

**It takes a community: a study of supervision  
in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M.S.  
in Psychology Program**

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## Abstract

How do students describe their experience of supervision in a training program for mental health professionals? This study focuses on students in the M.S. in Psychology program of Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston (TX). It employs a qualitative inquiry methodology, making use of two analytical tools, an adapted grounded theory and the Shotter Filter, an experimental lens adapted from the work of social psychologist, John Shotter. Data was gathered mainly via a group interview process with OLLU students. Other sources included electronic mail exchanges and responses to a brief questionnaire. Findings suggest that the students have created ways to appropriate values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with integration anxiety, the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis.



## **It Takes a Community: A Study of Supervision in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M. S. in Psychology Program**

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## **Acknowledgments and Brief Introduction**

In her book about Lincoln and his rivals, Goodwin (2005) reiterates the myth of Lincoln the self-made man. She tells of his lonely frontier childhood, his love of reading and his insatiable thirst for knowledge. One might conclude that Lincoln invented himself without any help from anybody, but that would be a false conclusion. Even in the case of the self-motivated, self-educated Lincoln, a community watched his progress, took pride in his love of reading, providing him with books, support, and encouragement. His innate gifts, like precious seeds, fell on the fertile soil of an extended community that helped him grow into a national hero.

Not one counselor or psychotherapist has ever made it through graduate school and clinical training to take licensing exams without the guidance and nurturance of an extended learning community. The entire family of mental health professionals forms that learning community into which students are born, grow, mature, and leave to start their own lives. Like Lincoln, even the gifted ones require the assistance and supervision of more experienced professionals. In this sense, supervision starts with the first contact made with anyone who represents the wider family of mental health professionals. Within this community-student supervision, a student also participates in a great deal of faculty-student supervision, including the case consultation generally referred to as supervision.

I wrote the above two paragraphs years ago when I first began to think more seriously about supervision. Not only are they still true, but they have become true for me in a completely new way. Like the students who would not be able to complete a training program without all the other students, I would never have been able to complete this dissertation project without a whole host of friends and colleagues. I simply cannot imagine going through something like this on one's own. It has turned out to be, like social constructionists have claimed all along, a joint

action, a genuine collaborative creation. If I ever had any doubts about the creative potential released by participation in a collaborative learning community, they have disappeared.

What is the point of all of this? The renowned therapist and teacher, Irving Yalom (2005) wrote that “the acquisition of an inquiring attitude to one’s own work and to the work of others is necessary in the development of the mature therapist” (p. 544). If you want to know what I learned, listen to what Yalom (2005) suggests.

What are the characteristics of effective supervision? Supervision first requires the establishment of a *supervisory alliance* that conveys to the student the ambiance and value of the *therapeutic alliance*. Supervision not only conveys technical expertise and theoretical knowledge, it also models the profession’s values and ethics. Accordingly, supervisors must strive for congruence: they should treat their students with the same respect and care that the student should provide to clients. If we want our trainees to treat their clients with respect, compassion, and dignity, that is how we must treat our trainees. (p. 548)

Yalom basically summarizes our current understanding, scientific and otherwise, of how and why supervision works well when it works well.

There are many who deserve special mention, without whose inspiration and encouragement I would not have written anything. My long-suffering wife, Chrys, the love of my life, has once again put up with me going back to school for years at a time. I think this is it, honey. Thanks for your patience. We can take that Mediterranean cruise now. I am serious. My son, Cory, now a graduate from the M.S. in psychology program at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas has inspired me by his belief in what his dad has tried to do since he was a toddler. He used to tag around with me in the mid 1980s when I did small group



assignments as part of a Master's program in marriage and family therapy at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Cory works with and for children in the Texas valley. He has heart of gold and will be a better therapist than I ever was. My son, Andy, currently working for the Federal District Court (Southern District) in Houston, Texas, inspires me with his work ethic and his forward thinking. He has overcome serious health obstacles to excel in almost anything he does. He not only plans to go to law school, but he is almost fluent in Chinese.

As in most of the professional advances in my life in the past twenty years, Harlene Anderson has played a major role. I really do not know how she does it, but she manages to inspire and teach me all at the same time. She welcomed me in the first months after the untimely death of the legendary Harry Goolishian to continue my interest in what she and Harry were writing. Sitting in on the theoretical seminar at the Houston Galveston Institute was a turning point in my life. I have never regretted that decision and have never looked back. Harlene once again set me upon the path of professional growth when I sat in on her supervision training seminar for just one day, as I recall, but on that day she challenged us to begin writing our philosophies of supervision. That was six years ago. Thanks, Harlene.

I have known my advisor, Saliha Bava, since she first came to HGI in the late 1990s as a doctoral intern. She was very bright and very engaging, interested in talking about almost any aspect of psychotherapy and research. We would hang around after practicum at HGI until well into the evening talking. What a privilege to have her now become my dissertation advisor. She pushed, prodded, confused, encouraged, and then, just when I was gaining momentum . . . moved to New York. New York?! Yes, New York. But before she left, she bequeathed a ton of articles and other materials that she had saved from her own reading and research. Thanks, Saliha. I could not have done it without you. Now move back to Texas where you belong.

Thanks to my friend, Seamus Prior, who instructs and supervises in the clinical counseling program of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland for allowing me to convene a dialogue group as part of my earliest attempts at collaborative learning about research design. Seamus has not only allowed me the opportunity to meet and learn from colleagues in Scotland (the original home of the Boyd family), but he also read an early draft of the dissertation and made valuable suggestions that made it better. I look forward to working with him and other friends in Scotland again someday.

Thanks to Harlene Anderson, Sheila McNamee, and John Shotter for agreeing to read an early draft of the dissertation. Their comments and suggestions immediately helped me see things that could be said better. What an honor to have them help with this project. I owe a great deal to Taos Institute faculty members like Sally St. George and Dan Wulff for insight and inspiration.

I must take a moment to thank my colleague and boss, Leonard Bohanon, the director of the M.S. in psychology program of Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston in which I have been privileged to be a faculty member since 1998. From the inception of my crazy dream about pursuing the Taos/Tilburg doctoral program, he backed me and encouraged me, even when he learned that I wanted to study our own students. Believe me when I say that not everyone in the upper echelons of power at the main campus in San Antonio were happy to hear about it. Thanks, Leonard. I owe you a six pack of Kona.

My late friend, Ronald Beasley of Edinburgh, Scotland, with whom I corresponded since the late 1980s and who died in 2006 at the age of 83, was a youth minister in the Church of Scotland as well as an educator and a counselor of college students. Queen Elizabeth awarded him the Member of the British Empire in 2005, an honorary title for his work with young people

and juvenile offenders especially. Ron and I exchanged many letters over the years until Chrys and I finally visited Scotland for the first time in 2004. Ron was a member of the Board of Governors of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists and was thinking about and doing research on supervision at the time of his brief illness. I dedicate this dissertation to his memory.

If is, however, for the living that I have undertaken this project. I dedicate this dissertation to all the students of the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M. S. in Psychology program, past, present, and future without whom there would be no point in a project like this. I hope that they will detect that I believe they are worth the trouble. They will ultimately be able to help thousands of people if we do our job well. For these and many other reasons, I dedicate this dissertation to them.

If I am going to have to talk to somebody in order to complete the journey, it might as well be people I like. That would be the students in our program. They are the light of my life. Everytime, and I do mean everytime, they graduate, it affects me, because I am never ready for them to graduate. It always seems like they just got here. It seems like they just started kindergarten and they come to tell me they are graduating from high school! Wait a minute. How can that happen?

The privilege of welcoming novice mental health professionals into our program, to talk to them along the way, to listen to them talk about what they are learning, to encourage them when they are confused, to advise them to slow down when they go a little too fast, to inspire them to believe that the client will tell them everything they need to know—that is a reward in and of itself. I feel a little like Mr. Chipping in James Hilton's (1934) novel, *Good-bye, Mr. Chips*. The old professor who had taught so many years at Brookfield School assured the older

boys who thought that he had forgotten them, “But I *do* remember you—as you are *now*. That’s the point. In my mind you never grow up at all.” He remembers all their faces and cherishes each and every memory.

I realize that, in fact, the students do grow up. They grow up and evolve so wonderfully that we all miss them terribly when they are gone. They probably would not believe such a thing, but it is true. Thanks for the privilege of watching you become competent and caring mental health professionals who will help and inspire others for many years to come.

## **Chapter 1     What Interested Me: Supervision from the Student's Perspective**

This dissertation tells several stories, but mainly reports on a qualitative research project involving students in the M.S. in Psychology program of Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston. Most of the participants in the research interviews have now graduated from the program. The goal was to find a way into the life-world of students involved in a rigorous and demanding clinical training program for mental health professionals in order to understand better how they experience the various aspects of supervision in a collaborative learning community in the midst of their earliest exposure to an essential part of the professional training process. I am a long time faculty member in the program in addition to my role as researcher in this project. This dissertation reports on a series of learning experiences culminating in two formal conversations with students about their first experiences of clinical supervision in the training program. Hopefully, these efforts to engage them in concentrated sense-making about their experiences will make the training program better in its response to the lived experience of the students.

The research process has been quite an adventure. First, there is no way to separate the “I” of the researcher from the research project. I am the one telling the story and I will attempt to be transparent throughout this report. I am the one who started the ball rolling in the first place. My perspectives are the ones that influenced the way I interviewed and the way I analyzed the interviews. I take full responsibility for all the choices and decisions I made to create the basic structure of this project. Second, there is no way that I could have taken this journey alone. It is my sincerest hope that the journey will continue for everyone involved in the training program.

This project began, as most things in my life, in the dazzling brilliance of bloody frustrating confusion. Not understanding something, especially if I think I should understand it, angers and embarrasses me. Somehow I believe that I should already understand whatever seems

to elude my intellectual grasp, an absurd expectation when one is learning to manage such large amounts of material toward the goal of synthesizing it into a coherent report. In the case of this research project, the results have been more than rewarding. If colleagues or students report to me that they have been inspired, enlightened, or encouraged by any aspect of the project, then the results will have been more rewarding still.

In this chapter I will discuss the general contours of my original curiosity about supervision which evolved into a curiosity about what OLLU students thought about and how they actually experienced supervision. Such an introduction must also include some relevant background on the researcher himself and the training program in which he functions as a conversational partner with novice practitioners. It must also endeavor to convey something of the importance of supervision in clinical training in addition to articulating the author's starting point in terms of a working definition of supervision in this context alongside of a distinction between two different levels of supervision.

### **My Goal is to Write an Engaging Dissertation**

One struggles with how to make this kind of report accessible to audiences who are new to such writing. Rather than hide behind academic-sounding rhetoric, the reader deserves to know where the author is in this text. I wanted to integrate some journaling of what the process was like for me as I progressed from phase to phase as one creative way to face the fact of reflexivity (Hosking & Pluut, 2010), the circular relationship between the creator and the creation in which the researcher is continually influenced by what evolves. It is difficult to know how to write about some of the unanticipated confusion and ambiguity growing out of the research process. It is a surprisingly messy process, much like the messiness of good supervision. In the interviews, I boldly asked students to share their thoughts about their experience of

supervision in a collaborative learning community. Why should the researcher not also attempt the same openness about the process of writing a dissertation? It might even make things a little more interesting and the text somewhat more accessible.

I am a big fan of irreverence, not just as a personal style but as a quite serious commitment to a fearless kind of curiosity that tends not to privilege the status quo. Many of my psychotherapy heroes wrote about irreverence of this kind (Cecchin, 1992; Cecchin and Lane, 1991; Cecchin, Lane, and Ray, 1993). I would like to challenge that time-honored maxim, “If it’s not boring, it’s not research.” One obvious way to experiment with this kind of irreverent reflexivity is to look for humor in serious situations. If we fail to find humor in the midst of creative confusion, we end up taking ourselves too seriously and lose that same curious edge that drives a dissertation project like this one. It makes complete sense to me to make fun of a process that caused me so much pain and agony. I nevertheless learned a lot about a lot of things.

Various advisors suggested that a dissertation must tell two compelling stories (Sally St. George and Dan Wulff, personal communication), one about the *content* and the other about the *research process* itself. In my opinion, it may be that another compelling story would include how the author positions him or herself in the report. The word “compelling” poses a significant literary challenge to the author of a dissertation. Irreverence and tasteful humor are ways to engage the reader, but I also intend for the text to be compelling in the sense that it makes a contribution to the field. Compelling implies that something appeals deeply to one’s innate curiosity. It has the capacity to ignite one’s passion, one’s commitment to see the project through to the end, and every bit of one’s neurotic tendency to overachievement. The challenge for the author comes with knowing that passion and intense curiosity are not what usually comes to mind when one thinks of clinical supervision. I am keenly aware that the goal of two compelling

stories sets a high standard for keeping the reader engaged in something interesting. Neither story can afford to be boring or lifeless. Nothing about this project has been boring or lifeless to me. I hope this project will invite the reader to consider the importance of supervision in any mental health training program.

### **In the Beginning**

This research project began with a desire to give something of value back to the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston (OLLU) training program by contributing to the quality of supervision as experienced by the students. I agree in general with Gergen's (2009) assertion that "the primary aim of education is to enhance the potentials for participating in relational processes—from the local to the global" (p. 243). Kottler, Zehm, and Kottler (2005) encourage teachers to be relationship specialists as well as educators and learners. McNamee (2007) eloquently articulates a vision of a relational, collaborative, conversational approach to education. The nature of the Taos-Tilburg doctoral program with its emphasis on qualitative inquiry allows me the opportunity to both learn something and to make a contribution to the training program. My original goal was to learn about qualitative research and clinical supervision. What I learned about qualitative inquiry encouraged me to believe that by allowing the rigorous discipline of a structured research project to fine-tune and focus my original curiosity, the actions of the researcher would become an intervention into the students' consciousness of supervision by encouraging their own curiosity about how and why supervision works as it does in the OLLU program.

Harlene Anderson (1999, 2000) routinely challenges participants in her supervision training seminars to write a five page paper discussing their personal, but developing and evolving, philosophies of supervision. As I began to write my paper many years ago, I ran into



roadblock after roadblock. Every time I sat down to write, a new aspect of supervision would occur to me. One day I was writing about the communal and collaborative aspects of supervision in which students and faculty learn from one another and the next I was puzzling over the importance of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy's Core Competencies or the American Psychological Association's version of the same and how to include them in supervision. One day I was reflecting on how and why a training program should integrate its dominant approach into all of its supervisory processes and the next I was writing about a general philosophy of supervision.

The lack of traction in my reflections led me deeper and deeper into the writing of others, including creative ways in which they had done interesting research with students regarding their experiences of supervision (Anderson, Schlossberg, Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Gawinski, Edwards, Speice, 1999; Nelson, 1978; Sellicoff, 2006). That writing prompted me to consider that all my personal reflections on supervision might be useful in terms of learning how to provide high quality supervision to beginning students. To pursue my curiosity correctly, I needed to enter into a dialogue with the students themselves to talk *with* them about how they make sense of their experiences while they are in the midst of the experience.

What motivated me to want to take supervision seriously enough to study more closely with Harlene Anderson in her supervision training seminars is exactly the same curiosity that motivated me to undertake this dissertation project. At the point several years ago when I sat in on Harlene's seminar, I had already been functioning as a supervisor for many years, both privately and as part of the adjunct faculty of the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston training program for the M.S. in Psychology degree. I was barely aware of the immense literature related to supervision and training. I wanted to do a better job as a supervisor in both contexts.

With hope of finding some traction in my desire to understand supervision better, I began to read what others were thinking and writing about supervision. For starters, the articles in the more well-known handbooks (Hess, 1980, 2008, Watkins, 1997, Todd & Storm, 2002) stirred a longing for a holistic way of thinking about supervision. Early on I began to realize that in order to be true to my own epistemological and ontological commitments, I needed to generate even more curiosity about the student's experience of supervision. It makes sense to include the people for whom the journey of supervision is most immediately relevant. My secret and subversive goal was to make a contribution to the overall quality of supervision in the OLLU program.

### **My Theoretical Approach**

This project grows out of social constructionist or as some prefer, postmodernist, assumptions encouraging experimentation with new ideas and approaches (Kvale, 1992; cf. Foster and Bochner, 2008). I have written appreciatively of various aspects of this approach (Boyd, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998, 2003) and have benefited from the clinical implications of this way-of-thinking and way-of-being which influences one to take seriously the uniqueness of the client's language. This dissertation will endeavor to take the unique language of students in the OLLU training program seriously in the same way.

A brief overview of current social constructionist thinking may be appropriate; I will include more as it relates to methodology in chapter 4. Lock and Strong's (2010) new book offers an extensive look at "sources and stirrings" in social constructionism, adding that there is not one, but many approaches to social constructionism. The tradition that winds its way back through Berger and Luckman (1966) to George Herbert Mead (1934) and the influence of American pragmatism (Dewey, 1938; James, 1970; Menand, 1997, 2001), is most capably

represented these days by Kenneth J. Gergen (1994, 1999, 2009) who has spent much of his career elucidating the various themes and vast implications of social constructionist ways of thinking.

Gergen (1994, pp. 48ff) summarizes several assumptions for a social constructionist approach.

1. "The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts." In other words, the terms come from a human attempt to make sense of the world with each other.
2. "The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artifacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people." We can only make sense of our experience of the world based on previous attempts to make sense of things.
3. "The degree to which a given account of world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account built on the vicissitudes of social process." Just like the original account grows out of human attempts to make sense of the world, so do evolving accounts depend on the creativity of the social process of making sense of things.
4. "Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship." The logic of language derives not from objective accounts, but from the tradition of the social process of making sense of things.
5. "To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves." Critical examination of language forms gives one insights into the history of how a particular culture has made sense of things.

In his more recent work Gergen (2009) builds on earlier assumptions, but continues to experiment with even more radical and timely implications of what he calls relational being. “There is nothing that requires us to understand our world in terms of independent units; we are free to mint new and more promising understandings. As the conception of relational being is grasped, so are new forms of action invited, new forms of life made intelligible, and a more promising view of our global future made apparent” (Gergen, 2009, p. 5). How might such a point of view play itself out not only in this research project but in the OLLU training program?

Lock and Strong (2010) address the question, “What is social constructionism?” in their new book. They point out, first, that a central feature of human being is an instinctive concern for meaning and understanding. Second, meaning and understanding grow out of human interaction (Shotter, 1993, 2008). Third, the human concern for meaning-making is fundamentally influenced by time and place in which we are embedded. Fourth, social constructionists, therefore, challenge the prevailing assumption that psychology’s proper aim is to uncover the unchanging essences of human experience. And, fifth, is the adoption of a particular kind of critical perspective, or, as Lock and Strong (2010, p. 8) describe it:

a concern with revealing the operations of the social world, and the political apportioning of power that is often accomplished unawares, so as to change these operations and replace them with something that is more just (this being opposed to traditional theorizing which seeks only to explain and understand these processes).

Social constructionists endeavor to make things better by joining with other human beings with whom they share community in the enrichment of their shared and evolving understandings.

