other because they believed that helps build relationship.

Some of the interviewees reported that through sharing disclosures between them and their supervisors, they came to learn that they shared similar personal or professional interests, backgrounds, outlooks about life, geography, ethnicity, or even personalities. More importantly, it appeared that the supervisees appreciated their supervisor's self-disclosure as a sign of trusting, being respectful, being open to differences, as well as an attempt to distance themselves from a more hierarchical relationship and move into a more mutual and interpersonally interactive supervisory relationship. Many of the

students talked negatively about a supervisory relationship that is perceived to be hierarchical. One student termed it a "one-way street", while another student discussed why it was especially important to try to create more rapport in the supervisory relationship. The student said,

> Their experience puts them at a position of hierarchy already. But I think that there are also lots of other factors that shift that hierarchy even further to a larger, even more hierarchical position: grades, recommendations for internships, recommendations for the NCE exam, you know, they have to sign off on that sheet, recommendations for further education in Ph.D. programs, professional recommendations that you might need later on. All of those factors contribute to a very high level of hierarchy.

In addition to the supervisor's self-disclosing, being warm, open, and other characteristics that were mentioned earlier, one supervisee stated that she also liked her individual supervisor because the supervisor was perceived as having advocated for her when she felt hurt by another evaluator's comments. This student said,

> She was very understanding and was ready to advocate on my behalf and get to the bottom of things.... So that's one factor, just to her personality and her willingness to do that sort of thing and it's just that kind of supervisor. She is really open and willing to hear what I have to say. So, that was helpful. As far as the relationship, I mean that probably the most important thing is just that she was willing and ready to advocate and really heard what I said.

Several students expressed feeling lucky or very fortune to have been assigned to good supervisors or for being part of a good program that they thought respected their values

and provided the conditions that helped them meet their personal and professional goals. For example, one of the interviewees said,

> I feel very fortunate because I do know other students in this program who do not have a good relationship with their supervisor and it's very uncomfortable. I think it's, you know, it's not a good match for no particular reason but, you know, maybe their personalities are not matched or they've had some conflict or something like that, so it has been a difficult experience instead of a positive experience.

Comparing supervisory conditions with those of other classmates was common. Additionally, many students compared their current supervisors with the supervisors they had in the past. For example, one of the students who may have had a prior unsatisfactory supervision experience described her current supervision experience as such,

> I was unsure about how it was going to be coming into practicum, but especially with my individual supervisor, we have sort of joined in our individual supervising setting, so I really look forward to coming in... It feels like a warm setting, I look forward to it, to getting the feedback. So, you know, I'm pretty happy with where I'm at with the supervision. And I feel pretty lucky to be a part of this program. I really enjoy the supervisors, especially my individual supervisor.

The student seems to suggest that her thinking of having joined in the supervisory relationship has positively influenced both her views of the larger school setting as well as her desire to seek supervisor's feedback. Another student who said she was trying to be more open and less sensitive to accepting constructive criticism made a statement that

further confirmed the power of good supervisory relationship to change the way she felt about being evaluated. Here is what the student said,

> I think it really depends on the supervisory relationship, though my current supervisor is extremely supportive. I think that while they are evaluating me, they can be really supportive. Then I think given that my supervisor is really supportive it's not anxiety-provoking for me, or it's a very very low level. It's more kind of exciting, because I can get help with identifying what I can work on.

In addition, the supportive and satisfactory supervisory relationship seemed to have helped change this student's hesitancy and avoidance to actually be excited to receiving her supervisor's feedback.

One of the students who considered herself to be from a minority background described her thoughts and feelings about her supervisory relationship in a way that clearly reflected the importance many students give to the quality of the relationship with their supervisors. This interviewee made a statement that incorporated several of the previously discussed factors. This practicum student said,

> Even though he hasn't evaluated me yet, I feel like he is very supportive and we really keep the communication open. And I feel like I share a lot and am willing to put in a lot out on the table in my supervision hour. I cry a lot in supervision.... I would say that I cry a lot of times when I feel like he really understands me, so it's not that it's a negative thing, but I feel like we really connected and he really gets to what I'm saying and it's almost like it makes me so excited and so happy...

Reading this student's narrative, it became apparent that the student had a high level of emotional investment in the relationship with the supervisor. From what she said, it was clear that what she described was more a crying out of joy and appreciation for feeling a strong connection with the supervisor that can bring support, communication, and understanding.

Finally, one of the students made an observation that seems to capture the significance of the supervisory relationship in the students' overall experience with evaluation during their training program. The student reflected on her own practicum experience and said,

> what I really liked about the evaluation portion of the practicum experience it would be, you know, the relationship I have with my supervisor and the relationship I don't have, I guess, with other supervisors, would be the thing that's not good.

Conclusion

One issue that became apparent from the early stages of data analysis was that all the students described various circumstances that, in one way or another, had impacted their experience of evaluation in supervision. Of great importance were the students' understandings of evaluation in the context of their supervisory relationship, which largely included different perceived purposes for having evaluation as part of the supervision process. All of the trainees interviewed acknowledged evaluation to be part of their supervisory experience. Interestingly, however, interviewee's different understandings of the purpose of evaluation seemed to play a defining role in their point

of view as well as in how they differentiated between grades, evaluation, and feedback in supervision.

Generally, reciprocity was an important feature of supervision that made it a learning opportunity, with the supervisor being regarded as providing knowledge, support, and encouragement toward professional and personal growth. In addition, students used the metaphors of a "safety net" and a "supportive womb" to describe a good supervision as one that made it easier for the supervisees to be able to be more candid about approaching their supervisors for seeking help or answers to the many questions that they have.

In summary, experience of evaluation had not happened in a vacuum. Instead, the interviewees described relational dynamics and personal circumstances that influenced their thoughts and feelings of being evaluated in supervision. The supervisor's way of presenting the feedback and having a careful balance between positive evaluations and specific constructive criticism or suggestions was also said to be important in bringing positive impact. These positive influences included an increase in the students' level of confidence in counseling, a decrease in their evaluation anxiety, an increase in the level of comfort to be more open and honest to approach supervisors with questions, and to feel more satisfied about the supervisory relationship and the supervision experience in general.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the meaning of evaluation for a sample of 20 counselors-in-training in the context of their supervisory relationships. This qualitative study revealed many interesting findings that were presented in the previous chapter. This section includes a summary of the main findings that will be presented along other available and pertinent research literature to provide increased clarity for the conclusions, interpretations of the implications, and the inferences that are drawn from the present study. Although it was not planned, several metaphors were used by the participants of this study. Four of these metaphors which seemed to capture the essence of the experience of evaluation by the supervisees are presented in this section. Other areas that will be included in this section will be recommendations for the field of counselor education and supervision, suggestions for future research, and some brief concluding commentary.

The review of the existing literature produced at least some support for the need for more detailed inquiries about the supervisees' perceptions about and the meanings of evaluation in the context of their training and supervision experience. There seemed to be a need for development of an evaluation-focused, strength-based supervision approach in the field of counselor education and supervision. In addition, there seemed to be a stronger case in favor of using more qualitative approaches in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the students' experience of evaluation.

Explanation of the Findings

General Observation

Despite the many different ways or examples used or even different positions taken in regards to the phenomenon of evaluation in the supervisory relationship, the majority of those interviewed seemed to be trying to convey relatively similar important messages through their responses to the interview questions. Having said this, I find nearly all the findings as thoughtful, important, and very personal to these students' experience in their training program. The interviewees themselves did a good job of elaborating on their thoughts and feelings, which reflected their high level of insight and awareness. This level of awareness, or the interviewees' ability to more coherently express them appeared to increase during the interview process.

I observed that when the students talked about their thoughts and feelings about either being evaluated or about the supervisory relationship that they tend to also discuss how they were impacted by the evaluations they received in the relationship. These impacts manifested themselves in the form of emotional or behavioral changes. Another important observation is that the interview question that addressed the issue of supervisory relationship generated feeling words that were mostly positive, whereas the question that asked about the students' thoughts and feelings about being evaluated yielded mostly negative feelings. However, the majority of the interviewees who mentioned negative emotions with the experience of being evaluated appeared somewhat obliged to match their responses with different possible explanations.

Paradoxical Complementary Statements

Another finding of this research is the apparent paradox that was created when many of the students seemed to add possible reasons for when they experienced negative feelings in reaction to being evaluated. The students' unease to simply express negative emotions about their evaluation experience could be because of different reasons. One possible explanation is that the students may have been worried about the probability that their responses became known to supervisors. However, the majority of the interviewees seemed to have trusted the interview process in respecting their confidentiality as they continued to disclose information. This was evidenced by the level of detail when they talked about very personal feelings. Only one student explicitly wanted me to reassure him about the confidentiality of the interview before he moved on to discuss about his supervisors.

The negative explanations that often accompanied student's mention of positive emotions may have been done as an effort to compensate for the effects of possible self-fulfilling biases in their self-evaluations. Or, maybe the student was trying to meet the supervisor's expectations, which many times were unknown to the student, and so by keeping open a wider range of evaluative possibilities the student was also preparing himself for different sorts of evaluations. It is possible that the student believed strongly in the accuracy and appropriateness of the supervisor's evaluations. Similarly the student's assumption about the inherent merit of the supervisor's evaluation may have not been matched by his more doubtful self-evaluations. This was evident when a majority of students referred to their supervisors as being experts in the field, as professionals, and as people who know what they are doing.

Locus of Control

Borders (1989) reported a higher level of self-criticism and doubt by beginning supervisees. The current research, however, indicated that even students who had more experience with supervision seemed as likely to experience high levels of self-criticism and doubt, along with high levels of evaluation anxiety and other negative emotions. However, these more experienced supervisees seemed to primarily contribute such emotions to external sources such as to the supervisors or to the supervision environment. Most of the participants had started their practicum experience relatively recently, so they mentioned mostly internal reasons for their negative feelings, while contributing most of the positive feelings to external factors, such as the supervisor's characteristics. In other words, many of the students appeared to blame themselves for their negative feelings around the phenomenon of evaluation, while they tended to be appreciative of their supervisors for having created a good relationship that made them experience positive emotions.

Working Relationship

In general, students seemed to downplay positive feelings in supervision, unless when they felt strongly in favor of their current working relationship with supervisors. Strong negative feelings were reported even by many of the students who described how they thought their supervisors had good qualities. However, as one of the interviewees suggested, supervisor's good intentions or the student's upbeat understanding of the purpose of evaluation may not always be sufficient to guarantee a desirable attitude towards evaluation by the supervisor. Only a few of the interviewees seemed to be able to portray their current supervisory relationships as being sufficiently strong, secure, and

reliable for them to feel confident and comfortable about their place in supervision. Furthermore, these interviewees seemed to have gained more trust in their own self-evaluations. It should be noted that the aforementioned interviewees contributed their strong connection to their supervisors to an ongoing sharing of disclosure by the supervisors and the consequent realization about shared understanding. They also reported sharing cultural backgrounds with the supervisors.