### **Background Information About the Researcher**

My interest in supervision goes back to before I knew there was such a thing, at the beginning of my graduate education in a theological seminary in Memphis, Tennessee in the mid 1970s. There was not much emphasis on supervision in the first few years of my training as a helping person, probably because the counseling training we received prepared us for pastoral counseling rather than mental health counseling. We mainly talked about our experiences in class or in small groups. It was not until 1980 when, as a young minister in his first parish, I was assigned a supervisor who was not much older than me, but who encouraged me and gave me helpful advice about a number of important things. He was good mentor.

In the late 1980s, when I transitioned into a new, but related, career as a mental health professional, I discovered a more rigorous kind of supervision in which one's professional behavior was witnessed, critiqued, and honed by an ongoing dialogue that included both the supervisor and the rest of the students present. There were times when supervision was not my favorite thing to do, especially in my internship year. I felt completely unprepared for the level of expertise expected by the supervisors and the level of competition created by the presence of psychiatric residents and interns, psychology fellows, and other Masters level students. That experience created in me a determination that still motivates me to do everything I can, as a supervisor and teacher, to prepare students for internship as well as any other early experiences as mental health professionals. I do not want to be a boring or irrelevant supervisor. Supervision is too important.

### **Background Information About the Training Program**

In this dissertation I will endeavor to enter into a creative dialogue with students in the M.S. in Psychology program of Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston (OLLU), an extension

campus of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas, a historic Catholic university with a time-honored commitment to training helping professionals. The Houston program began in 1996 with a small faculty comprised mainly of members of the faculty of the Houston Galveston Institute, a family therapy think tank, training institute, and counseling center in Houston, Texas. Marriage and family therapy continues to be a major emphasis in the program. Since its inception the program has expanded to include a core faculty of active clinicians and a wide range of occasional faculty from a number of mental health backgrounds. I have been teaching in the OLLU program since 1998.

The Master of Science in Psychology program began to be offered by Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston Campus in 1996. It was described as a “weekend” program in keeping with a marketing niche in other disciplines. The program requires a minimum of three years to complete and, increasingly, three years plus one trimester. The first year includes introductory academic courses geared toward preparing the student for the addition of clinical work in the second year. The second year consists of academic courses in addition to a three trimester practicum course during which time student teams begin to see real clients in a clinical setting with live supervision. During the third year, students are placed in off-campus sites for what is called their “internship” year, basically a part-time job working with clients in a wide range of clinical settings. One of the courses is a bi-monthly practicum team with less clinical work and more supervision of overall experience. The live supervision of the third year combined with that of the second year gives students two years of the three year program in supervised clinical work, a distinct advantage after graduation.

The advent of the reflecting team process (Andersen, 1991, 1992, 1993; Anderson, 1997, 2007; Friedman, 1995) opens up new possibilities in therapy and training as a result of a

procedure for a more public co-creation of meaning and hopefully addressing the issue of power by attempting to minimize structural hierarchies. The OLLU program has always used reflecting teams in the clinical training aspects of the program. Each practicum team operates around a therapy team usually consisting of two students, unless the supervisor is working with one student, and a reflecting team consisting of the rest of the practicum team, usually made up of no more than four or five members.

The reflecting team quietly observes, listening intently, while the therapy team works with a client or clients. At some point in the therapy conversation, usually after thirty or forty minutes, the therapy team will take a break to hear what the reflecting team has heard during the therapy conversation. Members of the reflecting team turn to each other to allow the client some distance from the process and briefly, respectfully, and as constructively as possible, share thoughts and curiosities about what they heard. The client is usually allowed the opportunity to reflect further on reflecting team comments or on any other part of the therapy conversation.

Another innovation vital to the success of the OLLU training program are the learning POD (peer orchestrated development) groups, small groups of students who meet together in the interval between formal class meetings. Students remain with the same POD group for the entirety of the three year training program. They get to know each other very well. These groups provide ample opportunity for collaborative learning.

### **A Collaborative Learning Community**

The importance of the collaborative learning community will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8. The OLLU-Houston training program can be characterized as an experiment growing out of the unique approach to psychotherapy in the work of Harry Goolishian and Harlene Anderson (1988, 1990, 1992; Anderson, 1997, 2007), who along with several others

founded the Galveston Family Institute in the late 1970s and is now the Houston Galveston Institute in Houston, Texas. From Goolishian and Anderson's collaborative language systems approach to therapy came Anderson's (1999, 2000, 2007) compelling vision of a collaborative learning community which emphasizes: (1) shared responsibility for learning, (2) dialogue as dynamic generative conversation in which there is room for all voices, (3) that transformation occurs in and through dialogue. She likes to talk about the 3 C's: Connect, Collaborate, and Construct. A collaborative learning community builds on the following points: (1) relationships and conversations are inseparable and influence each other, (2) experiential learning: collaboration by doing and (3) dialogical conversations are inherently constructive. The values inherent in the vision of a collaborative learning community influence a great deal of both the academic and clinical influence imparted by the faculty.

Supervision within the OLLU program is also influenced by the work of Goolishian and Anderson (1990; Anderson and Swim, 1995) which describes supervision as collaborative conversation. The training system is one in which teacher and student collaborate to create meaning together that benefits the evolving understanding of both in their work with the other. The training process is a dialogical endeavor with is collaboratively co-constructed and in which learning occurs as the shared inquiry process develops. The trainer's role has now shifted to that of a student who takes the position of "not-knowing," a position emphasizing a non-expert stance that allows the supervisor to learn about the needs of the supervisee from the supervisee. The teacher or supervisor bears the responsibility of facilitating a radically open, creative learning context in which students feel safe to think out loud about their lived experience of the challenges of clinical training.



## **What Makes Supervision Important?**

At the first opportunity I ask the new students if they know what the program is about before answering for them (a unique faculty privilege), “It is about you and the person you will become as a result of the sum total of all the things that happen to you along the way between here and graduation.” The students have chosen to undergo a socialization process at the end of which they will be more or less prepared to begin helping people professionally. It is an awesome responsibility on both sides, but it is a sobering ethical responsibility on the faculty side. Despite the weight of that responsibility, my participation as a faculty member since 1998 has been one of the most rewarding and enriching experiences of my life. It has made me a better psychotherapist and a better human being. The training program offers the possibility of a collaborative process in which both students and faculty participate in the co-construction of new meanings and new ways to do things, to become co-creators of a new level of professional competence on both sides.

The role of supervision and of the supervisor comes into sharper focus when seen as an integral part of the whole transformative learning process of a training program. Supervision takes place from beginning to end. It is the ultimate collaborative effort. Supervision usually takes the shape of a dialogue with an experienced therapist to whom a student therapist endeavors to bring together all that she/he has learned and has become as a result of the professional socialization process. More specific forms of supervision, e.g. case consultation, continue to derive meaning from the whole process of socialization.

If supervision is part and parcel of a particular training program, it will reflect the philosophical assumptions of that program without being enslaved to them (Anderson, 2007). Supervision ought to enact and embody the basic values of that program. If a program sees its

various cohort groups as organic parts of a collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1999, 2000) preparing students for full participation in the larger community of licensed professionals, everything that happens in the program can be seen as supervision. Everything is part of that socialization process that transforms the curious student therapist into a confident, competent professional. Everything encourages integration of everything else. Exposure to traditional models and approaches stands alongside of the practice of clinical skills. The process of integration energizes the student's ability to imagine oneself as a developing competent professional. The student's inner voice begins to say more and more confidently, "I can do this. I want to do this well."

### **The *Sine Qua Non* of the Training Process**

Supervision points to the interface between more experience and less experience. It takes place at all the times and places where an experienced mental health professional meets the altruism, the curiosity, the compassion, and the professional ambition of a novice mental health professional. Supervision grows out of and nurtures a kind of chemistry between students and faculty that brings them into a bonding experience that often lasts well beyond the training program. The quality of that relationship can define the student's experience of supervision.

A holistic view (Phillips, 1976) of the process of clinical training would suggest that a student's total experience of the training program amounts to her or his socialization into the mental health profession. How does supervision fit into such a perspective? What is supervision and what is not? Who must be present in order for a conversation to qualify as supervision? A narrow view of supervision, particularly as something a more experienced colleague provides the less experienced colleague, misses innumerable other aspects of supervision defined in a wider sense. A student's clinical imagination, learning-pod conversations, class presentations, and term

papers all function as aspects of supervision in this wider sense. There are both micro and macro aspects of supervision.

An attentive practicum supervisor will keep the mission of the whole process in mind, while observing students work to learn clinical skills, by focusing less on understandable mistakes and more on the student's evolving feel for what is actually expected of a counselor in a therapeutic conversation. Included in the supervisory process might be an ongoing conversation with the students about what they are learning and what they think they will need in order to continue to grow toward confidence and competence.

Supervision is, therefore, one of the most important aspects of any clinical training program, the goal of which is, among other things, attainment of a professional identity (Lerner, 2008). Watkins (1997b, p. 603) suggested that "without the enterprise of psychotherapy supervision, the practice of psychotherapy, in my opinion, would become highly suspect and would or should cease to exist." Supervision is the cornerstone of the professional education of mental health professionals (Falender and Shafranske, 2004). It is "the primary means by which the entire allied health field is now taught" (Campbell, 2006, p. 1). Whatever it may turn out to be, one gets the impression that supervision cannot be overlooked or minimized in a training program.

Supervision matters to the novice student who already feels overwhelmed by the prospect of learning how to do psychotherapy (Weatherford, O'Shaughnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor, 2008). That may be why Yalom (2002) and Pipher (2003) have both published books for students. In the practicum phase of a training program, one learns by doing rather than by reading or writing or talking about competent practice. It is pure experiential learning (Mahrer, 2008) no matter what one may call one's favorite approach to psychotherapy. Live supervision (Charles, Ticheli-

Kallikas, Tyner, and Barber-Stephens, 2005; Liddle, Davidson, and Barrett, 1988; Montalvo, 1973) requires a patient, more experienced practitioner who can patiently accompany less experienced colleagues as they struggle to feel comfortable with clinical work. Case consultation (Haber, 1994; Nielson and Kaslow, 1980; Wynne, Daniel, and Weber, 1986), or “dead” supervision as it is sometimes called, requires a bold willingness on the part of the less experienced colleague to honestly discuss current clinical work with appropriate vulnerability and professional curiosity.

### **Supervision as Ethical Responsibility**

I have been struck by the extent to which supervision is an ethical responsibility of the whole mental health field (Hess, 2008; Knapp & Vandecreek, 1997). As Sperry (2007) points out in his book on ethics, “For most counselors and therapists the process of becoming competent to engage in professional practice begins with graduate training” (153). Therefore, Sperry concludes, “graduate faculty and supervisors bear the initial responsibility for producing competent professionals” (Ibid). This is a moral responsibility shared by the whole family of mental health professionals. Any of the websites dedicated to professional associations such as the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the American Psychological Association, etc. will detail the importance of training and supervision. These statements indicate the importance more experienced professionals attach to the socialization of younger or less experienced colleagues into the field. State laws and codes of ethics amount to promises made to the public that licensed professionals will accept, train, evaluate, weed out, and supervise future professionals toward the goal of protecting future clients and patients from possible harm (Bradley, Kottler, and Lehrman-Waterman, 2001; Newman, 1981; Slovenko, 1980).

The whole community of mental health professionals bears responsibility for the socialization of future mental health professionals. This ethical responsibility grows out of a commitment to self-monitoring reflected in the various state licensing acts and the codes of ethics of various professional associations (Storm, 1993; Tannenbaum and Berman, 1990; Upchurch, 1985). The public hears this commitment as a promise to provide services aimed at “helping without hurting” (Pope and Vasquez, 2007; Pope and Vasquez, 2010), including guarantees that candidates for licensure have participated in a rigorous training experience designed to equip them for maximizing help while minimizing harm (Herlihy, 2006). That training program consists of all the elements of a socialization process, but especially the constant presence of more experienced clinicians who provide ongoing supervision for the students.

Self-monitoring by the whole community of mental health professionals, in this sense, focuses attention on the myriad of ways in which students are introduced into the life of the profession as well as how they integrate knowledge and skills toward the goal of functioning independently as full partners in the life of the profession (Wampold and Holloway, 1997). How do we talk about the goal of their socialization as future mental health professionals? What words, images, and metaphors adequately describe what we hope students will have achieved by the time we unleash them upon the world?

To some degree, licensing acts and codes of ethics give us ways of talking about the goals of our training programs, but those documents often couch the therapist’s responsibilities in negative language or in minimalist terms. In recent years, the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy has suggested the use of Core Competencies for training and evaluation purposes (Bowers and Gautney, 2005). In addition, common factors research allows

clinicians an increasingly interesting glimpse into the client's expectations with clear implications not only for effective therapy, but for effective supervision as well (Blow and Sprenkle, 2001; Hubble, Duncan, and Miller, 1999; Morgan and Sprenkle, 2007).

At some point the student must embrace that same commitment to integrated trustworthiness promised to the public by the whole community of professional helpers. Embracing the values of the profession may be the essential first step in their transformation. At some point she or he will learn that one must not only develop in a way that makes sense to oneself, but also in a way that makes sense to others. Those others will ultimately include the public, i.e., the clients and patients for whom one will provide responsible care. But initially, those others will include fellow students and faculty members in a training program that functions as a collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1999, 2000).

The responsibility for oversight of this initial transformative learning experience may be shared by all participants to some extent, but the faculty plays an important leadership role by articulating the vision, the goals, and some of the parameters of the program (Anderson, 1999, 2000; Anderson & Goolishian, 1990; Boyd, 1978; Cary, Williams, and Wells, 1988; Cormier and Bernard, 1982). They not only function as living examples of the goals and values of the training program, but they also embody a performance of some of the key values and skills for students' consideration. Faculty members are representatives not only of the family of mental health professionals, but also the general public. In his concluding thoughts at the end of his handbook, Watkins (1997) reported that he had become, as a result of editing the handbook on supervision, even more convinced of the importance of a relational training process during which students learn about basic skills and quality service. Clinical supervision, Watkins (1997, p. 603) argues, "transmits, protects, and enhances a valuable culture, the culture of psychotherapy." It is the

whole profession whose self-monitoring requires a close, personal, ongoing dialogue with each and every student in the program, each one of whom is a potential candidate for membership in the professional family.

### **Supervision: General and Specific**

The steps connecting the two areas of curiosity mentioned above, a general curiosity about supervision and a specific curiosity about the OLLU students' experience of supervision include: (1) elements of a working definition of supervision, and (2) a distinction between faculty-student supervision and community-student supervision.

#### **Elements of a Definition of Supervision**

A complete definition of supervision must include references to: a context, a relationship, a process, a set of goals, and a set of standards for competence. There are other possible elements of a definition (Bradley and Kottler, 2001), but these allow for a fairly comprehensive description of a complex process of socialization that begins with a student's first interest in becoming a mental health professional and, basically, never stops. Most students have not imagined the difficulty of a process that requires them to learn to synthesize academic instruction and clinical instruction into an integrated whole. Theories do not matter much unless and until they find helpful application to the problems presented by the client. To this end we must attempt the widest possible understanding of what is meant by the word supervision.

**A context.** Supervision takes place in the context of some kind of training for becoming a mental health professional. Most students who plan to become licensed professionals are obliged to pursue a challenging structured course of study in an accredited training program before they can be prepared to sit for a licensing exam. The fact that mental health professionals are licensed by the state implies a legal arrangement in which various professional associations promise to

train future mental health professionals to meet the highest possible standards for competence (Bowers and Gautney, 2005; Falender and Shafranske, 2004). Those legal obligations quickly become ethical obligations on the part of professional associations and training programs to insure that the professional socialization process takes place in a context of rigorous academic and clinical excellence.

**A relationship.** Supervision requires a relationship between a more experienced professional and a future, but less experienced, colleague. By relationship I mean that the two must relate to each other in some fashion to accomplish the requisite goals of supervision. There has been a great deal of research and reflection on the supervisory relationship (Muse-Burke, Ladany, and Deck, 2001). One of the more well-known definitions of supervision (Bernard and Goodyear, 1992) focuses on the relationship angle, calling it “an intervention” (p. 4).

This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior member(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients she, he, or they see(s), and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession. (Ibid.)

That is a multi-tasking relationship, for sure. The supervisor not only conveys information, but also models how that information might influence a therapist’s behavior or how it might influence the way a therapist thinks about the client. The supervisee-as-witness has no meaning apart from a relation to the supervisor-as-mentor (Johnson, 2007; Johnson and Ridley, 2004; Kitchener, 1992). The supervisee relates to the supervisor as an apprentice to a master except that few experienced therapists would describe themselves as masters.

**A process.** Supervision refers to a sequence of unique events that function as links in a chain, each one of which enhances and strengthens the one before and the one after. Supervision,



therefore, also describes an ongoing process in which an initial experience takes on greater meaning in light of all subsequent experience (Dewey, 1938). Once a student learns how to do skill A, he or she is more open to recognizing the value and relevance of skill B and so on. In other words, such a process becomes a transformative process (Mezirow, 2000) similar to the ideal for the therapy process. This process is multi-faceted, to say the least. It consists of each and every learning moment that takes place at any point along the transformative continuum. It might involve a faculty member and it might not. It is possible that the role of the more experienced colleague is to function as a kind of leaven which begins a catalytic process (faculty-student supervision) taken up by the students themselves (community-student supervision). A great deal of essential learning takes place in small groups and in private conversations without a faculty member present.

**A set of goals.** The students already realize that there is some point to all the academic material with which they are inundated during the early phases of training. The problem is that there are multiple ways to talk about the point. What really is the goal of training? Is it the same as the goal of supervision? Do they coincide or overlap? How is one integrated into the other? Most of these questions amount to the student's unspoken questions: What is going to happen to me along the way? How will I be different as I approach the goal of the training process? Lerner (2008) suggests that the goal of supervision ought to be assisting students as they move toward a sense of professional identity. Who can argue with the suggestion that self-supervision is the universal goal of supervision (Keller and Protinsky, 1984; Lowe, 2000; Todd, 1992, 2002) or that "a key goal of supervision is to ensure that clients receive competent, ethical services" (Herlihy, 2006, p. 18)? Rioch (1980) thought that the main thing, after self-confidence, was to develop the ability to listen to oneself while listening to the other. A program with a postmodern

or social constructionist bias, such as the OLLU program, might frame the goal as a way-of-being in conversation or a way of managing a certain kind of conversation (Anderson, 1997, 2007; Gardner, Bobele, and Biever, 2002; Rober, 2005), i.e., the ability to facilitate the kind of conversation with a client in which old meanings are deconstructed while new meanings are being co-constructed.

**A set of standards for competence.** In recent years, the mental health profession has begun to experiment with a new way of thinking about how to measure success in the delivery of psychotherapeutic services involving the use of “core competencies” (Nelson, Chenail, Alexander, Crane, Johnson, and Schwallie, 2007; Gehart, 2010). This new way of thinking directly impacts the education of future therapists (Watkins, 1997b; Miller, Todahl, and Platt, 2010). The entire issue of the *Family Therapy Magazine* (Bowers and Gautney, 2005) for July and August of 2005 focused on the theme: “Competence in Family Therapy.” Required for effective performance, a competency is a professional skill that can be measured and verified. Several outstanding academics and practitioners officially connected to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy discussed the pros and cons of identifying core competencies for the profession. The Core Competencies can be found on the AAMFT website. Gehart (2010) has done the field of family therapy an immense service in her recent work dedicated to encouraging the mastery of competence in family therapy.