From the above discussions, a student's meaning of evaluation is influenced by factors that are either internal or external to the student. Issues related to human tendencies, coping, and personality may be viewed as internal. Supervisors and the roles they take during a student's supervision, clients, peers, and student's larger life stressors are examples of external factors. In the context of supervision, the supervisory relationship acts as the 'glue' that joins these multiple factors in a meaningful way for the students. A person who walks on a bridge trusts that the 'glue' used to hold the supportive structure together works. Similarly, supervisees indicate that a good supervisory relationship is one that works, hence justifying the term – a working relationship. The majority of counselors-in-training trust that the supervisors are willing and able to constantly understand and therefore give evaluations that accurately reflect their thoughts and feelings which are always changing.

Supervisee vs. Supervisor Evaluations

Another interesting finding was that almost all of the students interviewed for this study reported that they tried very hard not to rate themselves higher than their supervisors would grade them. I found most of the students to be acutely aware of the risks for overestimating their competencies. One reason the supervisees stated was to

show humility by giving themselves lower ratings. Another reason was to be reminded and to acknowledge that they were still students who had a long way for growth and improvement. There were also other important reasons that were not as openly expressed during the interviews. One of these reasons was that some of the students did not want to challenge their supervisor's more negative evaluations. An even more subtle reason for lower self-evaluations could be that, unconsciously, the students were attempting to increase the number of times they would be pleasantly surprised by the supervisor's more positive evaluations. These students appeared to be taking some control over their own emotions in response to an anticipated evaluation from the supervisors. For example, a student who underrated himself would feel encouraged when he receives a positive evaluation from a supervisor. Having said this, students seemed to experience an even greater degree of negative feelings such as disappointment and failure when they received an evaluation that was even lower than their own self-imposed deflated evaluative estimates. This may explain why an interviewee said it was especially important that the supervisors try to be more careful when giving negative evaluations, or at least elaborate more and give more specific examples when pointing out to the areas that the trainee needs to improve. Previous research (Daniels & Larson, 2001) had also suggested that while positive feedback significantly increased levels of counselor self-efficacy, negative feedback seemed to have an even larger influence by reducing counselor's levels of self-efficacy.

Balanced Evaluation

Another finding from the interviews was that students preferred to have a balanced evaluative experience, which included pointing out to the things they did well

(positive evaluations) followed by a mutual discussion about the things that needed to change. Supervisees with different levels of practicum or supervision experience liked to see a balance of evaluations that both encouraged and at the same time pushed or challenged them to new and better directions.

This research indicated that a trainee's perceptions about the quality of the supervisory relationship, as described by the trainee, appears to be a better predictor of the type and amount of evaluation that will be received most effectively by a supervisee. This was an important finding, because previous research about the developmental stages of counselor development (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) presented trainees' relational requirements based on the stage at which the supervisors think the supervisee is operating at; whereas, the current research suggests optimal evaluation practices that are, for the most part, independent from the supervisor's assessment of the student's developmental stage. More specifically, it was the supervisees' accounts that suggested a more positive direction in the meanings and impact of supervisory evaluations.

For an evaluation to be experienced as fair and balanced, the supervisor needed to pay special attention to the way evaluations were delivered. Also important was the order in which they were received by the trainee. Supervisees' tolerance and ability to listen, agree, and try to implement constructive criticism and feedback increased significantly when it followed a noticeably positive evaluation. More importantly, the supervisees needed to get a clear sense that the supervisor was putting in a personal effort to be supportive, warm, and respectful of intellectual and evaluative differences. If this was established, then the students felt more confident about their relationship with the

supervisors as a source for encouragement, reinforcement, and as an opportunity to learn about new and better ways to engage in the profession of counseling.

Changes in Meaning of Evaluation

One of the interview questions asked participants about changes to their meaning of evaluation. Surprisingly, the majority of participants stated that their meaning of evaluation has not changed during the supervision. This is interesting, because despite initially making this assertion, many of the same students described various aspects of their supervisory relationship as influencing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences of evaluation. Supervisees' understanding of the purpose for the use of supervisory evaluation and their perceptions about being able to be in charge of the direction of evaluations also seemed to factor into the meanings that were made.

Another possible explanation for the contention by the interviewees that their meaning of evaluation had not changed may be that most students would not normally think about evaluation and the impacts it may have on them. These students may especially be unaware about the role their cognitions may play in the complex and often subtle process of making meaning. The second reason for the majority of the interviewees to show difficulty in seeing a change in their meaning of evaluation may relate to humans' tendency to adhere strongly to what is perceived to be of great importance which includes beliefs, thoughts, and values. Using this analogy in addition to the analysis of information that was obtained through this research, it became clear that the meaning of evaluation related to the representation and reflection of some basic, yet core existential needs by the participating students. For example, most of the responses included topics such as communication, unconditional empathy, respect, and honesty.

Counselors-in-training may have been at a stage where they were trying to form more coherent understanding of their supervision experience. A beginning student may have higher levels of doubt and lower levels of self-confidence about counseling (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). This may be because the student has not yet faced supervisory conditions that would have challenged the current meaning of evaluation. It is also possible that the student may have difficulty isolating different sources of evaluation.

The findings of this research seems to confirm previous research (De Graaf, 1996) which suggested that a frequent shift in counseling self-efficacy of counselors-in-training may be a result of the influences by various external sources for validation and performance evaluation. The information obtained through the current research study suggested that the cognitions of counselors-in-training may undergo frequent changes in relation to the interaction of both internal and external variables.

In-Supervision Cognition

Only a few studies such as one by McNeill and Worthen (1989) was found that tried to examine trainees' in-session cognitions. The current research, with its focus on supervisory relationships, has gone one step further by examining the trainees' in-supervision cognitions. Students indicated that their thoughts and feelings about supervisors and the evaluations they received from them during supervision play an important role in how they approach their clients and therefore in how the clients can be impacted differently. Because of the potential benefits to both supervisees as well as the clients they serve, this study proposes that it is important that supervisors seek supervisees' in-supervision cognitions in order to get a better understanding of how the

students make meaning about their evaluation experience. The interview questions appeared to have accurately captured the essence of the meaning of evaluation for supervisees. This was indicated by several of the participants and it was especially confirmed when one interviewee explicitly thanked me for the interview because she thought the questions helped increase her understanding of how she was making meaning about evaluation.

Metaphors

Four different metaphors were used by four different interviewees as they responded to the interview questions. These metaphors seemed to do a good job in capturing some of the issues that were common to the evaluative experience of the majority of the interviewees. I find each of these four visualizations to best relate to an important aspect of the interviewees' evaluation experience. The first metaphor was "lots of chiefs, not enough Indians," which was used to discuss personal confusion and disappointment when receiving contradictory evaluations or supervisory expectations from one or more supervisors. The second metaphor that was used was a "supportive womb" which clearly illustrated some of the benefits of having supervision to include support, comfort, warmth, and nourishment. The metaphor given by the third student was a "one-way street" to speak about challenges in communicating with supervisors when the inherent power and knowledge differential imparts a sense of hierarchy into the supervisory relationship. The metaphor of a "safety net" was used to further confirm students' desires and expectations about the role of supervisors to provide comfort, protection, learning, and advocacy. Although it was not planned, the in-depth interview questions as well as frequent requests for further clarification of meanings produced these

metaphors that addressed important areas that were common to most participants. These important areas of interest included the students' thoughts and feelings about being evaluated, their understandings of the purpose and benefits of supervision, and the interactional dynamics of the supervisory relationship.

"Lots of Chiefs, Not Enough Indians"

The first metaphor that one of the interviewees used was "lots of chiefs, not enough Indians." This metaphor captures a theme that was shared by many of the counselors-in-training. While a small number of supervisees said that they liked that two or more supervisors work closely with them during supervision, a larger number reported an increased level of confusion when they received instructions or suggestions from several different supervisors. Some supervisees liked to have supervisors with different theoretical orientations or backgrounds, because they thought that the supervisors would be able to help them develop their own preferences or strengths for a particular theoretical approach. Availability of supervisors who represent different theoretical orientations would help expand the opportunity for students to learn and be equipped with new skills and ways of thinking that may become useful in different counseling situations.

Several supervisees indicated that they perceived to sometimes receive conflicting supervisory messages when working with supervisors who had different theoretical orientations. This lead to increased confusion, increased number of disappointments, higher levels of anxiety, and a lower sense of being supported in the supervisory relationship. This finding is consistent with research (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1993) that suggests the use of mutually agreed upon contracts that would address supervisory

expectations and areas of focus. At the same time, many students appreciated being exposed to and learning new and different ways of understanding the counseling profession. However, the findings of this research indicated that the majority of counseling students may prefer to work more closely with one supervisor who takes on the responsibility to observe the student's sessions and provide feedback according to previously specified theoretical orientation.

Trainees who have different supervisors with different theoretical orientations may receive contradictory and confusing suggestions from supervisors. They may feel torn between two instructions about how best to approach a given situation, and therefore not know how to comply with or please both supervisors. This problem was especially prevalent in situations where the students had their live supervisor make one suggestion and then later had the individual supervisor evaluate that action negatively. Students who faced similar situations reported being disappointed, confused, and defenseless because they did not know how best to approach this perceived incongruence between the supervisors. The students were worried that they would hurt their supervisor's feelings and so often did not talk about their feelings regarding these different expectations. More importantly, the students worried about the impact of their supervisor's negative evaluation, which often seemed to lead to some level of frustration about the supervision experience. In such circumstances, the students were more likely to become defensive, critical of self and supervisors, or even experience higher levels of self-doubt and lower levels of confidence as a result of inability to understand professional expectations.

Working with several different supervisors would normally divide the supervision time that many of the students already said did not provide them enough time to really get

to know the supervisor's expectations, personality, and evaluation style or the way of delivering feedback. For example, a supervisee reported that she initially had difficulty differentiating one supervisor's style of giving information from another supervisor's way of delivering critical, negative, or corrective evaluations. In regards to supervisory expectations, interviewees, in general, indicated that they preferred to experience some level of uniformity within one supervisor or between different supervisors. Liddle et al. (1988) emphasized the importance of the style by which feedback is delivered to the supervisees. For example, a practicum student may interpret a supervisor's use of the phone during a session as a way to communicate warning for his or her mistakes.

"Supportive Womb"

The metaphor of a "supportive womb" was used by a supervisee who participated in this study. This metaphor provides a good example and an effective way to highlight the important factors that seemed to have influenced the meaning of evaluation for the majority of participants. The phrase "supportive" recognizes the importance of the supervisory relationship, while the word "womb" acknowledges a need for a context and space that is conducive to personal and professional growth. Here, I will discuss several of the findings along with a theme that was common in responses related to the metaphor.

Transition. Supervisees perceived supervision as a point of transition through which they expected to see professional and many times personal transformations. Trainees thought of their supervisors as individuals who have significant influence on the successful results of this transitional time. A paradox arose because while some of the students seemed to be aware of the time required for such a transition to happen, they generally appeared to be somewhat impatient in achieving supervisory objectives.