In the end, the taskforce identified 128 core competencies (the first draft contained 270!) organized under the following six domains and five subdomains:

<i>Domains</i>	<i>Subdomains</i>
Admission to treatment	Conceptual skills
Clinical assessment and diagnosis	Perceptual skills

Treatment planning and case management	Executive skills
Therapeutic interventions	Evaluative skills
Legal issues, ethics, and standards	Professional skills
Research and program evaluation	

It appears, however that the AAMFT is not the only organization taking the idea of core competencies seriously.

Falender and Shafranske (2004) call their work on clinical supervision “a competency-based approach.” It was published by the American Psychological Association and is the most complete interpretation of supervision through the lens of competency to date. The authors present their approach as superseding all other models and approaches. This model would require new procedures on the part of supervisors, including careful attention to learning goals, case management, the supervision learning process, and formative and summative evaluations. Falender and Shafranske (2004) believe that their approach “is in step with the increased emphasis on explicit procedures of accountability in health care” (p. 20). This emphasis would certainly turn up the heat on training programs and supervisors to insure that core competencies are integrated into the overall mission of preparing future mental health professionals for independent practice.

### **Faculty-Student Supervision and Community-Student Supervision**

One of the implications of the vision of a collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1999, 2000, 2007) is that everybody is constantly learning from everybody else. Over the years of my involvement in the OLLU training program, I have observed that a great deal of supervision takes place informally in the myriad of conversations indirectly inspired by academic and clinical training. If, in fact, supervision is going on all the time in such a program, faculty

and supervisors might be curious about the relationship between more formal supervision contexts and what happens in less formal contexts. A *minor* goal of the dissertation project is to determine if one can hear language supportive of the usefulness of a distinction between faculty-student supervision and community-student supervision.

**Faculty- student supervision.** One kind of supervision involves a faculty member and a student and sometimes more than one student. It is a narrower and more systematic approach to trainee socialization. This kind of supervision involves *direct faculty influence* as in the traditional case consultation format. In that format, the faculty member directs the conversational themes and more or less evaluates student progress by inviting the student to perform some newly acquired skill or integration of skills as a way of determining something about the student's developmental stage. This kind of supervision can be supportive and essential to the smooth integration of the million and one things students are supposed to integrate while in graduate school. Hopefully, the supervisor is wise enough to focus on what the student does well, allowing her or him to leave supervision feeling encouraged. Of course, that does not always happen. Nor should it.

Faculty-student supervision is the more traditional understanding of supervision and basically amounts to the kind of case consultation described above. In that kind of supervision, the student reviews a case in direct consultation with a supervisor who gives advice and makes suggestions about how to work more effectively with a particular client or family. That approach is also sometimes called "dead" supervision because of the absence of a client or clients. Live supervision, on the other hand, usually refers to supervision in which students and supervisor are in the presence of a client or clients.

**Community-student supervision.** There is another kind of supervision that is much less directive, less conscious, and less specific, but has all the elements of competence-enhancing supervision. Community-student supervision refers to all aspects of *indirect and informal faculty influence*. It takes place anytime, anywhere and involves just about anybody. It takes place in the informal conversations in the hallway between classes. It takes place in phone calls and in bars and in living rooms. This level of supervision witnesses the evolving process of integration of faculty influence by means of conversations large and small about the meaning of that influence.

The role of the faculty is to embody and enact the core values of the program philosophy. For example, in a collaborative learning community, a faculty member would relate to students and other faculty members from the perspective of a fellow life-long learner. She or he values each and every opportunity to encourage collaboration by modeling it in general conversation and by talking about the philosophical roots of those commitments and that way-of-being (Anderson, 2007). He or she is a good listener as defined by a responsible member of a collaborative learning community. Both clients and theories are talked about in terms of respect and patient curiosity.

Community-student supervision describes a broader and more systemic professional socialization process evolving in the midst of and as a result of all the various kinds of “supervisory” aspects of all the program-inspired interactions between members of the collaborative learning community. In my opinion, insights related to postmodern and social constructionist ways of thinking about how people create meaning together in the ongoing flow of interaction (Shotter, 1993, 2008) help us make the distinction between the two levels of supervision discussed above. Clearly, this distinction spreads accountability among all members of the learning community instead of assuming it rests completely with faculty and supervisors.

It is a relational responsibility (McNamee and Gergen, 1999) and a specifically relational approach to the education process (Gergen, 2009).

Another implication is that students should be more adequately prepared to assume the role of co-supervisors. This preparation for the role of student-supervisor cannot and will not happen unless there is a consciousness that such a dynamic matters in the professional development of the students. An important goal of this project, therefore, is to stimulate exactly that kind of consciousness in the OLLU students in particular and, perhaps, other student therapists in general.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation reports on the adventure that grew out of my frustrating inability to articulate what I knew to be important in the OLLU training program and in the private supervision that I have been doing for many years. It ends with more than enough material and experience to articulate what I found to be important new insights into the role of supervision in general and more specifically in the OLLU program.

If there is one thing all the books on supervision agree on, it is that supervision is important. Since the days of Freud, who believed that supervision “must be done by personal teaching” (Hess, 2008b, p. 579), supervision has continued to be a major way of training mental health professionals. There are a myriad of ways to conduct that task, but there seems no way around the need for some sort of master-apprentice relationship no matter how uncomfortable it is for either the master or the apprentice.

In addition to understanding the important dynamics of a supervisory relationship, one must also understand the ethical dimensions of supervision. The more experienced colleague bears responsibility for stimulating a socialization process which ultimately results in a fully

functioning mental health professional. Training programs make promises not only to the profession, but also to the public which deserves to know that a particular faculty is doing everything possible to ensure that its graduates are committed to “helping without hurting” (Pope and Vasquez, 2007; Pope and Vasquez, 2010).

Supervision can be understood generally and specifically. It can be defined in terms of a context, a relationship, a process, a set of goals, and a set of standards for competence. It can also be understood in terms of a wider process in which every experience of the student throughout the training program becomes part of an overall general supervisory experience. Faculty-student supervision is a way to talk about supervision with a faculty member present while community-student supervision offers a way of talking about the cumulative process during which the student integrates and synthesizes a wide range of data into his or her developing identity as a mental health professional.

In each of the chapters to follow I will develop the key ideas and information that guided the development of this report. A dissertation project contains many working parts which, when working properly, combine to generate a dynamic organic unity. I hope that the reader will be able to sense the movement from one step to the next as we continue the adventure. Sometimes I felt like I would never figure out how to take the next few steps. If I had been foolish enough to take the trip alone, I might not have been able to take any steps at all. Without advisors I would have been lost from the beginning. Without the students whose experiences comprise the heart and soul of the project, there would have been no project.

## **Chapter 2     What Others Learned: A Review of Literature Related to Supervision**

This chapter offers a traditional overview of the research and literature focused on supervision over the past generation in addition to the literature review integrated into the text of the dissertation. The goal of this chapter is to look for patterns and trends in supervision research and development. One can detect shifts in interest over the years, specifically a growing interest in qualitative research as well as a growing tendency to more collaborative work with students. My research project is in line with all of these current developments. I have chosen to focus mainly on the literature in psychology, marriage and family therapy, and articles about postmodern or social constructionist approaches to supervision.

I will begin with a summary comparison of the reports in the first edition of Hess (1980) and the second edition (Hess, 2008) compiled a generation later. Next, I will attempt to summarize literature in the marriage and family therapy field covering basically the same period by reviewing *The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* back to the 1980s. Finally, I will review a number of important publications specifically related to postmodern or social constructionist ways of understanding and practicing supervision.

### **Psychology**

#### **Hess 1980**

Lambert (1980) gives us a starting point for a literature review focused on supervision research with Wolberg's (1954) definition of supervision as a teaching procedure in which an experienced psychotherapist assists in the development of a less experienced psychotherapist by helping him or her learn the basic skills of the field. The current understanding of supervision emerged from the role of the control analyst in early psychoanalytic circles. The supervisor taught the student how to practice.



Over time supervision became the central tool in the training of mental health professionals. Lambert cites the 1964 Greyston Report and refers to the research of Hoch, Ross, and Winder (1966) which encouraged the use of supervision in the training of psychologists. Gerkin (1969) asked APA members about their opinion of the necessary features of training. Of some 156 attributes, weekly supervision rated highest in importance among all other attributes.

Lambert (1980) noted that supervision provides an opportunity for increased self-awareness which allows the novice to learn to monitor one's own strengths and weaknesses in relational interaction. In this regard, good therapy and good supervision overlap.

Supervision is a very personal way of working with neophyte therapists that may have considerable therapeutic effect. It clearly differs from therapy, however, in that the major goal is to help the student to be more effective and useful with clients. Although the goals and activities of supervision can be easily distinguished from those of psychotherapy, there are many parallels in the theories and processes of these two learning procedures. As a result, research on supervision has a great deal in common with research into the effects of psychotherapy. (Lambert, 1980, p. 424)

Despite these early votes of confidence in the role of supervision to enhance practice, only recently has supervision been studied as separate variable.

What is supervision? Supervision is not one thing, but many. Lambert (1980) set limits on his definition while acknowledging that numerous methods have been used to attain the goals of supervision.

Supervision is that part of the overall training of mental health professionals that deals with modifying their actual in-training behaviors. It excludes the parts of training that are primarily didactic, such as classroom teaching, and likewise excludes the parts of training

that are purely personal (e.g. experiential groups and the personal therapy experience). It includes training activities, either group or individual, wherein the supervisor arranges experiences that are aimed at helping the student therapist to modify specific behaviors with particular clients. (p. 425)

Methods include: instruction, supervisor modeling, direct observation, supervisor intervention in the actual process, and feedback based on direct observation or recordings.

### **Training in Specific Skills**

The client-centered approach to therapy (Rogers, 1942, 1951, 1957, 1959; Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, and Truax, 1967) laid the foundation for a later expansion of research in supervision focused on the importance of learning particular attitudes or interpersonal skills such as empathy, warmth, congruence, and respect. Truax and Carkhuff (1967) confirmed the importance of these dimensions, urging the measurement of changes in trainee skill after training. Matarazzo (1978) summarized much of the research on training methods and models from that time which showed that skills could be learned prior to a practicum experience. The advent of audio and video recordings added a cutting edge element to training from that period.

What are the essential components of an already effective training program? Training was found to be superior to non-training. Systematic training was more effective than traditional supervision. Lambert reports that the research of this kind was unequivocal in support of clearly defined skills and training aimed at the goal of teaching those skills. While innovative training procedures vary from study to study, Lambert (1980) reports, “it is generally true that innovative programs involving the training of specific skills show gains in those skills that are superior to those resulting from ‘traditional’ supervision” (429).

**Crucial Elements in Training.** Peters, Cormier, and Cormier (1978) studied the effects of four training methods on the learning of counseling skills. The dependent measures included both a written test and a role play interview with a client in which a trainee demonstrated knowledge of a counseling strategy. All students showed improvement in their ability to formulate goals. Lambert (1980) adds an exclamation mark indicating his surprise that the authors of the above study concluded that there was little evidence to suggest that behavior rehearsal and feedback were necessary for skill acquisition.

Dalton and Sundbald (1976) combined videotaped models and systematic training which included a model as well as feedback on empathic interaction. All subjects showed improvement, especially when systematic training was added to the model used. The authors concluded that some students need feedback while others do not. Lambert (1980) praised a study by Perry (1975) for its methodological rigor. Perry looked at the relative contribution of instructions and modeling to the development of accurate empathy. The group that received the high empathy model situation showed the greatest gain.

A number of researchers made use of suggestions in a didactic-experiential program designed by Truax and Carkhuff (1967) who concluded that effective training makes use of (1) a highly specific didactic training in interpersonal skills, (2) interaction between trainees as to their thoughts and feelings about clients in relation to their role as therapists, and (3) a therapeutic context in which the supervisor provides high levels of the therapeutic condition for the students. Several studies followed up on that last suggestion that trainees are impacted by the way supervisors supervise. Pierce, Carkhuff, and Berenson (1967) and Pierce and Schauble (1970, 1971) tested the hypothesis, finding support for the notion that trainees whose supervisors provided high levels of Rogerian conditions move in the direction of their supervisors in their

ability to practice the same skills. Lambert and Beier (1974) found that interactions between supervisors and clients do not differ significantly from interactions between supervisors and trainees. They also found that supervisors teach and model empathic responses, but not all the time. There is something like an implicit trust or an implicit contract between supervisor and trainee that the supervisor is an understanding person.

Learning, therefore, proceeds in a relationship that is formed with an implicit contract that the supervisor is understanding and interested in facilitating the growth of the trainee, but the typical rating scales do not capture this implicit contract. While the implicit understanding is important in the formation of a learning contract, it is not necessary for the supervisor to frequently reflect trainee feelings of inadequacy or the like. Nor perhaps is it even desirable for a productive supervisory relationship. (Lambert, 1980, p. 433)

Grzegorek and Kagan (1974) compared two training approaches for effectiveness, one emphasizing trainee feeling and personal growth, the other emphasizing a cognitive approach to client dynamics, feelings, and counseling techniques. Results indicated no significant differences between the two approaches after training, although the feeling and personal growth group showed significant growth in all measures.

**Research Related to Interpersonal Skills Training Programs.** Identifying specific attitudes and behaviors by therapists that lead to change has contributed to advances in training and supervision. Lambert (1980) expressed his opinion that while the importance of these attitudes and behaviors cannot be underestimated, research has only been able to demonstrate a modestly positive relationship between the Rogerian attitudes and psychotherapy outcome. Lambert bemoaned the apparent poor results of more general studies of the therapeutic effects of training interpersonal skills.

At the same time, Lambert notes that Carkhuff (1972) argued specifically that training in relationship skills has a strong effect on overall trainee competence. Carkhuff's Human Relations Development model has demonstrated positive effects on the psychological adjustment and total functioning of trainees. He argued that trainee benefits provide the only significant outcomes of training. Lambert suggested that while programs like Carkhuff's are popular, their impact on therapy outcome is open to question. Lambert also expressed concern that the focus for training has shifted from a philosophical emphasis on therapist attitudes nurtured by supervision to a technology for promoting concrete therapist responses.

**Supervisory and Training Outcome Criteria.** Evaluating the effectiveness of training and supervision demands research methods that reliably detect the changes occurring in the trainee. This kind of research requires a clear specification of the goals and methods of supervision. Those goals point toward two broad categories: personal growth and skill development. General personality instruments address issues related to personal growth. Skill development, on the other hand, includes the development of increased competence in dealing with clients. All manner of measuring devices have been used to assess changes in skill development. Lambert (1980) presents an impressive table enumerating no less than twenty-four approaches to measuring trainee skill levels. Research conundrums might be alleviated by eliminating methodological problems.

In general, it can be concluded that *the more distant the criterion measure is from the actual criterion (performance in psychotherapy), the less representative it will be. Stated more strongly, simulated counseling criteria, especially paper-pencil devices, seemingly have little relationship to the phenomena they are supposed to represent.* (italics Lambert's, 1980, p. 441)

Lambert summarizes his review of literature up to the late 1970s by pointing out that much of the research seems to have been focused on novice therapists or even paraprofessionals and that the issues studied seem to have been basic interviewing skills.

The clear specification of the goals of supervision has resulted in training methods that speed up the acquisition of knowledge actual performance. Thus, it has been found that trainees can learn to be empathic with their clients more quickly when they are systematically trained than when they are provided with 'traditional supervision'. (p. 442)

Lambert bemoans the fact that studies have failed to focus on the personal characteristics of the supervisor or techniques of supervision in interaction with trainee characteristics. What might an ideal learning environment look like? In addition to trainee experience, certain trainee variables deserve more attention: anxiety level, open-mindedness, defensiveness, cognitive flexibility, and locus of control.

### **Hess 2008**

Inman and Ladany (2008) report on research since the first edition of Hess (1980), noting that supervision-related research expanded rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, but seems to have slowed noticeably since 2000. While research in the 1980s began addressing topics including supervision models, supervisee variables, parallel process, and the impact of psychotherapy supervision on client outcome, a preponderance of research focused on theoretical and conceptual issues. During the 1990s, the American Psychological Association's Committee on Accreditation identified supervision as one of the crucial areas of training. Research during that era tended to address supervisory process, supervisee and supervisor characteristics and development, legal and ethical issues in supervision, supervision in special settings, and cultural competency issues in supervision. Supervision emerged as a distinct area of study. In their

chapter, Inman and Ladany (2008) reviewed research across disciplines, focusing on variables with a history of investigation. They clustered studies focused on supervisory process, supervisee variables, client outcome, supervisor variables, and collateral dimensions like multicultural competencies, ethics, and areas of specialization.

**Supervisory Process.** During the 1980s and 1990s, articles examining the supervisory relationship reflected an interest in social influence theory (Efstation, Patton, and Kardash, 1990; Heppner and Handley, 1981), the reconceptualization of the therapeutic working alliance (Bordin, 1983), the structure of the supervisory relationship (Holloway, 1982); Holloway and Wampold, 1983), and client-centered conditions (Schact, Howe, and Berman, 1988, 1989). Bordin's (1983) work seems to have captured the most attention. Bordin's model of the supervisory alliance consists of three components: agreement on goals of supervision, agreement on tasks of supervision, and the emotional bond between supervisor and supervisee, with an emphasis on mutuality throughout all three. Bordin described eight areas of focus: (1) developing mastery of specific skills, (2) expanding a pragmatic conceptual understanding of clients, (3) enhancing awareness of therapeutic process issues, (4) deepening self-awareness and its impact on the therapeutic process, (5) overcoming obstacles along the path to engaging the client in the psychotherapeutic process, (6) deepening understanding of theoretical concepts, (7) creating opportunities for research, and (8) maintaining appropriate ethical standards of practice. Among the important conclusions of Bordin's research, Inman and Ladany (2008) highlight the fact that

Bordin proposed that the strength of the emotional bond is reflected in the extent to which there is mutual trust, likeability and care between supervisee and supervisor.

Additionally, Bordin identified the need for the supervisor to empathize with the

supervisee and to actively diffuse the hierarchical relationship inherent in supervision to help strengthen the alliance. (p. 502)

The attempt to minimize hierarchical boundaries ranks high among the goals of the research reported in this dissertation.

Others have tested Bordin's model by using empirical measures developed by Bahrnick (1990). Those studies found that a stronger supervisory relationship is related to goal setting and feedback (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001), trainee satisfaction (Inman, 2006; Ladany, Ellis, and Friedlander, 1999), greater supervisor attractiveness and interpersonal sensitivity (Ladany, Walker, and Melincoff, 2001), supervisor self-disclosure (Ladany and Lehrman-Waterman, 1999), and supervisor and supervisee being at advanced stages of racial identity (Ladany, Brittan-Powell, and Pannu, 1997). On the other hand, a weaker supervisory relationship correlates to increased trainee role conflict and ambiguity (Ladany and Friedlander, 1995), diminished adherence to ethical behaviors (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, & Wolgast, 1999), and diminished supervisor multicultural competence (Inman, 2006). As Inman and Ladany point out, "One tentative but important conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that supervisory working alliance is at the heart of effective supervision" (Ladany, Friedlander, and Nelson, 2005).