Interestingly, students who expressed such awareness tended to also be worried about the notion that the supervisors could perceive them as defensive, resisting suggestions, or not wanting to comply with them. Many of the negative emotions expressed by supervisees can be considered normal reactions to the discomforts of "stretching and growing" that some of the supervisors acknowledged to be part of their supervision experience.

Longing for a supervisory relationship. Although many supervisees felt nervous about being evaluated by their supervisors or were anxious in face of the many unpredictable reactions they could get in supervision, it became apparent that a majority of them also expressed relatively strong feelings of seeking supervisors' feedback and evaluation. In fact, two of the interviewees wished that their current supervisors would be like their past supervisors who they had good supervisory relationships with. There was a noticeable level of emotional investment by counselors-in-training in the relationship with supervisors. Similarly, students hoped that the relationship with their supervisors be very supportive, and that the supervisors be warm, understanding, and respectful of their professional goals and personal values. A supervisee who perceived her supervisor as having these qualities said that she started crying out of joy following her supervision meeting with her current supervisor, because she thought that her long held hope for a good supervisory match was finally realized.

Supervisor as a friend. When describing evaluation or the supervisory relationship, many of the supervisees seemed to talk about several characteristics that are normally seen in describing friends. Some of the words that were used by the supervisees when they described their supervision experience included: to trust, to advocate, knowing each other more intimately, share disclosures, be honest, help, guide, support, and do not

judge. Supervisees wished for a more open supervisory relationship that would allow them to be more upfront and honest to approach and disclose their questions and concerns with supervisors. These expressions, even in the context of supervision, suggest that there are many supervisory characteristics which are also commonly found in any friendly relationships.

Most supervisees described being more accepting of the feedback they received from their peers and other classmates. As with friends, peers were portrayed as being more supportive, giving more positive feedback, and being less critical. They were also perceived as being in the same position which helps them to relate better with each other as supervisees. Supervisees who were satisfied in the relationship with their supervisors indicated that they did not feel like they were being evaluated or judged by their supervisors, or they reported that the level of evaluation anxiety was minimized. Some of the supervisees associated letter grades with more negative feelings of being evaluated and suggested that grades were not necessarily helping to strengthen the supervisory relationship. This seems to confirm Starling and Baker's (2000) suggestion that the students were generally satisfied and more upbeat by receiving feedback from peers, which added to the quality of their supervision experience.

Closeness of fit. Supervisees who described a closer match with their supervisors on various aspects were more satisfied with their supervisor's evaluations. Students used words such as "match" or "fitting" when describing the issue of compatibility with their supervisors. Areas that were mentioned by the students about a match between supervisees and supervisors included a match between personalities, thoughts and feelings, evaluations, personal and professional interests, and "spiritually a good match."

Costa (1994) had also recommended that more attention be given to the match between the styles of the supervisors and the supervisee.

Mutual influence. Supervisees expected that their supervisors be empathic towards them by offering them an unconditional support that is appropriate for their professional, educational, and personal needs. Most of the supervisees thought that they should also be allowed to influence their supervisors' evaluations of themselves. They indicated that the relationship would be stronger if both the supervisee and the supervisor be open and appreciative to learn from one another during supervision. For example, a supervisee who saw her supervisors as being there with her in the learning process said she did not "feel less than in their presence," but instead felt supported, empowered, and encouraged. Supervisees seemed to enjoy an increased sense of collaboration when working with their supervisors.

"One-Way Street"

The metaphor of a "one-way street" also captured a number of important themes that related to the finding of this study. The student who used this metaphor was describing how the supervisory relationship may be perceived as hierarchical if he did not feel invited by his supervisor to be part of the evaluation process.

Take me into account. Supervisees seemed to enjoy the supervisors' evaluations when they frequently checked with them about their thoughts, feelings, and ideas on specific counseling situations. Students also appreciated it when the supervisors actively asked for and took into consideration their points of view about the supervisors' evaluations. As such, students liked to see more of negotiation-like, mutual, and interactional discussions with their supervisors that would also accompany their formal

written evaluations. This indicated to the supervisees a level of respect and trust by supervisors in their assessment abilities and for their self-evaluations.

Reciprocity. Another finding with important implications for supervision was that students who perceived the information from their supervisors as suggestions, recommendations, or ideas for consideration were generally much more willing and enthusiastic to try them than those who understood the information as an instructional request or as an order to follow. The information that was given by supervisors was more useful when it was perceived by the supervisees as feedback that offered suggestions, options, or choices. This finding seems to confirm Choate's (2005) argument that "providing choices regarding student professional involvement can be a way to increase internal motivation, which might serve to enhance counselor professional involvement over time." (p. 394). Supervisors who used a language that was more tentative in structure, softer in tone, and seemed to invite or seek the supervisees' own feedback about a given situation seemed to be much more satisfied with the supervisory relationship and found the evaluations as being more helpful and useful. A mere teaching mode was perceived as lacking an attitude that would invite supervisees to contribute to their evaluation in supervision. Students associated more positively with more didactic relationships where teaching combined with learning to create a fulfilling learning opportunity during supervision. These findings seem to be in agreement with Liddle's (1986) suggestion that supervisors engage their supervisees in a mutual brainstorming in an effort to discover the sources of threat and anxiety for the supervisees.