**Evaluation.** The evaluative function adds notorious complexities to the supervisory relationship. Evaluation has two functions: goal-setting and feedback (Lehrman-Waterman and Ladany, 2001). Which processes comprise effective evaluation? Many supervisors have made use of audio recording and video recording to assist in the evaluation of students, but some myths about their actual use were debunked in research done by Ladany and colleagues (Ladany and Lehrman-Waterman, 1999; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, and Wolgast, 1999) who



found minimal use of recordings by supervisors. In addition, research suggests that the time-honored training technique of the one-way mirror has negligent effects on supervisees (Ellis, Krenzel, and Beck, 2002). Apparently, trainees are more often evaluated qualitatively (Norcross & Stevenson, 1984). Supervisors seem to lean toward leniency (Gonsalvez and Freestone, 2007) and evaluations seem to depend on how much the supervisor likes the trainee (Carey, Williams, & Wells, 1988; Dodenhoff, 1981). Obviously, such findings raise questions about appropriate, reliable, and ethical evaluation of trainees (Cormier & Bernard, 1982; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Malinaro, and Wolgast, 1999).

### **Marriage and Family Therapy**

Todd and Storm (2002) remind us that the earliest supervisors in the marriage and family field were the same self-taught innovators who basically created the new field (cf. Everett and Koerpel, 1986; Lee, Nichols, Nichols, and Odom, 2004; Liddle, 1991). They were determined to invent a new systemic point of view that would eventually have more implications for practice and training than they could have imagined at the time. In sharp contrast to the strict and often secretive values of traditional psychoanalysis, the early developers of the new field emphasized a radical openness to sharing and learning from each other. As the field began to take shape, it realized that it must recognize supervision as an endeavor in its own right. Training of new recruits required trainers whose job was to convey the values, perspectives, and practical innovations of the emerging systemic field.

The field often developed so fast that research validating training methods with empirical measures could not keep up with it, an important criticism of Liddle and Halpin (1978). It was the beginning of a new era of seriousness about answering basic questions about training effectiveness (Kniskern and Gurman, 1979). A lively controversy was shaping up between

proponents of university-based programs and community-based programs (Henry, Sprenkle, and Sheehan, 1986). The 1980s became a time of resolving critical issues regarding training and socialization into the new field beyond the importance of the personalities of innovators and the organizations with whom they identified (Fenell, Hovestadt, and Harvey, 1986; Henry, Sprenkle, and Sheehan, 1986; McDaniel, Weber, and McKeever, 1983; Nichols, 1979). It was a time of a clearly developing consensus about credentials and training (Nichols, Nichols, and Hardy, 1990).

One of the approaches to training about which there was considerable consensus was the use of “live supervision” (Montalvo, 1973). In live supervision, the supervisor observes a therapy session in real time. In most cases, training involved a one-way mirror separating an observation room with a telephone in which the supervisor could monitor the progress of therapists-in-training. At any point, the supervisor could call into the session and make suggestions to the therapists which they assimilate into their learning. Lewis and Rohrbaugh (1989) reported on research asking supervisors about what they thought made live supervision effective, discovering that most respondents urged parsimony, clarity, and the importance of the timing of phone-in interventions, in addition to encouragements to attend to parallel process issues. At the end of the 1980s, Frankel and Piercy (1990) confirmed the importance of live supervision for effective training, paving the way for almost pervasive use of that training technique in marriage and family therapy training programs in the U. S. (McKenzie, Atkinson, Quinn, and Heath, 1986).

Already at the beginning of the 1990s, innovations growing out the epistemology debates of the 1980s (Hoffman, 1981, 1993, 2002) began to appear. Qualitative research began to make its way into the vocabulary of marriage and family therapists (Atkinson, Heath, and Chenail, 1991; Moon, Dillon, and Sprenkle, 1990; Pratt and Dolbin-MacNab, 2003) urging interest in hearing the multiple voices involved in the whole psychotherapy enterprise, including beginning

students. Faulkner, Klock, and Gale (2002) reported that between 1980 and 1999, 131 articles were published using qualitative methods. The dominant methodology was, by far, content analysis. Stith, Barash, Rosen, and Wilson (1991) recommended clinical research as a training tool, but perhaps more importantly, they encouraged a collaborative approach to learning across disciplines and levels of training.

Prest, Darden, and Keller (1990) outline training implications of constructivism for family therapy, specifically the use of the reflecting team approach to supervision. An emerging awareness of the role of the therapist as participant as well as observer in the therapy system naturally led to new ways to think about reality and the temptations of power and certainty (Amundson, Stewart, and Valentine, 1993). The reflecting team was first used by Andersen (1987, 1991, 1992, 1993) and colleagues in Norway where the observation team, including the supervisor, exchanged places with the therapy team and the client in order to allow the client the same opportunity to overhear a conversation about the therapy conversation. The Milan group (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, and Penn, 1987) also experimented with a variation on the reflecting team approach. Prest, Darden, and Keller (1990) concluded that the reflecting team approach to supervision helped trainees understand and develop the ability to learn from various kinds of parallelism in which similar dynamics occur across multiple levels in a training clinic setting.

Aponte and others (Aponte, 1992, 1994; Lutz and Irizarry, 2009; Aponte, Powell, Brooks, Watson, Litzke, Lawless, and Johnson, 2009; Aponte and Carlsen, 2009) began a discussion of the person-of-the-therapist model that continues even to the present. The major point of the POTT model of supervision grows out of one of the traditional themes of psychotherapy training about the need for the beginning therapist to be aware of one's own

personal issues as they interface with the issues and needs of the client. Kaiser (1992) continued the theme of sensitivity to relationship in her work identifying primary elements in the supervisory relationship.

Liberal social concerns could be seen in articles in which social awareness played a major role. Storm (1991a) extended a challenging theme from the 1980s by encouraging supervisors and faculty to place gender at the heart of the training of marriage and family therapists. Whipple (1996) emphasized the importance of offering the possibility of an identity as a feminist family therapist in training. McGoldrick, Almeida, Preto, Bibb, Sutton, Hudak, and Hines (1999) encouraged training programs to incorporate social justice perspectives in their training.

Despite all of the previous innovations, White and Russell (1995) bemoaned the fact that there was still no comprehensive model of training and supervision in marriage and family therapy training programs. They had the lofty goal of achieving consensus about the essential elements of marriage and family therapy supervision. By tracking supervisor variables, supervisee variables, supervisor-supervisee relationship variables, supervisory interaction variables, and contextual variables, White and Russell (1995) conclude that the 800 unique essential elements that influence the outcome of marriage and family therapy supervision reveal the complexity of the task of supervision. They want to know if there is a common thread across the various models that might illuminate a path to consensus about supervision variables.

Throughout the 1990s, an emerging interest in the role of language (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, 1992; Anderson, 1997) began to be seen in articles about training and supervision. Latz (1996) reported on an experiential exercise for trainees focused on teaching language skills, indicating a shifting interest in the importance of language in the therapist-client relationship. Rudes, Shilts, and Berg (1997) were also interested in language as used by the

supervisor in practice rather than in theory, showing how a recursive frame analysis can be used from the point of view of a solution-focused approach to therapy. Gradually, that interest began to include an interest in the language and experience of the trainees themselves. Polson and Nida (1998) researched student members of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy regarding training program and graduate school lifestyle stressors. It was one of the first serious looks into the real world of trainees and their families while in graduate level training. Not surprisingly, they discovered that most students were under enormous stress during their training. Their tip-of-the-hat to the possibility of contributing to student transformation rather than simply education echoes prominent themes in the recent work of Johnson (2007) on transformational supervision.

In the very first issue of the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* in the twenty-first century, Anderson, Schlossberg, and Rigazio-DiGilio (2000) reported on a study of trainees' best and worst supervision experiences by focusing on the supervisor's level of interpersonal attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. The best supervisors were good at creating an open, hospitable training environment rich in conversation and encouragement, attention to personal growth in addition to providing technical guidance. Ratliff, Wampler, and Morris (2000) added to the emphasis on a collaborative environment by studying what happens when there is a lack of consensus between the trainee and the supervisor. They found that the best pattern accented negotiation and collaboration in which supervisor and trainee work together to produce a presentation of the trainee as a cooperative and competent therapist. Prouty, Thomas, Johnson, and Long (2001) brought feminist family therapy supervision up to date with their study of the important role of supervision contracts, collaborative methods, and the whys and wherefores of hierarchical methods. Balancing the three elements seems to work best for

students in feminist-oriented supervision. Moorhouse and Carr (2001), reporting from Ireland, studied the role of live phone-ins in a collaborative family therapy training program and found that client cooperation was almost exclusively related to the presence and quality of the collaborative behavior of the therapist.

There was an entire section of the October 2001 issue of *JMFT* devoted to supervision and training. Green, Shilts, and Bacigalupe (2001) continued an emphasis on the need for research related to supervision practice rather than theory. They experimented with an increased level of openness to each other as faculty and to the students as well. The evident lack of consensus and isolation surprised the authors who thought they were being exceptionally open to each other. Among the themes that emerged in their study were multiple perspectives, therapeutic vulnerability, and hierarchy, among others. The authors recommended several specific working guidelines indicative of an evolving interest in less theoretically based toward a more collaborative approach to training: provide a clear rationale; avoid model specificity; focus on process; not content; maintain flexibility; include all participant voices; and, finally, create a safe context.

The contribution of Wieling, Negretti, Stokes, Kimball, Christensen, and Bryan (2001) focused on student perceptions of the role of postmodernism in their training (cf. Hertlein, Lambert-Shute, and Benson, 2004). Apparently, while students are generally attracted to the tenets of postmodernism, they also experience certain discomforts with knowing how to apply it to clinical work. Similar to my project, the authors asked students two questions: “Would you please share with us your understanding of postmodernism—what does postmodernism mean to you?” and “How do you see postmodern thought influencing the field of MFT?” Most

respondents saw value in the emphasis on shared understandings in postmodernism and most believed that postmodernism was having a major impact on MFT.

In the final article in the special section on supervision and training, Helmeke and Prouty (2001) reported on an exercise created to help students learn to exercise caution and curiosity in the co-creation of meaning with clients. They call the exercise “‘Unlearning’ Certainty.” Students participated in a mock therapy session after which the therapists spent time debriefing the clients in a language understandable to both. Participants were struck by the important need to develop a spirit of humility and curiosity, to focus on the “nonlanguage” aspects of therapy, and to attend to the process of therapy more than the content. Students expressed appreciation for the way the exercise allowed them to feel like they were developing important skills and building confidence in themselves as therapists. The exercise apparently helped reaffirm the importance of sensitivity to cultural biases while making room for the uniqueness of the client’s culture.

An interest in diversity training grows naturally out of evolving sensitivities about the uniqueness of the realities of others. The April 2002 issue of *JMFT* contained a section on training in diversity. Bean, Perry, and Bedell (2002) offer wonderfully practical guidelines for non-African American therapists who work with African-American clients mostly having to do with respect and not-knowing. Keiley, Dolbin, Hill, Karuppaswamy, Liu, Natrajan, Poulsen, Robbins, and Robinson (2002) reported on the use of a cultural genogram in their work as students with clients from other cultures. McDowell, Fang, Brownlee, Young, and Khanna (2002) reflected on efforts to transform a training program for enhancing diversity by encouraging a more activist approach to retaining students of color. McDowell, Fang, Young, Khanna, Sherman, and Brownlee (2003) followed up a year later to report on the progress of their attempts to incorporate an open dialogue regarding race into their training program.

A concern shared with practitioners from other disciplines, multicultural competence provided the focus for the work of Inman, Meza, Brown, and Hargrove (2004) who studied student and faculty perceptions of multicultural training in an accredited MFT program, comparing the results with students' self-reports regarding competence. Training programs lag behind the rhetoric about the increasing need for multicultural awareness. There are three aspects to multicultural competence: therapist's awareness of his or her own culture; the therapist's knowledge of clients from different cultures; and the therapist's ability to engage in culturally appropriate skills when working with clients from other cultures. The authors listed twelve guidelines for inclusion of multicultural competencies in MFT training programs.

Inman (2006) discussed supervisor multicultural competence and its relation to the process of supervision in a report grounded in trainees' perceptions of supervisor competence. Supervisor multicultural competence is positively correlated to the supervisory working alliance and perceived supervision satisfaction. In other words, it matters to students that a supervisor seems to possess competence when it comes to dealing with clients and students from other cultures.

Continuing the growing interest in the realities of trainees, Murphy and Wright (2005) studied supervisees' perceptions of the use of power in supervision. Power differences are unavoidable and the use of power is not always easily detected. Where the abuse of power is possible, measures should be taken to recognize, acknowledge, and find positive ways to cope with power. Discussing power openly in a safe environment where feedback can be given and received nondefensively helps. Empowerment and collaboration positively focus supervisor power while favoritism and violations of confidentiality are negative forms of power.



Morgan and Sprenkle (2007) elaborated on a growing interest in a common factors approach to therapy (Hubble, Duncan, and Miller, 1999; Duncan and Miller, 2000; Blow and Sprenkle, 2001) by showing what a common factors approach to supervision might look like. They begin with a chilling assertion that there is to date no evidence showing one model of supervision to be superior to any other. A common factors approach offers the possibility of bridging different theoretical approaches to clinical supervision. They focus on three continuums suggested by the literature: the emphasis dimension of supervision, the specificity dimension of supervision, and the relationship dimension of supervision. Multiple supervisory roles are correlated along each of the continuums.

### **Postmodern and Social Constructionist Approaches to Supervision**

Goolishian and Anderson (1990) argued early on that the basic elements of their collaborative language systems approach could be applied to training and supervision. Building on the three elements of their approach, they discussed their unique way of understanding (1) the training system, (2) the training process, and (3) the role of the trainer or supervisor. The *training system* is one in which the supervisor and the supervisee create meaning together that benefits the evolving understanding of both in their work with the other. The *training process* is a dialogical endeavor with is collaboratively co-constructed and in which learning occurs as the shared inquiry process develops. The *trainer's role* has now shifted to that a student who takes the position of “not-knowing,” a position emphasizing a non-expert stance that allows the supervisor to learn about the needs of the supervisee from the supervisee. The teacher or supervisor bears the responsibility of facilitating a radically open, creative learning context in which students feel safe to think out loud about their lived experience of the challenges of clinical training. Anderson and Swim (1995) spell out in more detailed the implications of

supervision as collaborative conversation in which the supervision system is a mutual learning context, the supervisory process is described as a generative conversation, and the supervisor's position amounts to being in a collaborative relationship with the supervisee. Their article shares the testimony of several students as to the effectiveness of such an approach for their developing competence as mental health practitioners.

Gardner, Bobele, and Biever (2002) outlined a postmodern approach to supervision that takes seriously a set of assumptions unique to the social constructionist insight into the extent to which we negotiate understandings together in interaction. There is a strong emphasis on how conversations evolve over time as participants interact in the co-creation of new meanings. "Supervisory expertise, then, is understood to lie in the manner in which the supervisory conversation is managed" (Gardner, Bobele, and Biever, 2002, p. 218).

A postmodern supervision process has as its goal the enhancement of supervisees' ability to appreciate multiple perspectives and to develop new meanings for supervisees, which can be used to facilitate their clients' therapy. (Ibid, p. 219)

Postmodern supervisors focus on the creation of a kind of context in which new meanings and new stories have a chance to emerge rather than be stifled by a pre-arranged commitment to a particular view of reality.

There are supervision dilemmas that are unique to the postmodern approach. One must attend to the need for an expansion of hierarchy, the adoption of a nonexpert position, the entertainment of multiple truths, a balancing of classification and nonlabeling, and an emphasis on local rather than universal meaning of evaluation. A postmodern supervisor sees trainees as capable and resourceful in the same way that he or she would approach a client in therapy.

“Many postmodern supervisors believe supervisees have natural skills, abilities, and talents that can be focused and enhanced to encourage positive changes in clients” (Ibid., p. 220).

Postmodern supervision avoids the constraints of other ways of thinking about trainee development, especially models that emphasize developmental stages. Predetermined trainee experience along a developmental continuum does not always fit with the continually evolving dialogical development of the supervisee.

Changes in supervisees are seen as resulting from changes in the internal, cognitive processes that are applied to therapy, and are evident in behavioral changes demonstrated by supervisees. It has long been recognized that lasting cognitive changes are most effectively promoted with noncoercive direction. (Ibid, p. 225).

To summarize, the goal of postmodern supervision, then, is to help trainees learn how to manage the therapeutic conversation in a way that makes room for new possibilities for the client. Caldwell, Becvar, Bertolino, and Diamond (1997) also reported on the effectiveness of such an approach in their training program.

Compare the earlier work of Gardner, Bobele, and Biever (2002) to a later article by Ungar (2006) in which he discusses aspects of postmodern supervision. Ungar believes it is important to blur the boundaries between the various roles of the supervisor. He approaches relationships with trainees toward the goal of creating opportunities for them to construct identities that they prefer to live. The process is similar to that with clients in therapy.

Thus, my goal during supervision is to offer the best experience possible for supervisees to experience preferred identity conclusions, ways in which they wish to be known to themselves and others as therapists. In this postmodern approach I am never just “the supervisor,” a singular identity determined by my role, but instead I am co-constructed in

multiple ways through interaction with the supervisee, depending on what the supervisee wants or needs. (Ibid, p. 59)

Part and parcel of the postmodern approach is to focus attention on the processes by which we construct our worlds together.

Ungar (2006) prefers to accent the need for flexibility on the part of the supervisor who must smoothly transition between different roles. There are six such role constructions that demand the supervisor's attention: the supporter, the supervisor, the case consultant, the trainer or teacher, the colleague, and the advocate. The flexibility of the supervisor models for the trainee the kind of process that is most helpful to clients. "A postmodern turn in the field of family therapy and greater sensitivity to the intersectionality between the personal and professional is leading to ever-lengthening lists of the roles that therapists play. This same trend is emerging slowly in the supervision of family therapists" (Ungar, 2006, p. 62).

Philp, Guy, and Lowe (2007) wonder if there is such a thing as social constructionist supervision or should we think of it in terms of supervision as social construction? The authors believe that social constructionist supervision is still working to liberate itself from realist thinking because of its tendency to align itself with particular models. The challenge to avoid falling back on realist definitions of reality in favor of the radical openness required for the co-creation of new meanings in interaction can be daunting at times, if not impossible. The authors describe certain practice dilemmas that have challenged their commitments to postmodern ways of thinking. Students often tend to see a social constructionist approach as just one model among many, this reifying what is meant to remain open. In an educational context, students want to know things, i.e. content, as opposed to a constant emphasis on process, relational or otherwise. The dilemma is how or whether students in a social constructionist program ought to be

supervised exclusively in a social constructionist manner? How much exposure ought they to receive from other approaches and models? Philp, Guy, and Lowe (2007) encourage a kind of meta-positioning which allows them to remain open to questioning any preferred way of working. Finally, they encourage a careful vigilance about ethical considerations about traditional power structures and dominant beliefs.

Gehart (2007) reports on her efforts to teach postmodern therapy in a university setting which usually tends to be a modernist context. She introduces a social constructionist teaching approach she calls “process-as-content” which aims at delivering the content of the course by means of a particular process. The conceptual framework behind her work makes use of several distinct elements: learning communities, relational responsibility, meaning in practice, and philosophy of life. The process-as-content approach relies on fairly intense experiential learning activities like role play and other small group activities. Rather than convey postmodern ideas in the form of content, this approach allows students to experience the idea which, in turn, helps them empathize and identify with the process of therapy through the eyes of the client.

Gehart (2007) admits that this is not an easy way to teach because it requires the teacher to abdicate the role of the authoritative knower. She discusses the challenges of being public with students about her own process, monitoring and evaluating process rather than content, attending to the traditional university context, and relating to other faculty. She also describes the challenges students face as they endeavor to develop trust with faculty and peers, as they experience shifts in personal and professional identities, and as they engage in exploratory and student-directed learning processes.

## **Conclusion**

One can detect shifts in focus from a traditional, psychoanalytically-oriented approach to supervision to a focus on teaching skill sets which provide trainees practical tools for work with clients. The psychology conversation seems to move inexorably toward attention to the vital importance of the supervisory alliance which amplifies the relevance of the trainee's experience for measuring the effectiveness of a training program.

The marriage and family therapy story moves from beginning innovators to the importance of theory-construction to the relevance of other voices in an increasingly diverse world. Marriage and family therapists were among the first to wonder out loud about the nature of reality. One senses a movement from admiration of early heroes to systemization and theoretical conceptualization to interest in the kinds of relationships required to be able to learn to work with clients. Social concerns accenting diversity and respect lead to an emphasis on collaborative ways of working with both students and clients.

Postmodern and social constructionist approaches emphasize the importance of mutual learning and a collaborative conversation with the supervisee. Others emphasize the necessity of learning to manage the therapy conversation to allow clients to create new possibilities for themselves. Supervisors valuing those philosophical commitments learned to engage students in less hierarchical ways that urge sensitivity to issues of power. We are still learning how to implement those commitments in terms of content versus process (Gehart, 2007).

My research design will endeavor to embody postmodern and social constructionist commitments including a careful attention to hearing the voices of those with whom one engages. The growing emphasis on collaborative learning and creative ways to minimize hierarchy seen in this review of recent literature can be found on almost every page of the

interviews with the OLLU students. In the end I believe the reader will find ample support for the effectiveness and usefulness of more collaborative approaches to creating shared understandings together. Beginning with the question about how students might describe their experience of supervision in the earliest parts of their training, the next chapter discusses the steps taken to create a research design consistent with both the research question and with certain philosophical commitments unique to qualitative inquiry in general.

### **Chapter 3     Steps to a Research Design: Early Learning Experiences**

In chapter one I reported that my curiosity focused on how the OLLU students would describe their unique experiences of supervision. I made the case that supervision is the *sine qua non* of the training of future mental health professionals. The challenge is to turn that original curiosity into a research project starting with a research design, defined as “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, pp. 33f; cf. Cole, 1994). The previous chapter shows that my interest in the experience of students and how they might talk about their experiences finds ample support in recent trends in the literature. In this chapter I will report on early conversations about the development of the research project that culminated in the formal conversations with the OLLU students that comprise the heart of the project.

An evolving vision of a research project motivated me to do some careful and collaborative thinking about how to proceed, including taking advantage of some rare opportunities to talk to people about research design. Those early learning experiences fit with my inclination to think out loud as much as possible to begin experimenting with collaborative decision-making. I also wanted to include the students as much as possible on the level of research design not only as a way to be consistent with early commitments to a collaborative approach to qualitative inquiry, but also because I wanted to create as solid a foundation for the conversations we would have about their experience of supervision.

#### **Early Learning Experiences**

##### **A Dialogue with Students in Edinburgh, Scotland**

In March of 2008, my wife, my son, Cory, and I were able to visit friends in Scotland where I had been invited by Seamus Prior, co-director of the counseling training program at the



University of Edinburgh, to meet with students and faculty to host a dialogue about supervision on March 20, 2008. I had been in dialogue with Seamus about their program and his philosophy of supervision since first meeting him in 2006. Seamus invited me to title the 2008 event and I decided on “The Velveteen Rabbit’s Dilemma: A Dialogue About Supervision,” making use of the famous children’s story (Williams, 1922). It was a beautiful crisp morning in one of the campus buildings just off of Edinburgh’s “Royal Mile” where university instruction has taken place for centuries. Thirteen people equally representative of faculty and students, masters and doctoral level, attended the dialogue. We sat in a circle for the hour and a half of the conversation. My son, Cory, who had been admitted into the M.S. in Psychology program of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas (he graduated in 2010), took notes reflective of some of the general themes of the conversation. I also took some notes, but Cory’s notes helped me recreate our conversation that morning.

After a brief introduction to the velveteen rabbit allusion, I explained that, much like the velveteen rabbit who wanted to become real, students also enter a process of academic and clinical training wanting to become “real” mental health professionals. Like the velveteen rabbit, who sought out the skin horse for “supervision” on how to become real, they learn that one becomes real after a long and often arduous process. I reported to the group that I was interested in the social construction of competence, a concept with which they were familiar. I was not yet clear about how to develop my original curiosity about how students experience supervision.

Beginning with concerns about how to overcome hierarchical aspects of training and supervision, members sank their teeth into a wide range of concerns and experiences. I shared with them my longstanding interest in social constructionism and collaborative approaches to therapy. I confessed that while I wanted to be a good supervisor, I was never sure if I was

achieving the goal. One member shared a similar concern about how to effectively allow students to find their own work and their own words. After I asked if anyone had what I called an ideal approach to supervision, there was almost unanimous consent that there was no such thing as an ideal approach.

Members emphasized some themes consistent with the dominant approach in their program which strives to integrate psychoanalytic and person-centered approaches. For example, there were a number of references to the illumination of the self of the student, a need for the supervisor to be the non-expert expert who focuses on the student's growth rather than focusing on how the student is not as professionally evolved as the supervisor. The theme of power differentials was never far from the surface. One member suggested that when supervision works best, the process allows the student to be close to a genuinely authentic person. I had the clear impression that there was a fair degree of agreement about common values like curiosity, respect, tolerance of ambiguity, encouragement, authenticity, not-knowing, and allowing room for the students to grow on their own terms.

I left the dialogue with the clear sense that I was not alone as a student, a teacher, or a therapist. Anyone involved in the immense challenge of effective psychotherapy, no matter his or her country-of-origin, shares common concerns about how to honestly and sensitively facilitate the socialization of future mental health professionals. I am grateful to Seamus Prior and to those who consented to participate in the dialogue on that day in March of 2008.

### **A Dialogue with Students in a Research Class**

Even before I visited Scotland, I had approached a number of colleagues back in Houston, Texas for their thoughts about supervision. Saliha Bava, Ph.D., at that time Associate Director of the Houston Galveston Institute and fellow adjunct faculty member of OLLU, invited

me to consider sharing my concerns with her research class comprised of second-year students. Saliha recommended that I play the role of the consumer employing the students to do research prompted by my concerns. I welcomed her generous offer and met with the class during its first meeting on May 10, 2008. I was already known to all of the students and several of them had been on my practicum team since September of the previous year. Dr. Bava asked volunteers to interview me about my interests in understanding supervision as it functions in the real experience of students. Jacinda Tucker, a doctoral student helping Saliha with the class, took copious notes of the interviews which allowed me to articulate general interests, questions, and curiosities about the supervisory process. I am grateful to both Saliha and Jacinda for their kind generosity.

In an opening statement, I began by sharing thoughts and concerns about the OLLU-Houston program, how well it works from the students' perspective, professional socialization, and how the meaning of that process evolves throughout the program. The issue of the social construction of competence describes a hope that the students will be in a different place with regard to professional socialization at the end of the training program. To talk about the social construction of competence assumes that we, students and faculty, mutually influence each other along the way, especially if we see ourselves as a collaborative learning community. I asked what must have sounded like strange and even dangerous questions. Is it possible, for example, that students are supervising each other in addition to faculty supervising students? Is it possible that students can supervise faculty in various ways? In other words, I am interested in supervision in the widest possible sense, but especially in the way it is actually experienced by the students as they evolve from year one to year three.

There are many theories of supervision (Campbell, 2006; Falender and Shafranske, 2004), including those described as postmodern or social constructionist like the Collaborative Language Systems approach of Anderson and Goolishian (1988, 1992). Anderson (1997, 1999, 2000) has been thinking about, teaching, and writing about supervision for a long time. Her ideas and the emphasis on a collaborative approach to therapy and supervision influenced Gehart, Taragona, and Bava (2007) to suggest a collaborative approach to research that describes a vision of a communal and participative approach to qualitative inquiry. Their approach emphasizes the inclusion of those being studied in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the whole research project. I pointed out to the students in Dr. Bava's research class that I wanted to conduct research about supervision in the OLLU-Houston program along the lines laid out in the Gehart, Taragona, and Bava (2007) article, among others.

The conversation eventually touched on some of my concerns about the word "supervision" which suggests a view from above or a kind of meta-view that is somehow different from that of the supervisee. Thinking about who is above and who is below automatically conjures up issues of power and brings to mind a hierarchical aspect of supervision which, while it may be essential on some level, cannot be the only way to think about supervision. Is supervision, in fact, inherently hierarchical? If so, how would we square that with the fact that the OLLU-Houston program ostensibly emphasizes collaborative and minimally hierarchical ways of thinking and working?

Implied in that dilemma is the possibility of a non-traditional approach to supervision. This is the golden fleece of my desire to understand supervision in the OLLU-Houston program. I want to be open to hearing and co-constructing an understanding that will surprise all of us. I do not want to begin by knowing what I will eventually learn. I also hope, without apology, that

it will function as an intervention of sorts benefiting the whole program in its evolution as a high quality clinical training program. This will mean designing a research approach that allows for these kinds of outcomes.

One student in the research class wondered out loud about how any presentation of results of the research will fit with state regulations and other kinds of accountabilities. I confessed ignorance and said that I hoped the results would eventually be shared in venues, such as conferences, where these ideas can be discussed and tested by other colleagues, but that I would get participants' permission to do that. I also confessed that I did not want to worry about what the state or even other colleagues thought, but that I wanted to push the edge of the envelope with this research, looking for a new way to do this kind of work. When I mentioned the hope that outcomes might be mutually satisfying for students and faculty, one student asked how I would measure "mutually satisfying?" Again I mentioned that I hoped the results would be interesting and beneficial to students and faculty alike.

Another student pointed out that perhaps a genuinely collaborative research project would give students a compelling reason to participate. Why would this research be important to the students in the OLLU-Houston program? How might they benefit in real terms? I responded that I am always thinking about how things could be done better even if I am not always able to embody those new elements. It all begins with a genuine curiosity about how the students see things and how they experience them. When asked if we might be at the edge of a new understanding of supervision, I answered that I hoped we were. When the student asked how my curiosity applies to them as students, I said that they would be partners in the co-construction of a new consciousness, a new form, and a new appreciation for an innovative approach to supervision. For example, if the students took seriously the likelihood that they were continually

supervising each other, that awareness might add a whole new direction for thinking about supervision.

Another student wondered how a new approach to supervision would fit within a traditional program. She pointed out that in many ways even the OLLU program was traditional. Might it be difficult to get outside the box even in a non-traditional program? I responded with the hope that the OLLU box might be different than other boxes. She was curious about the extent to which our program would be able to incorporate any new elements that might emerge from the research conversation. I answered that the dominant approach in our program is theoretically capable of integrating new insights. Anderson (1997) has been saying for years that we must be open to creating new meanings and new understandings together. I assume that means a courageous openness to new possibilities even if it means abandoning former meanings and understandings. The student followed up by asking how such an outcome would match with other programs that might not be as open. I responded that we would have to put it out there for others to consider and that even if their conclusion was negative, they would have to think about what we were saying.

Another student asked if this is a closing-the-gap kind of process or if in fact we would be really learning from each other. I pointed out that it seems likely that supervision and one's experience of supervision evolves as one moves from year one in the program to year three. We would have to develop instruments and procedures for gathering useful data. The student wondered if I envisioned students cohesively working together bringing in information that would nurture their evolving together. I said I did not know the answer to that, but that we would all evolve simply in the process of talking and thinking about it. What if, for example, we somehow created a new consciousness in the program that was continually passed on from class

to class, year to year, so that it became a natural part of the socialization process? It is in the air to the some degree, influencing everyone and continuing to evolve because of our common awareness. What if we could co-create a real collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1999, 2000) in which everyone continually learned from everyone else?

Saliha made some closing comments about possible implications for research approaches before asking the students to gather in small groups to summarize what they heard and to record some of the key words and ideas that emerged for them out of the interview. Some of the emergent themes were: not-knowing, sociological influences, the co-construction of new forms, consciousness and the lack of consciousness, hierarchy and non-hierarchy, competencies, evolution, how one's view of supervision might change over the three years of the program, a Collaborative Language Systems influence on the process, mutual influence versus hierarchical influence, the idea of being at the edge of tradition, new words and terms, and the possibility of the new view of supervision.

During a follow-up conversation with the research class members on July 19, 2008, it was clear to me that the students had done a lot of thinking about both research and supervision. Indicative of what happens when people engage in a collaborative inquiry process (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000), the students seemed eager to share concerns and questions about what they had been learning about research, how my research would proceed, and what it might mean to them. We began by considering what collaborative supervision might look like. How would it make things better for the supervisee? How would it deal with the dilemma of hierarchical versus non-hierarchical approaches? There seemed to be a consensus that some elements of hierarchy would exist even in a non-hierarchical program. One student asked me directly if I thought I was a collaborative supervisor. I answered that it was my intent, but that I was never certain to what

degree I succeeded. I honestly shared my fear that I might not be very good at embodying the ideal of collaborative supervision. That exchange led to a back and forth discussion of the degree to which collaborative supervision was an ideal process toward which we might strive without ever completely succeeding. It left me wondering about possible elements of collaborative supervision and how we might arrive at a working definition.

Another theme that emerged as we talked about what they had been thinking was the need for inclusion of the students' voices in any attempt at collaborative supervision. How would we do that? We talked about how some supervisors were better about asking questions than other supervisors. Someone noted that we ought to be able to work toward non-hierarchical inclusion even within a hierarchical context. Another student who had experience with supervision from a sales perspective pointed out that there may be an innate need in the novice for an expert of some kind.

### **A Dialogue with Students via Email**

Later that same summer (July 27, 2008), I sent an email to twenty-one first year students in a class I was teaching, asking them to reflect on their current understanding of supervision. Keep in mind, none of these students had been in practicum working with a supervisor yet. I had two requests for those choosing to respond.

1. Write a couple of lines about your understanding of supervision. Don't try to be fancy, just what you think it is right now at this point in the program.
2. Where do you think you might already be getting supervision at this point in the program?



Of the twenty-one students, eleven responded with responses varying from a few sentences to half a page. Clearly they were “projecting” what they imagined would be the essence of good supervision which might include what they hoped would happen in supervision.

First, I counted nineteen different descriptive terms for supervision. The students suggested the following descriptions: learning, directing, supporting, mentoring, guiding, encouraging, confidence building, inspiring, monitoring, suggesting direction, preventing harm to clients, collaborative relationship, empathic, genuine, flexible, curious, respect for supervisees, and supervisors should be able to take criticism.

Second, there were already references to what might be called community-student supervision. One student suggested that “conversations between oneself and classmates is a kind of supervision.” Another pointed out that she was getting supervision from her learning POD, some others in her cohort group, and from some second and third year students. Another added, “In all honesty, supervision began the day we started the program.” Another said, “I think we have supervision to some degree in each of our classes and even from our POD.”

### **Summary Impact of Early Learning Experiences on Evolving Research Design**

The two dialogues described above, in addition to the email responses just described, provided an opportunity to begin the process of sense-making about my desire to understand supervision better as well as to imagine an evolving research design. Their major contribution was to help me make the internal dialogue external (Anderson, 1997). They helped me make my thoughts public. They prevented me from doing all the work in my imagination, cut off from those with whom I share a vital interest in supervision and who have become my major source of inspiration for pursuing the research project.

In addition, these conversations helped me hone my own questions while sharpening the decision-making process about how to approach a qualitative research project focused on understanding how OLLU students experience supervision in a program in which I am both a faculty member and a supervisor. These are not simple matters. What kind of research would work? Should it be done at all? If, as I felt strongly, I was not only doing the research for myself but also for all the conversational partners in Scotland and in Texas, how would I include them in the various choices and decisions relevant to the project? In the next chapter I will describe the nuts and bolts of the evolving research design.

## **Chapter 4    Steps to a Research Design: Research as Contribution to Community Life**

Many research reports seem to convey boring information that nobody will ever use because nobody will ever understand it. In making the case for collaborative inquiry, Torbert (1981) asked why educational research has been so uneducational. Torbert and others (Reason and Rowan, 1981) argued in that seminal work that research ought to answer the practical questions people have about their lived experience. Rowan & Reason (1981) asserted that

Much of the argument presented in this book is that a true human inquiry needs to be based firmly in the experience of those it purports to understand, to involve a collaboration between ‘researcher’ and ‘subjects’ so that they may work together as co-researchers, and to be intimately involved in the lives and praxis of these co-researchers. (p. 113)

A lot has happened since 1981. What might have been unorthodox in the world of research back then is common place today. Many of the emphases of this way of thinking overlap with my theoretical approach and research design.

One of the appeals of qualitative inquiry is that it proposes to make a difference. As I confessed earlier, I want to make a contribution to the OLLU training program. How can one engage in research that does more than simply generate data? Why bother if one’s work will not somehow make a difference to someone? The advent of social constructionist approaches to qualitative inquiry brings new assumptions about reality and how human beings construct and interpret meaning together (Kvale, 1996; McLeod, 2001; Patton, 2002; Shotter, 1993, 2008). Such approaches allowed me to realize that I could, by entering into the life-world of the OLLU students, engage with them in the kind of meaning-construction that might ultimately enhance

their experience of supervision. These commitments to understanding meaning-making in the students' experience of supervision brought me to the importance of collaborative research.

Collaborative research has a long and distinguished history, even when it was not called collaborative research (Weinberg, 2008; Best, 2008). Collaborative research in which participants become partners in the inquiry process can have a direct and meaningful impact on participants' lives (Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava, 2007). To witness the vitality of action and reflection cycles in collaborative inquiry (Bray, Lee, Smith, and York, 2004) confronts one with the fact that this kind of research is designed to do something, to accomplish something, to make something happen. One can detect the philosophical influence of the American pragmatist tradition (Dewey, 1938; James; 1970; Menand, 1997, 2001) with its emphasis on democracy and experimental method.

Some approaches to qualitative inquiry emphasize the impact it can have on a particular community. A feminist communitarian model (Christians, 2003), for example, offers an alternative and an antidote to the Enlightenment worship of autonomy (Gergen, 2009). It suggests that community is and ought to be prior to persons.

Human identity is constituted through the social realm. We are born into a sociocultural universe where values, moral commitments, and existential meanings are negotiated dialogically. Fulfillment is never achieved in isolation, but only through human bonding at the epicenter of social formation. (Christians, 2003, p. 227)

Therefore, the purpose of social science research ought to be, as Christians (2003) suggests, "enabling community life to prosper" (Ibid). The goal is not data collection, but community transformation. This goal fits my theoretical approach and its implications for research that makes a difference.