Humanizing relationship. One supervisee expressed it bluntly that she viewed her supervisor's frequent sharing of self-disclosures with her as helping humanize the

supervisory relationship. Furthermore, the supervisors who took initiative to share disclosure were perceived as trying to create rapport and to keep the communication channels open. Supervisors who shared more self-disclosures actually encouraged their supervisees to check-in with the supervisors for their feedback, even when they were feeling most vulnerable during supervision or when dealing with a client issue. Supervisees appreciated when a supervisor shared with them about personal reasons that may have lead to a possible shortcoming in the quality of a previous evaluation.

Immediate feedback. Most counselors-in-training were highly motivated to be as effective as possible to meet their supervisors' intentions to help them and the clients during supervision. They also wanted to do well and to leave a positive impression on the supervisors. Most of the students seemed to endure a great deal of confusion and uncertainty until they received the supervisor's feedback which helped them realize their supervisor's way of thinking about them. Immediate feedback was generally favored by the supervisees because it would shorten the waiting period which was distinguished by increased anxiety as a result of anticipating supervisor's evaluation.

"Safety Net"

The interaction of several different factors seemed to influence the students' experience of evaluation. Most of these factors involved conditions that were more directly related to the supervision setting, which included different supervisors, classmates, and the client. Additionally, there seemed to be interplay between the effects of these supervisory components and the students' personal attributes. The supervisory relationship provided the context in which qualities of the supervisee interacted with those of the others in his or her supervision experience.

Counselors-in-training testified that they put a lot of emotional investment in supervision because they see their success in supervision as making worthwhile their struggles with many other life challenges. Therefore, supervisors were seen as mediators who help facilitate a return of rewards for supervisees' intentions and actions during supervision. One of the students used the metaphor of a "safety net" to reflect his satisfaction about and anticipation for his supervisor to offer him a strong, reliable, and at the same time flexible supervisory environment.

The mentioning of "safety" revealed an evaluative state that was sometimes marked with increased sense of insecurity and anxiety. Similarly, the reference to a "net" could signify an understanding by the supervisees that there exist many other personal or professional variables that are important in how they feel about being evaluated in supervision. Despite this awareness, supervisors were still looked upon as the only people who were qualified to be responsible with the task to help alleviate their feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and discomfort that was experienced with evaluation.

Recommendations for the Field

Instead of, or in addition to a stage-based view, the findings from this study suggest that supervisors adopt a relationship-based perspective when determining their supervisees' evaluation needs. For example, a beginning counselor who would normally be placed at level one of the developmental model and defined as needing more positive feedback (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1988) may in fact want for her supervisor to also point out to some areas that need improvement. The interviewees of this study reflected a desire for a balance in evaluations. Anderson, Schlossberg, and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000)

had argued that heavy emphasis on evaluation was a major contributor to the supervisees' worst supervision experience.

Similarly, a more advanced trainee with a lot of supervised experience may seek a lot of positive feedback, reassurance, and specific guidelines to follow, all of which are identified by the developmental model as features of beginning counselors. Through this research, I found that other factors such as characteristics of the supervisor, the supervisory relationship, the supervisee's personal conditions, professional background, and a general personality match between the supervisor and the supervisee is also important. Apart from a supervisee's stage of development, personality of counselors-in-training could also have a role in making them highly self-aware, self-analyzing, self-critical, and self-challenging. For these students, more attention should be given to the skillful delivery of negative feedback or constructive criticism as this may only exacerbate their already high levels of evaluation anxiety.

Supervisory approaches that are either relationship-based or supervisee-based are similarly important, and yet have not received enough attention in previous research. Many of the interviewees in this research explained their meaning of evaluation in terms of understanding the relationship with their supervisors. This makes sense, because there would be no urgent need to understand supervisee's meaning of evaluation in the context of the supervisory relationship if there was not a general consensus by supervisees as well as supervisors that evaluation is an integral part of trainees' supervision and an important responsibility of supervisors.

The apparent change in each of the student's thoughts and feelings during the course of supervision makes it more imperative for the supervisors to seek their

supervisees' active cognitions about experience of evaluation within the context of supervision. In order to achieve this, supervisors need to be aware of the level of complexity that is often inherent in their supervisees' experiences of dealing with evaluations. Supervisors will also need to become more familiar about their role as evaluators and the impact they can have on supervisees.

This research showed that students' willingness to talk about their thoughts and feelings in relation to being evaluated seemed to significantly increase when they perceived their supervisors as being willing to take the initiative to share self-disclosures. Therefore, greater attention should be given to the importance of sharing disclosures with supervisees, which may simply include a rather informal conversation about one another's culture or general interests. Sharing disclosures also helped humanize the supervisory relationship, increased trust, reduced evaluation anxiety, decreased defensiveness, and increased feelings of security. This was also important in making it more comfortable for supervisees to be more honest and candid to share their in-supervision cognitions (concerns or celebrations) with supervisors.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although it was not part of the initial research objectives, this observation of the secondary benefits of asking the interview questions suggests a need to adopt similar qualitative inquiries so that supervisors gain more insight into employing more effective supervisory methods that would more closely match the needs of their individual supervisees. Given the implied and expressed importance of the role of evaluation in the supervision experience of students, it is crucial that future research attempts to develop effective *evaluation impact interviews* that are based on more vigorously researched

theories of evaluation. Implementation of such interviews by supervisors may also benefit students by helping them organize their insights on new ways of thinking and feeling in supervision into ways that are more compatible with the overall objectives and expectations of supervision.

Although it was not planned in this study, several interviewees used metaphors as an effective way to describe their experience of supervisory evaluation. Future research may be conducted to further explore the potential usefulness of employing metaphors for the purpose of facilitating students' self-discovery and self-disclosure.