### **From Early Learning Experiences to Research Design**

Patton's advice kept ringing in my ears: "Really work on design," he advises in "Top Ten Pieces of Advice to a Graduate Student Considering a Qualitative Dissertation" (Patton, 2002, p. 34). The early learning experiences discussed in the last chapter encouraged me to pursue a customized design tailored for my particular purposes. The design required by the kinds of questions I am asking fits neatly into a qualitative approach and, specifically, a naturalistic design that takes me into the real world of the OLLU students. It is an interactive, emergent, and discovery-oriented approach to questions about the students' experiences of supervision in the program. In addition, this study contains elements of ethnography in the sense that it desires to understand better the culture of students at the beginning of a socialization process toward the goal of full membership in the family of mental health professionals (Berry, 2003; Bowen, 2005).

Patton points out that "ethnographic inquiry takes as its central and guiding assumption that any human group of people interacting together for a period of time will evolve a culture" (Patton, 2002, p. 81). That clearly describes any professional training program organized into cohort groups that stay together throughout the training. They experience both academic and clinical training together. They also spend enough time together to share life experiences, good and bad. Through their interactions, they are continually constructing meanings together, some of which stand the test of time, some of which do not. The students create an identity together at the beginning of a life-long process of professional identity development. What would it be like to "listen in" on that specific evolving culture of OLLU students?

## **Guiding Assumptions**

The next challenge included making my epistemological and ontological assumptions plain enough to be able to build on them consistently. Just as one cannot *not* have an anthropology in my experience as a psychotherapist, one cannot not have certain philosophical assumptions and commitments informing ones choices and decisions (Fay, 1996). There are considerable connections between social constructionist assumptions and collaborative research, especially the shared curiosity about how people create meaning together. To understand one is to understand the other.

One of my early forays into learning about qualitative research led me to a book by a Scottish scholar, John McLeod (2001), who teaches at the University of Abertay in Dundee, Scotland. McLeod's (2001) work focuses on research in counseling and psychotherapy specifically, but provides an engaging introduction to qualitative inquiry in general. The process of describing, analyzing, and interpreting characteristic of qualitative research demands "a process of careful rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world" (McLeod, 2001, p. 3). Qualitative inquiry "offers a set of flexible and sensitive methods for opening up the meanings of areas of social life that were previously not well understood" (McLeod, 2001, p. 1). But what convinced me I was on the right track, given my ongoing interest in social constructionist ways of thinking, was McLeod's (2001) suggestion that the primary aim of qualitative inquiry is to learn more about how the world is constructed. What I am most interested to learn is how students and faculty in a training program construct their world together.

I found McLeod's language as encouraging as it was instructive about a way to enter into some aspect of the life-world of the OLLU students. His language echoes the language of the approaches with which I am most familiar and have found most helpful over the years, mostly

pragmatic, language-oriented, and collaborative approaches (Anderson, 1997; Anderson and Gehart, 2007; Bertolino and O'Hanlon, 2002; Hoyt, 1998; McNamee and Gergen, 1992). Those approaches to helping people have a lot in common with McLeod's approach to doing research into the way people construct meaning in their lives.

### **Social Constructionist Influences on Collaborative Research**

As I detailed in chapter one, this project and my research design grow out of social constructionist assumptions encouraging experimentation with new ideas and approaches (Kvale, 1992; cf. Foster and Bochner, 2008). The reader will note the overlapping of ideas common to social constructionism and collaborative research. I have written about the impact of this approach on my own thinking (Boyd, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998, 2003) and have benefited from the clinical implications of taking clients' unique use of language seriously in the process of meaning-making together. In the case of this research project, that same theoretical approach informs my understanding of collaborative research and how to create a design fitted to my purpose.

Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) provide the primary inspiration for the experimentation unique to this project including their suggestion about the potential of collaborative therapy approaches for qualitative research. Noting postmodernism's skepticism about universal knowledge and dominant discourses in favor of local knowledge, they suggest that their assumptions point to a creative approach to research. While the article does not report on any specific research, it details how a researcher might draw upon that philosophical stance and dialogical approach to think about, design, and conduct qualitative research (Efinger, Maldonado, and McArdle, 2004). Besides their commitment to postmodern and social

constructionist assumptions, the authors have various kinds of clinical and academic experience to add to their own experimentation with these ideas.

Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava's (2007) brief description of the relevance of phenomenology and interpretivism reminds the reader of a long history of discussion about the role of the observer in the inquiry process. Gadamer (1960/1974) questioned the possibility of an uninvolved researcher, suggesting instead that all understanding is an act of interpretation. Only through a dialogical interaction with the other can one truly identify, test, and redefine one's prejudices.

Social constructionists are, if anything, even more skeptical about claims to truth than philosophical hermeneutics (Aguinaldo, 2004; Gergen, 1994, 1999; Lock & Strong, 2010). The researcher always brings to the inquiry sociocultural biases which cannot help but inform the research process. Such an approach basically asserts that it is impossible to arrive at a single accurate perspective that can posit itself as superior to other perspectives. Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) note with approval the importance of Anderson's (2005) notion of "relational hermeneutics" which emphasizes the inevitable interpretive stance of any sociolinguistic perspective. "Thus, a research methodology grounded in a strong social constructionist perspective takes into account the immediate relational and broader social contexts that shaped the knowledge which emerges from the research endeavor" (Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava, 2007, p. 369).

Other sources inspired similar conclusions. In his chapter on "Variety in Qualitative Inquiry," Patton (2002) elucidates various theoretical orientations relevant to the qualitative tradition. That discussion helped me see a social constructionist approach as a legitimate research design. McLeod (2001) inspired me in my early reading by pointing out that the main goal of



qualitative research is to understand better how the world is constructed and how we interpret our constructions. Researchers are interpreters in the same sense. The foundational questions of such an approach, according to Patton (2002, p. 96) are:

How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, “truths,” explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact?

A postmodern or social constructionist approach is the ultimate irreverence in the sense that it always takes a critical position with regard to taken-for-granted assumptions about reality. Such an approach assumes that human beings have evolved an exquisite ability to interpret and make sense of things, to construct ways of thinking and being that maximize the chances of survival. We are meaning-makers who form social and cultural constructs through language and other forms of creative interaction (cf. Duffy, 1995).

Patton (2002) illustrates how a constructionist approach might impact a program evaluation that must deal with multiple stakeholders in the program.

The constructionist evaluator would attempt to capture these different perspectives through open-ended interviews and observations, and then would examine the implications of different perceptions (or multiple “realities”) but would not pronounce which set of perceptions was “right” or more “true” or more “real,” as would a reality-oriented (post-positivist) evaluator. (p. 98)

This describes my preferred approach to a collaborative qualitative inquiry involving the students in the OLLU program.

My earliest exposure (in the 1980s) to the kinds of questions social constructionists ask was Thomas Kuhn’s (1970) classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. It was shocking and

refreshingly honest at the same time. Kuhn boldly suggested that the various paradigm shifts leading to scientific achievements required some quite unscientific social achievements before making sense to the larger body of scientists. The epiphany aspect of a paradigm shift amounted to the social construction of a new way of thinking about something, usually following an often brutal competition, that explained the accumulated evidence better than a previous paradigm.

By analogy, the students in the OLLU program at first represent competing schools of thought struggling to make sense of the experience of socialization. They develop various fragile and tentative paradigms which they test and retest in their interaction with each other, finally arriving at more and more confident understandings that allow them to evolve as professionals. One is naturally led to wonder about how that process works, how it unfolds, and how the students themselves create ways to make sense of how they experience the developmental process.

### **Similarity of Qualitative Research and Collaborative Therapy**

A collaborative approach to qualitative inquiry reveals similarities between qualitative research approaches and clinical work, especially the various forms of collaborative therapies which begin with two assumptions (Friedman, 1993): the primacy of human relationships and the advantages of non-pathologizing approaches. This matters to me because I am not a professional academic. I am a clinician, a psychotherapist of many years who is still sorting out what he does and why. Apparently, I am in good company. According to Kvale (1996), Freud saw the psychoanalytic interview as a research method. Freud believed that research and treatment went hand in hand. Other qualitative researchers tend to agree (Bowers, Minichiello, and Plummer, 2007).

Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy differs from qualitative studies in other applied fields, such as nursing and education, in that the activity of doing qualitative research (identifying and clarifying meaning; learning how the meaning of aspects of the social world is constructed) is highly concordant with the activity of doing therapy (making new meaning, gaining insight and understanding, learning how personal meanings have been constructed). (McLeod 2001, p. 16)

Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) agree that there are similarities between collaborative therapy and collaborative research, especially in terms of the integration of data collection and analysis. In a collaborative approach, the two occur almost simultaneously to the extent that the research subjects or, as I prefer, “co-researchers,” participate in decision-making about careful delineation of themes and patterns emerging from interviews. This notion influenced me to consider interviewing groups of students rather than individuals in hope that we might all be able to analyze, to some extent, the data we are creating in our conversations.

Even before I read the Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) article, McLeod (2001) inspired me with his introduction to qualitative inquiry and his invitation to consider its possibilities for mental health practitioners. In his discussion of the concept of *bricolage* (cf. Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 2008), McLeod talks about how method emerges in response to the purpose of the study. A *bricoleur* in popular French speech is a pragmatic skilled worker who finds inventive, but often unconventional ways to get the job done. The human inquiry method suggests a number of implications for those interested in experimentation with collaborative and participatory methods.

This approach grows out of the following epistemological principles (McLeod 2001, 122):

1. True knowing involves embracing the subjective dimension of experience. The goal is to cultivate an “objective subjectivity” or disciplined reflexivity.
2. Knowledge is irrevocably linked with action. The approach has been strongly influenced by the action research tradition in education and community work. Researchers seek to generate understanding in and through their practical activities and to produce outcomes that make a difference in the real world.
3. Knowledge is intrinsically collective and relational. Human inquiry researchers rarely work on their own, but instead operate as members of inquiry groups in which each person is viewed as a “co-researcher.”
4. Creating knowledge is a cyclical process. An inquiry group will progress through stages of reflecting on experience, generating hypotheses, testing hypotheses in action, reflecting on the experience produced by this practical action, challenging these new insights in the group, etc.
5. Knowledge which does not respect the whole person is destructive of the world. The human inquiry tradition has placed particular emphasis on the spiritual, emotional, relational and embodied dimensions of experience.
6. The most useful end-point of research or inquiry may not necessarily be in the form of a research paper or book. Drama, poetry, art and social action may all be legitimate research “outputs.”

McLeod (2001) points to the relevance of the above principles as “a kind of integrative meta-perspective” capable of encompassing any number of qualitative approaches, including the postmodern, social constructionist approach to collaborative research outlined in Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) and instrumental in my research design.

Patton (2002) also discusses collaborative and participatory approaches in his chapter on fieldwork strategies and observation methods.

The ultimate in insider perspective comes from involving the insiders as coresearchers through collaborative or participatory research. Collaborative forms of fieldwork, participatory action research, and empowerment approaches to evaluation have become sufficiently important and widespread to make *degree of collaboration* a dimension of design choice in qualitative inquiry. (p. 269)

Patton hones in on the importance of empowerment as a primary value in collaborative and participatory approaches to inquiry and evaluation. The role of the researcher becomes that of facilitator, collaborator, and teacher to support and to encourage those engaging in research designed to help them help themselves. As I have clearly stated, one of my goals for this project is to empower the OLLU students to make use of evolving ideas about the role of supervision in their socialization as mental health professionals. To this point, I was ready to commit to making use of the notion of collaborative research.

### **Assumptions of Collaborative Research Influence the Researcher's Approach**

Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) identify ten considerations for a collaborative research design, each of which is crucial to my own epistemological and ontological assumptions for this research project. Again, note the overlapping of these assumptions with those informing my theoretical approach as described in chapter 1; my comments follow the text in italics.

1. *Co-construction of knowledge or "data"*: i.e., human beings create knowledge together in their attempts to make sense of their experience of the world.

2. *Generative process*: i.e., the social process in which human beings co-construct knowledge is a meaningful creative and inventive process growing out of the logic of other language attempts.

3. *Conversational partnership*: i.e., the bond connecting participants in the social process is a conversational bond uniting them in their ongoing attempts to make sense of the world.

4. *Mutual inquiry*: i.e., the researcher engages in the joint construction of research questions with research participants.

5. *Curious stance of the researcher*: i.e., the researcher makes every effort to join with members of the community in their ongoing attempts to sustain meaning-making.

6. *Insider research*: i.e., the researcher's familiarity with the ongoing life of the community allows him or her ready access to the meaning-making attempts of community members.

7. *Interview as conversation: Inquiry as construction*: i.e., the researcher engages in an open-ended conversation with participants rather than a formal structured interview.

8. *Making meaning*: i.e., data analysis is inspired by and grows out of the natural meaning-making process unique to the particular community in question.

9. *Establishing trustworthiness*: i.e., validity and reliability become measures of the researcher's attempt to accurately and faithfully represent his or her conversation with community members.

10. *Space for quantitative approaches*: i.e., in cases where the researcher used a mixed-method approach, the researcher allows for the usefulness of quantitative approaches in addition to qualitative approaches.

Throughout their discussion, Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) repeatedly assert that just as the collaborative stance of the therapist defines a collaborative therapy approach, collaborative inquiry highlights *the stance of the researcher*. The joint meaning-making and co-construction of knowledge familiar to social constructionist approaches suggests an approach to research method, fieldwork, and data analysis that blurs the boundary between the researcher and the participants in the research project (Duffy, 1995).

The collaboration of researcher and participants illustrates what Anderson (1997) calls *mutual inquiry*, a guiding value in the process of inquiring together. Participants are invited to share responsibility in developing and refining research questions. “A collaborative approach always involves participants in defining what questions need to be asked and identifying processes that might be useful in answering those questions” (Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava, 2007, p. 375). What is the point of all this emphasis on shared participation? *Collaborative research elucidates and defines action that will directly impact the participants’ lives*. It amounts to what might be called research-as-intervention which places an ethical burden on the researcher to consider how to determine how the co-participants are experiencing and interpreting that impact. I hope to make a contribution to the OLLU-Houston community through my research.

Such a researcher embodies a radical curiosity that nurtures every interview, group dialogue, and the analysis of collected data. This stance is sometimes described as a “not-knowing” position in collaborative therapy circles (Anderson and Goolishian, 1992; Anderson, 1997). The researcher positions himself or herself as one determined to be instructed, to be corrected, to be guided, or to be confirmed by interactions with research participants.

A position of curiosity and not-knowing requires that the researcher acknowledge the limitations of any position or opinion, professional and personal, knowing that any single

view of reality is one of many and has been constructed within the relationships and institutions with(in) which one, historically and currently, interacts. Curiosity fuels the research process: a desire to understand how others are experiencing a particular phenomenon. (Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava, 2007, pp. 375f)

This kind of curiosity directs the researcher toward the kind of thick descriptions typical of qualitative research.

Members of the Grupo Campos Eliseos (Fernandez, Cortes, and Tarragona, 2007; cf. London and Rodriguez-Jazcilevich, 2007; and London and Tarragona, 2007) in Mexico City have discussed a project in which a therapy client and the therapist were interviewed together by a researcher. Following that initial interview, all three of them analyzed the interview transcripts together, sharing ideas and impressions of themes and patterns emerging from the recorded dialogue. This approach exemplifies the kind of shared analysis that will typify my research.

Qualitative interviews in the tradition of collaborative inquiry privilege participant perspectives which allow interviewees to use their own language in describing their experience rather than categories predetermined by the researcher (Gordon, 2000; Morgan and Drury, 2003). The interview process, therefore, is not one in which the expert researcher poses questions to the research subject who responds to the question.

Instead, we conceptualize interviews as a dynamic and organic dialogical process. Both the designated researcher and the invited researcher jointly participate in a dialogical process. They are in conversation about the topics of inquiry, and each can contribute to its focus, which is usually informed by the conversation as it unfolds. (Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava, 2007, p. 377)



Again, the same principles behind collaborative therapy conversations organize the research interviews. They share the exact same goal: the construction of knowledge meaningful to all participants. Just as collaborative therapists make use of therapeutic questions (Goolishian and Anderson, 1992; Anderson, 1997), research questions emerge out of the dialogical interview process. The researcher continually strives to *maintain coherence* (Anderson, 1997) with participants' own descriptions of their experience. New questions grow out of participant responses to earlier questions and attempts to understand more fully. Such conversational questions help the researcher to clarify his or her developing understanding the participants' realities.

Even though the first interview of the fieldwork begins with a general question about the students' experiences of supervision, reminiscent of Giorgi's (1985) phenomenological method, I will always return to the technique of asking conversational questions to facilitate an expansion of earlier descriptions. During the interview, which will be recorded for later analysis, the researcher will maintain the position of curiosity without feeling the need to control or dominate the unfolding conversation.

### **Roadblocks and Challenges: A Brief Historical Overview**

Apparently, researchers have not always been open to the idea of studying supervision from the perspective of the supervisee. Barnat (1980) argued for studying the students' perspective early on when older faculty members discouraged his interest in student perspectives.

I once approached a faculty person with the idea of writing a paper on trainee experience. To my inquiry, the senior replied: "Why should people want student observations when they can have professional ones?" (p. 52)

Barnat suggested that if these are representative attitudes, no wonder there is a lack of student literature on early professional development.

On the other hand, Wampold and Holloway (1997) conclude in their article on supervision research that such research needs to take the qualitative aspect of experience seriously. Apparently, attitudes have changed a great deal since 1980. Research is now more open to exactly the kind of experience I am interested in understanding.

Research designs that recognize that participants' description of their experience provide critical information about a phenomenon are beginning to be recognized as legitimate research strategies for understanding psychotherapy and related activities. (Wampold and Holloway, 1997, p. 17)

One gets the sense that the authors still see studying things phenomenologically as somehow in the beginning phases of the development of supervision research.

Hess (1980, 2008) and Watkins (1997) report extensively on the kind of research other people had been doing on supervision. Most of it is quantitative research that makes little room for the language and storied meaning-making of actual students in supervision. Inman and Ladany (2008) conclude that despite all that effort, not much has been accomplished and that more research will need to be done.

The strongest conclusion that we can make about psychotherapy supervision is that it continues to be a path less traveled. Although the existing research is encouraging, the complex and interrelated roles of the supervisor, supervisee, and client challenge researcher's ability to assess the relevant issues that influence the supervision process and outcomes in psychotherapy. This certainly highlights the disconnect that exists in theory, research, and practice. (p. 511)

Such a conclusion argues indirectly for the kind of qualitative research which I imagine.

Qualitative inquiry balances the statistical accuracy of quantitative research with the real-life descriptions of people living the experience of supervision.

My research will endeavor to address the disconnect between theory, research, and practice alleged by Inman and Ladany above. Moon, Dillon, and Sprenkle (1990) thought that qualitative research might help bridge research, theory, and practice in marriage and family therapy. It is my hope that by including the OLLU students in the project decision as much as possible, we will be able to co-create a set of interviews that will generate insight into the ongoing socialization process of mental health clinicians-in-training.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the importance of a collaborative approach that might make a contribution to the OLLU collaborative learning community. Such an approach grows naturally out of my theoretical approach strongly influenced by social constructionist ways of thinking. In addition, I am inspired by the work of Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007) who have outlined a meaningful approach to collaborative research. I discussed relevant philosophical assumptions as well as implications of collaborative clinical work for research methodology. Crucial to these commitments is the notion of the researcher as a co-researcher or co-participant with the student volunteers who comprise the “subjects” of the study. I have struggled to be thoughtful and consistent with an approach that encourages the researcher to proceed with both curiosity and respect in all dealings with co-participants. My goal is to create a solid and credible body of work capable of educating the reader while also empowering those who gave of their time and energy to help make this project possible.

At the end of his book, Patton (2002) discusses “Enhancing Quality and Credibility,” in a section called “The Credibility Issue in Retrospect: Increased Legitimacy for Qualitative Methods” (584). The author summarizes the importance of three distinct but related concerns:

1. *Rigorous methods* for doing fieldwork that yield high-quality data that are systematically analyzed with attention to issues of credibility.
2. *The credibility of the researcher*, which is dependent on training, experience, track-record, status, and presentation of self.
3. *Philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry*, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking.

These are sobering challenges for one venturing into careful qualitative inquiry for the first time.

I will endeavor to be guided by them in this project as though they provided ethical guidelines for the researcher.

## **Chapter 5     Steps to a Research Methodology: Contours of a Plan**

The goal of this chapter on methodology is to find a way to get all the choices, decisions, plans, considerations, and reconsiderations relative to research design under one roof. Hopefully, to the extent that we come to this chapter with “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, pp. 33f), we can begin to fill in the details of what I wanted to do and how I managed to do it. In this chapter I will discuss my initial strategies for collecting data, what strategies actually worked, and also preliminary thoughts about analysis as well.

In the previous chapter I hope you heard a story about an ongoing and evolving collaborative process that helped me determine to focus my efforts on the OLLU students and their experience of supervision. In subtle ways, that process emboldened me to perform the role of researcher-as-listener to the best of my ability. It gave me ideas about how and why to include student volunteers in a conversation that highlights their voices. In my experience, the OLLU students are involved in as complex a creative process as this dissertation project, a process in which they are not only embracing the social construction of competence, but the social construction of themselves as mental health professionals. That process takes place on sociolinguistic grounds involving multiple layers of conversation with faculty, with supervisors, and with each other. Their tentative vulnerable evolving identities are *relational* identities comprised of all the continually fluctuating layers of relationally-responsive influences (Shotter, 2008) operating in the training program.

### **The Proposed Research Plan**

The goal of my research design was to orchestrate a series of conversational interviews with a group of OLLU students for the purpose of collaboratively reflecting on various responses to the question, “How would you describe your experience of supervision?” The starter question approach grew out of a suggestion from Giorgi (1992) about the same kind of technique. I assumed that they would understand the question to mean their experience of supervision in the OLLU program. I also assumed that the volunteer participants would engage in as much self-disclosure as was comfortable for them. I did not automatically assume that they would equivocate, fudge, or fabricate positive responses simply because they were in conversation with a faculty member. Students in the OLLU program have opportunities at many points during the training program to evaluate the training process and the people involved. I did not assume they would be overly intimidated by my presence. In any case, my social constructionist assumptions lean toward curiosity about what we might be creating together more than what they might not be saying.

The research interview conversations will bear a marked similarity to a collaborative therapy conversation in their openness and lack of a pre-determined script or agenda (Paulus, Woodside, and Ziegler, 2008). It will be a mutual inquiry shaped by all participants as co-researchers. I planned to open the first interview with the question, “How would you describe your experience of supervision?” after which I planned to follow the conversation wherever it goes. I will repeat what I said at the end of the last chapter that my hope would be that by including the OLLU students in the project decisions as much as possible, we will generate together a set of interviews that will allow us *to listen in* on the ongoing socialization process of mental health clinicians-in-training.

## **First Things First**

To borrow a phrase from Covey's (1989) book on the seven habits of highly effective people, if habit one is to be proactive and habit two is to begin with the end in mind, the next step, habit three, advises first things first. The end in mind, in our case, is a series of interviews with students. First things first meant that a number of steps had to be taken and a number of problems solved just to get started. It took several months from the decision to conduct the research to being prepared to host the first interview in March of 2009. I now understand why it is never too late to start when it comes to dealing with academic bureaucracies.

First among those steps was getting permission not only from the director of the OLLU-Houston program but also from the Dean of the department at the main campus of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. Following those green lights, I would next complete forms to obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board in San Antonio to involve the students in the research. Those are the only institutional approvals I needed to begin scheduling interviews. All have been attained and are on record.

Second, I needed to create and to complete forms to begin the process both of obtaining IRB approval, but also the process of introducing the idea behind the research project to the students to allow them time to consider volunteering for the interview selection process. Both these documents, the IRB Approval Request Form and the Invitation to Participate in the Research Project, can be found in the Addendum section of the dissertation. In both documents, I suggested as a tentative title for the dissertation, "It Takes a Community: A Study of Supervision in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M.S. in Psychology Program."

Third, I planned various information meetings to interpret the goals of the research project. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board of OLLU in San Antonio to

proceed with the research project, I visited each of the three cohort groups at the beginning of class for the purpose of inviting students to participate in the research in a number of ways. During that meeting students were introduced to the research project in general by reviewing copies of the “Invitation to Participate in the Research Project” which outlines project goals and options for participation. They were asked to review the “Informed Consent” document requiring their signature to participate in the project. The informed consent stipulates risks and benefits as well as emphasizing the necessity of each participant’s permission to make use of data generated in the interviews or in the reflections in the final dissertation.

### **Presentation of the Research Plan**

In the information meetings, I discussed the research project step by step and endeavored to answer as many questions as possible. I offered to be available for questions. I emphasized that the group interviews would be video-recorded and, hopefully, posted online where, with the express permission of the participants, recordings may remain for years to come. I hope that by making the interviews available to current and future students in our training program, the process of consciousness-raising and the co-construction of knowledge about supervision will stimulate a similar interest in an ongoing conversation about supervision unique to our community. The possibility of a “collaborative group reflection process” stirred my imagination with thoughts of publishing a new approach to collaborative research.

I explained that I would announce the date of the first group interview and explained other aspects of the participant selection process as well. The meetings will be hosted between 12pm and 1pm on Saturdays when students are attending classes. Pizza and bottled water will be available. Meetings will be held approximately one month apart. Meetings will be video-recorded and transcribed as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to post the recorded



interview online for virtual participation by any student who wishes to observe and to reflect on the group dialogue.

A maximum of six students will participate in group interviews. The first six will be selected by drawing from a small box pieces of paper with and without numbers on them. Those who draw a piece of paper marked 1 through 6 will be able to participate on the interview team. A maximum number of ten people can sit on the reflecting team. I have decided to order proportional representation on the reflecting team as follows: (1) 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students comprise four of the ten, (2) 1<sup>st</sup> year students may comprise three of the ten, and (3) Faculty may comprise three of the ten.

Fourth, I outlined a tentative plan for all three interviews using the future tense. The first interview will focus on the collection of themes, questions, and reflections that come as initial responses/reactions to the research question. Six interview participants and ten reflecting team participants will have been selected during the information meeting. No more than three faculty members will participate on the reflecting team. My goal for the initial meeting will be to facilitate a playful, spontaneous brainstorming about thoughts, themes, concerns, questions, and suggestions for further reflection in subsequent meetings and reflections between meetings. I will endeavor to be guided by Kvale's (1996, p. 129) advice: "the more spontaneous the interview procedure, the more likely one is to obtain spontaneous, lively, and unexpected answers from the interviewees." If possible, a volunteer will record as many of the themes and related ideas as possible on a flipchart. A summary overview of the dialogue will be made available to participants as soon as possible for their review prior to the second meeting. Participants will be asked to think about how best to proceed by considering which of the ideas discussed during the first meeting seem most fruitful of further consideration. At the end of the interview, five to ten

minutes will be given to hearing reflecting team comments which will be summarized on the flipchart.

The second meeting will take place approximately one month after the initial meeting and will focus on further refinement of themes, questions, and reflections from the first meeting. An important goal of the second interview will be to gather feedback from participants about how to proceed given the themes that emerged in the first interview. I will attempt to encourage the need for all of us as co-researchers to take responsibility for the potential meaningfulness of what we create together. In addition, I will endeavor to model a collaborative attitude toward what may be called “an emergent design,” i.e., a design consistent with a “collaborative group reflection process” about how best to make use of what emerged in the first interview and subsequent reflections.

The third meeting will make use of emerging themes generated during the first two interviews. It will attempt to follow up on those themes while focusing on concluding thoughts about the interview process with an emphasis on evaluation and suggestions for further discussion. If participants express an interest in a follow-up meeting, it will be considered. Even if a fourth meeting is requested, a summary overview of the third group interview will be made available as soon as possible along with an invitation to continue reflections and/or participation in the group email designed for reflections.

Faculty members will be invited to participate in the information meeting. All faculty will be informed about the research project and invited to participate in one or more of the following ways: (1) by volunteering to participate on the reflecting team during the group interviews, (2) by viewing the video recordings of group interviews and writing a reflection, (3) by sharing

reflections in any of the ways outlined in the original invitation, or (4) any other creative form of reflection on the group interviews.

Integrating data generated during the reflecting process as well as from group interviews comprises one of the unique aspects of the research project. Consistent with a collaborative-participatory method of generating data from group interviews, data analysis will be collaborative and participatory as well. I intend to take the designation of “co-researcher” as seriously as possible. A group email list will be created for the express purpose of recording reflections on the whole process. Any student or faculty member desiring to protect her or his identity may submit anonymous reflections by mailing them to my office. Anyone who wishes to participate in the research project will have an opportunity to review the video-taped or audio-taped interviews.

### **The First Interview**

I received a ninety percent agreement from students in all three classes to volunteer to participate. One student observed later that I had one hundred percent interest, but a few students were afraid to make time commitments that might be open-ended. Some of them might change their minds about participating as the process continued. That intuition proved to be prophetic as I will discuss later regarding the fiasco of the lost third interview.

The first research interview was finally scheduled for March 28, 2009, almost one year to the day from our return from Scotland where I participated in a dialogue with University of Edinburgh faculty and students about supervision, as I discussed previously. I communicated with all team members via a group email created for this purpose to determine who would be available to participate. To my great relief, everyone was able and willing to make time to be present as they had agreed during an earlier information meeting. The logistical hurdles involved

securing a room in which the interviews were to be held, securing someone competent as a videographer, securing food and water to allow participants to have lunch before or after the interviews, and securing a volunteer to take separate notes, especially on what I call theme changes, during the interviews.

The transcript of the first interview can be found in the Addendum. That first interview took place in a large classroom familiar to the students. Pizza and water were displayed on two tables against the wall for participants. I collected all the informed consent forms before asking participants to also sign a “model release” for the videographer which would excuse him from liability about the posting of the videos anywhere except where they are supposed to have been posted. We were ready to sit for the interview. Interview team participants sat in a half-moon configuration to provide adequate visibility for videotaping purposes. Reflecting team participants also sat in a half-moon shape behind the interview team. I quickly welcomed everyone and reminded them of our purpose before inviting them to begin the first interview. Any initial performance anxiety seemed to melt away for all of us. After years of being on the OLLU faculty and knowing even first year students for several months, we were fairly familiar with each other.

### **The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men**

Perhaps you recall the rest of the line from the poem, “To a Mouse,” by Robert Burns (1946) who observes that our best laid plans often go awry (or “gang aft agley,” as Burns wrote). They did not go horribly awry, but a number of disappointing developments demanded that I make adjustments to the original plan. First, hopes for a follow-up interview a month from the first interview were dashed upon the rocks of the OLLU schedule, requiring that we wait until the middle of June for the second interview. I was worried that participants might lose interest or

face other more pressing demands when the second interview finally took place. Second, it took longer than I would have liked to get a copy of the video for creating a transcript and for attempting to make either the video or the transcript available for the students. As it turned out, I was unable to get the video online at all, but, thankfully, was finally able to type the transcript myself before emailing it to the research team.

Third, as I attempted to gather reflections on the first interview, respondents were noticeably recalcitrant (stubbornly silent). After taking the silence personally for a few days, I began to realize how busy the students were and that they were, perhaps, reticent to share further thoughts in a format allowing everyone to see what was written. To some degree, I am still speculating about this phenomenon. That lack of response from team members meant, among other things, that my dreams of a collaborative group reflection process would be denied this time. Others have had similar difficulties with collaborative research (Carlozzi, Carlozzi, and Harrist, 2004). The major implication of that unexpected lack of response to requests for further reflection was that I had to reconsider certain aspects of my analysis.

### **The Second Interview**

The transcript of the second interview, held on June, 13, 2009, can be found in the Addendum. After almost three months since the first interview, it felt like we were starting over in some ways. I had attended a research seminar between the first and second interviews that left me feeling discouraged and fearful that I had made so many erroneous choices along the way that the whole project might be in jeopardy. After I processed my feelings on paper and in conversation with my advisor, I began to make more positive use of my disappointment by accepting that those difficult feelings might be more normal than I realized and that (eureka!) perhaps the students feel that way, too, sometimes, perhaps even during the research project. The

thought that there might be some parallel process dynamics going on excited me to take the risk of disclosing some of my inner turmoil to the research team.

The second interview followed the same format as the first except that a few team members forgot about the interview requiring last minute substitutions. Because of time constraints, we began as soon as possible with, as you can see in the transcript, a fairly long opening statement in which I went public about various negative feelings accompanying the process from the researcher side. The risk might have paid off, however, given the more in-depth and personal nature of the students' reflections in the second interview compared to the first. It was a livelier and more fast-paced interview than the first. The number of pages of the transcript of the second interview ran to a full sixteen pages while the first interview transcript was barely over twelve pages. The reflecting team confirmed that the second interview was qualitatively different with several comments amounting to a surprising difference between the second interview and the first. They seemed to detect a clear movement in the second interview reflective of a sense of development on the part of the interview participants.

### **The Third Interview**

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, there was no third interview as I had originally planned. On the day of the third interview, scheduled for July 28, 2009, several unpredictable occurrences conspired to undermine the possibility of proceeding. The sudden illness of a faculty member's parent required cancelling a class which contained a number of participants. Some other team members again simply forgot or, one might speculate, had become tired of the time and energy demands of participation. While there were a handful of participants, I conferred first with the program director and then with other team members present to conclude that we did not have even close to a quorum to host the third interview. To add insult to injury, the videographer

had called to say he had a schedule conflict meaning I would not have a professional copy of a videotape of the interview.

Over the next few days, several participants emailed their regrets and/or apologies for not making it to the interview. In response, I emailed a query to the whole group asking for input about their thoughts about a third interview. Out of a possible sixteen responses, I only received three unequivocal affirmative responses. Most of the other responses were ambivalent or negative. That reality put me in a position, given the time-frame for writing up the results of the dissertation, to make an uncomfortable choice about stopping the data collection phase of the project with only two interviews.

To cover some of the data lost with the cancelation of a third interview, I will make use of responses to a group email sent out on June 20, 2009 inquiring about possible synonyms or other words for supervision that might occur to research team participants. There was sufficient response to that request to give me additional information about how team members tend to describe what they think of supervision, if not in terms of ongoing experience of supervision, at least in terms of an ideal experience.

### **Dialogue Participants**

It might be important to know more about the OLLU program and certain demographic facts about research team participants. If the reader wants to know more of the researcher's biographical information, a resume can be found in the Addendum. By recalling basic aspects of the OLLU training program and brief facts about research team participants, the reader will have a clearer sense of the context in which the interviews took place. Since team members did not participate in the analysis phase of the project to the extent which I had originally imagined, it

will help to know more about my biases and assumptions, some of which have been elucidated in other places.

**The Research Team.** Excluding the researcher, the interview team consisted of six women ranging in ages from the late 20s to the middle 40s. There were two African American women, two Caucasian women, and two predominantly Hispanic women. Keep in mind that research team participants were randomly selected as I described above, however the proportional representation could not have been better if I had chosen participants myself. The older of the two African American women, in her middle 40s, had been employed in various professional roles over the years. The younger of the two, in her late 20s, works for a local social service agency. The older of the two Hispanic women, in her middle 30s, also works for a local social service agency while the other woman, in her early 30s, is a business owner. The older of the two Caucasian women, in her early 40s, has worked in professional jobs as well as homemaking. The younger of the two Caucasian women, in her early 30s, is a stay-at-home mother by her choice.

The reflecting team, briefly discussed in chapter 1, consisted of ten members, eight students and two faculty members. There were four Caucasian women, one Caucasian male, one African American male, three African American women, and one Hispanic woman. The Caucasian male, a faculty member, is in his middle 50s while the women range in ages from the late 40s to the middle 20s and have work experience in psychotherapy, education, social service work, and a stay-at-home mother. During the second interview, the research team also included a female faculty member in her early 40s from India. The African American male works as a financial advisor while the women work in social service settings and education. The young Hispanic woman works in a social service agency.



## **Methods of Analysis**

From the beginning I determined to experiment with a collaborative approach to analysis of the data provided by the interviews. The messiness of the research process encourages the researcher to avoid unnecessary apologies and regrets about changes that occur along the way. My dream of a collaborative group reflection process that might have allowed the research team to continue to reflect analytically on the interviews came to naught for reasons mentioned above. In addition to the awareness that I might have been expecting too much of already overworked students, I also realized that I wanted to avoid any impression, even if false, that I was expecting the students to do the work of the dissertation for me. I am the one who sought out this dissertation project and I am the one to see it through from beginning to end.

My original goals for the doctoral program included learning as much as I could about qualitative research in addition to learning as much as I could about clinical supervision. Because elements of the original plan were thwarted by circumstances, I had to rethink my original plan and create a new one. Appealing for justification to the goal of learning about qualitative research, I decided to make use of two approaches to analysis, both heavily reliant on social constructionist commitments. In the first case, I adapted techniques of a more traditional approach to contemporary grounded theory based on the work of Charmaz (2006, 2008a, 2008b). In the second case, I chose to create a new instrument in which I experiment with the analytical implications in the work of John Shotter (1993, 1995, 2008) whose ideas have influenced me more than any other social constructionist apart from Gergen (1994, 1999, 2009). I created what I call the Shotter Filter, an experimental adaptation of some of the more simplistic interpretations of his work. The filter will allow us to see how participants co-construct their understandings of supervision together.

I hoped that there would be some surprises along the way in the form of emergent themes or categories that might demand more interpretive attention and I was not disappointed. An in-depth analysis of the conversations with OLLU students suggested two important understandings about their lived experience of supervision in the training program. One involves the pervasive influence of the vision of a collaborative learning community and the other, and related, learning reveals that elements of their experience of the collaborative learning community help them cope with what I labeled “integration anxiety.”

### **First Step: Grounded Theory**

First, as I was considering various ways to dig deeply into the data provided by the interviews and some of the group email responses, I decided that the rigorous discipline required of grounded theory analysis would meet that goal while showing that I was serious about working with the data in a way worthy of doctoral level work. Right or wrong, I have developed the impression that a grounded theory approach may be the best first exposure to learning about how to do qualitative research. Its goal speaks well to the goals of this research project. As Creswell (1998, pp. 55f) points out,

the intent of a **grounded theory study** is to **generate or discover a theory**, an abstract analytical schema or a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation. This situation is one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon. To study how people act and react to this phenomenon, the researcher collects primarily interview data, makes multiple visits to the field, develops and interrelates categories of information, and writes theoretical propositions or hypotheses or presents a visual picture of the theory.