Research is needed to further explore experiences of students' in-supervision cognitions in order to help provide supervisees with more personalized supervision experiences that match more closely with each of the student's unique strengths. Part of this will involve efforts to develop tools, guidelines, and training for supervisors to be able to encourage supervisees to engage in the activities of supervision.

Some other general topics that seem to be important for further consideration include evaluation-based supervision, emotion-based supervision, and supervisee-centered supervision. Additionally, the concept of "emotional mirroring" or other questions that attempt to address the possible connections between the psychological states of supervisees and their supervisors should be researched and expanded.

There is a need for development of qualitative approaches to seek and tools to more accurately measure and interpret the impact of feedback and evaluation on counselor-in-training. In the current study, I introduced myself to the supervisees as a graduate student. Future research can possibly explore if the role of the person administering such an exploratory instrument will yield different responses.

Another issue that came up during the current study and which is worthy of further research relates to the possible parallels and similarities between the fields of supervision and counseling. Several interviewees indicated that many of their expectations of their supervisors closely related to the roles of a counselor. Some of the commonly stated areas included unconditional empathy, normalizing, rephrasing, non-hierarchical, appropriate challenge, rapport, and congruence. Further research is warranted to investigate the transferability of these counseling skills into practice of supervision.

In recent years, some researchers (Asay, Lambert, Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999) have focused on finding empirical evidence in support of *common factors* for improved psychotherapy outcome. They have found that client improvement is primarily attributable to these factors which are common to all different types of counseling or psychotherapy. These factors, in order of significance are extratherapeutic (i.e., social support and client environment), therapeutic relationship (i.e., warmth, empathy), and expectancy. Findings of the current study suggest that attention should also be paid to the existence of these dynamic factors in the field of counselor education and supervision. Evaluation and feedback may prove to be an even more inclusive common factor that can more directly impact clients, supervisees, and supervisors.

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APPENDICES

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: The Meaning of Evaluation in the Supervisory Relationship for Counselors-in-Training

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WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? We are interested in exploring the meaning of evaluation in supervisory relationship by counselors-in-training who have experienced supervision.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? I (Yaser Madani) am a doctoral student at Colorado State University and will be conducting this research, along with my advisor, Dr. Nathalie Kees, as part of my Ph.D. degree at Colorado State University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? Through this phenomenological approach in qualitative research, we are trying to explore the meaning of evaluation for counselors-in-training during their supervisory relationships. We hope to be able to better understand the meaning of evaluation for participants as it relates to the supervision experience during their training. We also hope to use this research to produce a description that more accurately captures such experiences.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The study participant (counselors-in-training) will be coming from one or more graduate counseling programs across the Rocky Mountain region. The actual interview will be conducted in an appropriate location at the participant's university or another convenient location with comparable conditions, if agreed upon by the participant. The research is to be completed by May 31, 2008.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? You will be asked to voluntarily participate in a 45-60 minute interview and share your thoughts and feelings in response to your experience of being evaluated in the supervisory relationship of your counselor training program. You may be contacted again following this interview to provide further clarification and verification of the information from the first interview. The follow-up contact would generally take a shorter time and could be done in person, through the phone, or by email. Participants will also be asked to complete a general demographic questionnaire.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known reasons for not participating in this study. As a graduate counseling student who has experienced evaluation in your supervisory relationship during your training program, you are eligible to take part in this study. Again, your participation is voluntary. We greatly value your participation.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. The possible risk of you being identified in

the process of writing the research exists. Data will be reported collectively, your identifying information masked, and pseudonyms will be used to maximize protection of your personal identity.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? The expected benefits associated with your participation in this study include your contribution to the information about the experiences of evaluation in the supervisory environment of counselor training programs. Also, you may personally find it helpful to use this opportunity to share with others (anonymously) your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Also, it is hoped that the implications from this study will help improve counselor education and supervision practices which would in turn lead to increased counselor satisfaction and possibly more effective counseling outcome for clients.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? There are no anticipated costs for participating in this research study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extend allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? You may decide to withdraw your participation in the study at anytime. Other reasons for possible exclusion from the study include inadequate or inappropriate data, or any modifications to the scope of the research deemed as necessary.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? No compensation is allocated for taking part of this study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Yaser Madani at counsellors@gmail.com or Nathalie Kees at nathalie.kees@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a

volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrem, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? Your participation is greatly appreciated. There is a possibility that the information you provide during this research has significant impact in the improvement of counselor education and supervision programs as well as in propagation of knowledge related to human understanding.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing _3_ pages.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____

Signature of Research Staff

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

"The Meaning of Evaluation in the Supervisory Relationship for Counselors-in-Training"

Date: _____ Time of interview: _____ Interviewee code: _____

Main Questions:

1. What is your general understanding of evaluation in the context of your supervisory relationship?

2. What thoughts or feelings come up as you reflect on your supervisory relationships? What thoughts or feelings come up for you when you think about being evaluated by your supervisor?

3. What are your expectations of your evaluation?

4. Please share some examples of things your supervisor said or did that impacted you either positively or negatively. What thoughts or feelings came up? What meanings did that have for you? What else?

5. At what point, if any, during your supervision experience, did the meaning of evaluation change for you? What caused that change to happen? What happened next?

Additional Possible Questions

1. How does your evaluation of yourself compare with your supervisor's evaluation?

2. What is an example of a helpful evaluation by your supervisor?

3. What was the impact of your supervisor's evaluation? What aspects of his or her evaluation did you take personally?

4. What would you have liked for your supervisor to know about you before, during, or after his or her evaluation of you?

5. What factors contributed the most to your overall evaluation experience during the supervision?

6. What are some of the ways you were impacted by your supervisor's evaluation?

7. Do you have any words of wisdom, recommendations, or suggestions for supervisors regarding evaluation of their supervisees? Please share.

Demographic Information

Note: The general data that is gathered on this page will be kept confidential and managed in a manner that would not be used to publicize your identifiable information or responses.

1. Gender ☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age: _____

3. Type of supervision experienced:

   ☐ Live ☐ One-on-one ☐ Bug-in-ear ☐ Other: _____

4. Current Practicum Experience:

   ☐ In practicum ☐ Completed practicum ☐ Completed practicum / doing internship ☐ Completed internship

5. Ethnic group (Circle number)
   (a) White or European
   (b) Black or African American
   (c) Hispanic or Latino
   (d) Asian-American
   (e) Native American
   (f) Native Hawaiian or Islander
   (g) Other (please specify) _____

6. Primary location of your school setting (Circle number)
   (a) Rural
   (b) Urban
   (c) Suburb

7. Highest level of education completed (Circle number)
   (a) Bachelor's
   (b) Master's
   (c) Doctorate

8. School settings where you are a counselor (Circle all that apply)
   (a) Elementary school
   (b) Middle school
   (c) High school

9. _____ Year you received a counseling degree (NA=Not Applicable)

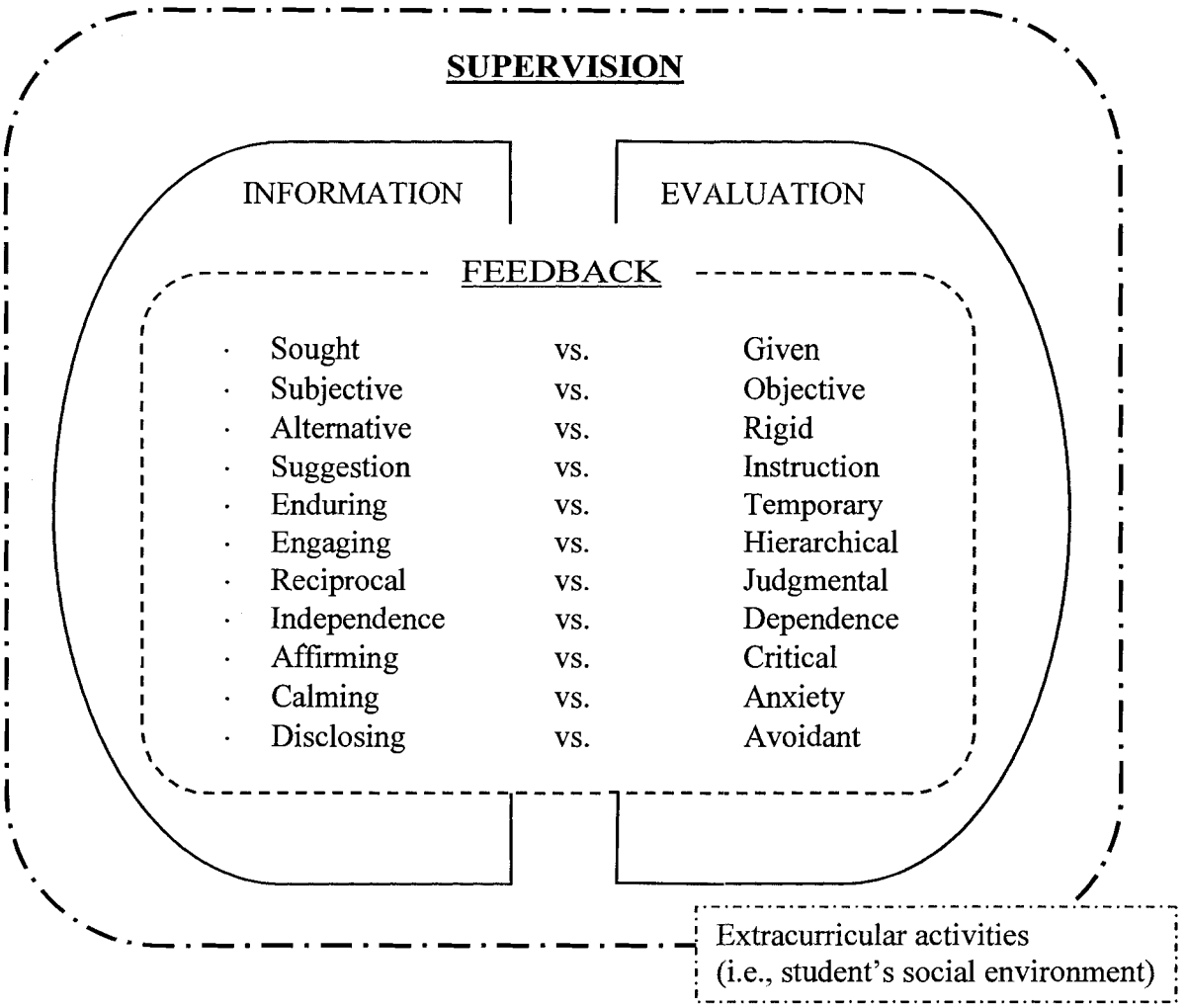

Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram of Supervisory Feedback – Students appeared to differentiate between the qualities of being presented with relevant information by supervisors and that of being evaluated. Supervisees perceived feedback as having more meaningful impact for being more receptive to the context of their experiences.