The 20 or 30 visits to the field recommended by Creswell (1998) are hopefully covered by my immersion in the life of the OLLU program over the past twelve years.

Relative to the process of data analysis, the decision to make use of the recent work of Charmaz (2006, 2008a, 2008b; Morse, Stern, Corbin, et al., 2009) was not an arbitrary decision. She makes use of specific constructionist commitments in her contribution to Holstein and Gubrium (2008), suggesting that grounded theory can make a contribution to the constructionist interest in “whats and hows” by adding an interest in the “whys.” The concept of integration anxiety, for example, helps to explain why the students report an admixture of various emotions in their experiences of supervision and also why the collaborative learning community seems to help with their adjustment to the various levels of stress in the training program (cf. Huehls, 2005 and Soklaridis, 2009).

Charmaz (2008) makes the case that creative adaptation and innovation are hallmarks of both a constructionist approach to research as well as a grounded theory approach.

Grounded theory not only is a method for understanding research participants’ social constructions but is also a method that researchers construct throughout inquiry.

Grounded theorists adopt a few strategies to focus their data gathering and analyzing, but what they do, how they do it, and why they do it emerge through interaction in the

research setting, with their data, colleagues, and themselves. (Charmaz, 2008, p. 398)

She notes with approval the social constructionist tendency to encourage innovation.

“Researchers can develop new understandings and novel theoretical interpretations of studied life” (Ibid.). I appeal to Charmaz and especially her contribution in Holstein and Gubrium’s (2008) handbook as ample justification for adapting grounded theory methods to the data generated in the interviews with the OLLU students.

Charmaz (2006) guided me through a qualitative analysis toward an “initial coding,” a methodology for line-by-line analysis in which pieces of text are coded in the margins using action words ending in “ing” as a way of capturing some of the dynamic nature of the process. The initial coding process allows the researcher to slow the process down in order to hear more of the richness of what was being said during the interviews. Below is an example of how I made use of initial coding taken from a brief excerpt in the first interview.

*Speaking up*

JH: OK. I’m finally speaking up. Especially

*Supervisor genuinely caring and concerned*

my first supervisor, I think she genuinely cared and had concern for our well-being and she came across that way.

*Asking about context*

GB: Are you talking about practicum, Jess, or internship?

*Remembering first supervisor’s caring*

JH: Practicum. My first supervisor. She

*Learning a lot about her personally*

came across as very caring. We learned a lot

*Learning about ourselves as well*

about her personally and ourselves and how we learned.

*Asking how personal style connected*

GB: Is that connected to the caring. You

*to caring*

said she was very caring. You learned a lot about her personal style?

*Indicating personal style*

JH: Her personal style and what she

*Calling her Mother Hen*

expected. I called her Mother Hen

*Needing to let them fly*

sometimes because she had to let us fly. She

*Indicating appreciation for nurturing*

did such a wonderful job. It was almost like  
a nurturing experience.

After absorbing the language and details of the interviews, I moved on to what Charmaz calls “focused coding” in which the more abstract categories of the initial coding are organized thematically to get a feel for some of the major themes addressed by participants.

I exposed both interviews to the process of initial coding twice before doing what Charmaz calls “focused coding,” a method for creating larger thematic categories based on the initial coding. In my opinion, this process allowed the major themes to emerge in clear relief against the backdrop of what began as a conversation about supervision. For example, numerous references to supervision and to supervisors sprinkled throughout the two interviews were brought together to be further distilled into several clear themes about students’ recollections, opinions, appreciations, and developments of the supervision they received in either second year practicum or their third year internship.

Even though initially I was not interested in pure grounded theory method to the point of creating a theory out of the data, I found myself being led more and more toward the goal of identifying interesting overarching themes that make the whole research project worthwhile. If that is what a grounded theory analysis is supposed to do, then I can see how that method might lead almost inexorably toward a new way of making sense of what happened in the interviews. There is, I must admit, a sense of excitement and satisfaction about being able to talk with faculty and students further about things that might make a contribution to the overall quality of the OLLU training program. I decided to run the data through the gamut of another level of analysis before identifying those overarching interpretive schemas.

## **Second Step: The Shotter Filter**

I have devoted a separate chapter below to introducing the Shotter Filter. There is much about Shotter's (1993, 1995, 2008) theoretical work that cries out for practical experimentation. Lock and Strong (2010) have captured some of the allure of Shotter's work and influence. It allows us to listen for what Charmaz (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008) called the "whats" and "hows" of constructionist curiosity. The Shotter Filter gives the researcher another analytic strategy by asking of the data the following questions: What elements of the learning process do the students affirm for inclusion in the future they and the faculty are creating together? And how do interview participants construct that future together? It asks the researcher to listen, first, for the content of what students affirm for inclusion in an ideal learning environment. Second, it provides a way to notice the process aspects of those affirmations, i.e., how are we already creating the ideal learning environment now? Shotter's contribution is to have created a new way of listening to what people are creating together in conversation, but he also directs our attention, in a unique way, to how they are interacting together in that co-construction. One can hear the subtle negotiations taking place in the interaction between participants even though there is no acknowledgment that a negotiation is taking place. We are witnessing the evolving co-creation of the very collaborative learning community about which we hear in the interviews.

Participants can clearly be heard to wonder about how they will be able to maintain their motivation and resilience in a process with an uncertain outcome. The students seem to be wondering out loud about how much sense it makes to continue to trust a process that never allows for any kind of long lasting relief. If not for the mutual support of the collaborative learning community, it might not be possible. They are constantly growing, stretching, challenging and being challenged, testing and being tested, experimenting and expanding in an

environment that seems to make their evolution a little easier because they share part of the responsibility in defining the nature of the environment.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I introduced how the research design became a methodology for gathering data in the form of interviews with a group of OLLU students. I reported on how the research plan evolved before its implementation in two interviews rather than the three originally planned. The data generated by the interviews was analyzed through two different lenses, one traditional, the other experimental. I would argue that to make use of more than one method of analysis fits well with postmodern and social constructionist commitments about how reality is constructed together. The more I read about the techniques of discursive analysis (Gale, 2000; Gale, Lawless, & Roulston, 2004) which can require hours of analytical time for a few seconds of transcript, the better I felt about having enough data from which to draw inferences and collaborative creations.

## **Chapter 6     Summary of Interviews**

I hope the reader will detect that a collaborative conversation has already begun in the earliest parts of my decision-making about how to gather data in a set of interviews with the students. From this point of view, the first five chapters can be read as part of the data gathering process even prior to the research interviews themselves. The transition to the more substantive parts of the dissertation can be seen as more seamless than chapter divisions might indicate.

My strongest desire is not only to allow the interview participants to tell their own stories but also to experiment with analytical frames that might allow us to hear in a new way the common or collaborative story they seemed to be telling. The primary data grows out of the two interviews, but there are also other responses to requests for key words for supervision and essential elements of a definition of supervision. Given the experimental nature of the collaborative interview and the immense subtleties of what people said, how they said it, how they expanded on the statements of others, how they digressed or disagreed, and how the various themes emerged and receded throughout the interview, I would argue that there is more than enough material to draw some interesting and useful conclusions as well as general impressions of what it might be like to overhear a group of students talking about their experiences of the various influences on their personal and corporate professional development.

### **A Summary of the Contents of the Two Interviews**

Before reporting on the thematic categories that emerged after systematic analysis, it might be helpful to hear an overture of sorts, an overview of the general movement of the two recorded conversations. In other words, if you took the time to peruse the interviews, you would likely detect certain themes fairly quickly. There was, of course, thematic overlapping from time to time, but there were some consistent themes.



In the first interview (Addendum, pp. 270-281), I began with a simple question, “How would you describe your experience of supervision?” I had no idea how the students would respond, but it was important to announce the theme of the interviews as clearly as possible. The initial response was to list attributes of supervision as they would describe their experience of it. They described their experiences as diverse, a learning experience, open, supportive, entertaining, a positive experience, non-hierarchical, and constructive criticism. After the suggestion of constructive criticism, I asked, “Can you say a little bit more about that?” That question seemed to take things in a new direction, allowing participants to describe their experiences in more detail. Several participants shared bits and pieces of their initial experiences of supervision and supervisors.

They noted how supervisors modeled how to work with clients. They noted with appreciation how supervision introduced them to clinical work by allowing them to witness it being done by the supervisor in a safe environment. After a few minutes, one participant added the theme of appreciating the contribution of fellow team members. She noted how they learned how to work together in the collaborative learning process. That same participant went further to add how the bilingual practicum team added even more richness to her experience because of the element of going back and forth between two languages, a common experience of many of the Hispanic students when they were growing up.

Another student went further with the theme of appreciating certain attributes of her supervisor who was described as caring and nurturing, “just like our mothers.” The maternal theme adds an interesting element of familial associations and connections. She did not stop at noting care and nurturance. She also recalled, using developmental metaphors, how she and other students pushed back against that same supervisor in order to grow while gaining some measure

of independence. She left the impression that she had to almost demand that she be allowed to fall or bump her head as long as she was learning.

At some point during her reflections, another participant on the same team, as it turns out, began reflecting on an incident in which one of their early practicum clients left a bad taste in their mouths by turning away from them, because they were students, and toward the supervisor, because she was the supervisor and the more experienced clinician. While the client's experience might make sense, the students recalled it as a negative experience that invalidated the program emphasis on non-hierarchical learning. At least three of the interview team participants reflected on that same memory. One talked about how the team processed the experience afterwards, speaking with appreciation about how they managed to make sense of what happened together.

The conversation shifted back to generalities at that point to focus again on appreciation for what we call non-hierarchical aspects of the learning environment. Non-hierarchical cannot be taken literally, but we use the term to remind ourselves of one of the important elements of the vision of a collaborative learning community. One might use the term minimally-hierarchical instead. Another participant described how her practicum team handled introductions and other practical matters related to explaining who all the members of team were and how things worked. When things got confusing, team members referred to each other for feedback and other perspectives, skills they were learning to apply to their work with clients. That same participant explained how important it was for her to feel engaged and interested in what was happening in practicum. While there was some laughter from other team members to add emphasis to her point, it only served to make clear how much they valued having learning experiences that were engaging and motivating rather than boring or disappointing.

Another participant expressed her appreciation for the diversity of views she experienced on her team. She explained that certain experiences allowed her to become more empathetic and more accepting. She told a story from her internship year about shifting gears to learn from a multi-generational Hispanic family about the importance of extended family. She learned to use a genogram to facilitate the family's telling of familial connections over time in the spirit of the cultural genogram discussed by Keiley, Dolbin, Hill, Karuppaswamy, Liu, et al. (2002). As she said, she not only learned a more effective way to ask questions, but she learned to ask questions about questions. She basically conveyed the idea that clinical learning is about learning how to learn from the clients in order to learn how to help them more effectively.

The second interview (Addendum, pp. 282-297) took on a different tone as a result of how I began the interview. Because of recent experiences not only of discouragement and frustration with the ambiguity of the research process, but also of wanting to find creative ways to invite a more personalized discussion of their experiences of supervision, I began with an extensive public statement about how I really wanted the participants to open up and allow themselves to think out loud about their experiences. I assumed that if I framed the question differently (Maxwell, 2005), the participants might be inclined to respond more personally. The opening question was "What do you bring to the program?," building on the constructionist assumption that we are not only discovering things in the research interviews, but also creating things together, just as we do in the training program.

The first response from a participant strikes me as humorous now. She stated quite honestly that she was trying to figure out what I meant by the question about what you bring to the program. What impresses me is how she asked for clarification in a respectful and professional manner. I reminded her that we all used language suggestive of the idea that we

were involved in creating our experiences of the program together in all of the conversations we had from the beginning of the program to the end. She answered that she brought an openness defined by a willingness to learn, but it was more than that. It was a willingness to learn by asking questions and insisting on being taken seriously in the experience of testing the ideas advanced by the training program, a challenging process, she noted.

Another participant went into more detail pointing out how students bring ideas from their past experiences to test against the new ideas inherent in a clinical training program. She recalls that she interpreted it as encouragement to question things, including ideas and assumptions of the training program. While this student emphasized the collision of ideas, another student emphasized how she experienced validation in the learning of the new ideas. Another student jumped in immediately adding how the ideas of the program confirmed her own developing ideas about working with people. She also confessed that some of what she learned lead to a sobering awareness of the power of ideas for clients, ideas that could hurt as well as help.

Yet another participant pointed out how the program allowed students to “experiment and expand,” an almost poetic way of describing the positive aspects of the learning process. She seemed to value the fact that she was not punished for thinking for herself, that she benefited from the program emphasis on open-mindedness. Another participant added that the process was not easy, but challenging, even difficult sometimes, but the security of being allowed to think out loud made it easier and more valuable. Someone else used the word “apprehension” to describe a developing awareness that the learning quite quickly becomes part of who you are as a student. When I asked her to expand on her comment, she confessed that she felt challenged by all the different approaches. She felt some pressure to be able to say something useful to the client, no

matter what. Another participant added that she felt challenged by the way faculty asked her to talk about why she believed what she believed.

Someone else clarified that while it was challenging, the process tended not to be confrontational in a negative sense, but only invited students to speak their minds. Another student talked about the surprising process of how team members learned to listen to each other without dismissing each other, again, a clinical skill that would come in handy with clients. I pressed her to say more about what she learned. She answered, “The more and more I’m in it, the more and more I know it is a way-of-being.” She went on to add that her learning allowed her to stand on her own two feet without the benefit of the other fifteen mirrors that allowed her to see herself in the developmental process, one of the more interesting metaphors of the interview. I asked her to expand on the mirrors metaphor to which she responded that she had learned how to learn from the perspectives of other people. She valued the experience of being able to share so much with like-minded people in the training program.

I wanted to shift the focus to supervision at that point, asking how we might frame what we were talking about in terms of supervision, noting that the past participant seemed to be suggesting that the students were learning how to supervise each other. She agreed with that idea. Another participant expanded on how it happens that students supervise each other. They talk about an idea and before long it becomes a community idea, a reference to communal decision-making. As I was appreciating the sound of what she was saying, another participant pointed out that the students were supposed to be learning to do the same thing with clients. She also commented that she appreciated us sitting down to talk about these things in the interviews. She was making the connection between how the learning process works in a parallel fashion to

learning to work with clients. “You’re just always learning,” she noted, “And that sometimes there aren’t answers, just perspectives.”

One participant introduced another theme by noting her appreciation of feeling connected, an experience she had not had in other programs, adding that the sense of connection actually seemed to be promoted even in the academic aspects of the training program. Others agreed, noting that supervisors seemed to possess characteristics of successful supervisors in the research literature. The component of connection adds value to the program, according to another participant.

I again shifted the focus to the issue of power, asking them how they thought power had been handled in their experience. One participant answered that while she had doubts at first, she tested early faculty assertions that the students were colleagues already. She voiced what others seemed to be thinking, that they tended to test to see if certain assertions would pan out or remain only assertions. They seemed to appreciate the sense of relief from discovering that program values actually allow for experimentation in an environment of safety. Finally, a quiet participant noted how much she valued that her ideas were not dismissed, but seemed to be valued, even affirmed.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a brief summary overview of the contents of the two interviews providing data for analysis. One must make adjustments as one proceeds. One might wonder if an exclusive focus on text might lose some of the flavor of a video of the two interviews. It is a legitimate criticism and perhaps future researchers will have the ability to provide a quick link to a video of a research interview.

## **Chapter 7     Primary Themes in the Conversations**

As I mentioned earlier, after some confusion about how to involve participants in a collaborative analysis of the interviews, I began to realize that the students were simply too overwhelmed with keeping up with class assignments and the pressures of practicum to maintain an ongoing engagement with me in the analysis phase of the project. Rather than sink into despair, which was tempting at times, I took advantage of the opportunity to learn something about other kinds of research approaches. My early exposure to grounded theory approaches to qualitative inquiry suggested the possibility of using grounded theory methods to get deep into the data provided in the interviews with the students. It seemed reasonable to take responsibility for learning (and creating) various ways to analyze the data without expecting busy students to take responsibility for taking time to do the work for me. I began with the assumption that all participants in the conversations were engaged in honest reflections on the experience of supervision in the OLLU training program. I assumed that participants were revealing profound and important insights into their experiences rather than assuming they were hesitant or even deceitful in their reflections and responses.

### **First Interview: Focused Coding Results**

Focused coding of the first interview allowed me to identify several themes that seem to organize most of what transpired in the interview. Since the focus of the research project is the students' experience of supervision in all its facets, it makes sense to anticipate that student participants would want to talk about a number of different experiences related to the general theme. For example, in addition to commenting on the role of a supervisor, participants expanded their focus to include other aspects of their overall experience in the training program.

The three themes to emerge in the first interview as a result of all levels of coding are: (1) the supervisor as mediator of program values, (2) room to grow, and (3) a bad experience gone good.

### **The Supervisor as Mediator of Program Values**

The first words of the first interview (Addendum, p. 270), in response to the opening question asking them to describe their experience of supervision, provide a wide array of various descriptors of their experience so far in the training program: diverse, a learning experience, open, supportive, entertaining, a positive experience, non-hierarchical, and a few others. Someone had to convey or to facilitate those experiences. The students did not create those experiences on their own, although they later would be able to do exactly that. In the early parts of the training program and in the early phases of the first practicum year, they are most open to faculty influence.

Students refer to a number of different aspects of the manner in which supervisors mediate program values indicative of research on the same topic (Wetchler, 1988; Wetchler, 1989; Wetchler, Piercy, and Sprenkle, 1989; Wetchler and Vaughn, 1991). They refer to the kind of tone set by the supervisor in interaction with students. They refer to the kind of direct and indirect instruction given by the supervisors, including didactic instruction and modeling. They refer to the importance of personal caring and self-disclosure. They also refer to the various ways in which supervisors facilitate a learning process similar to that of an effective clinical process in work with clients.

References to the kind of tone set by supervisors begin immediately in the first interview (Addendum, p. 270). In addition to the value words used by participants to describe various elements of their experience, participants contribute the following ways in which supervisors set a tone conducive to learning. They convey an egalitarian ethic in interaction with students as



well as giving permission to make mistakes without punitive reprisals. At their best, supervisors make it safe to ask questions and to think out loud as well as inviting other responses and other ways of seeing things. They directly and indirectly manage to foster a therapeutic environment in which students find creative ways to thrive and grow just as a client would in a genuinely therapeutic environment.

References to direct and indirect instruction include teaching and discussing academic ideas while explaining their relevance for working with clients. They not only talk about how things are done. They also show how it is done by modeling for students, especially in the early weeks of their practicum course, what a therapy conversation looks and sounds like.

AH: It's a good illustration of how it actually works in terms of techniques, of ways of asking, ways of talking . . . I find it a good modeling to see how the supervisors do it . . .

The physical characteristics, how they sit, how they move, how they touch, how they stop. (Addendum, p. 271)

They provide relevant and timely information as well as constructive feedback to students practicing with clients.

References to personal caring and self-disclosure include the various ways supervisors express confidence in the novice student.

JH: OK. I'm finally speaking up. Especially my first supervisor, I think she genuinely cared and had concern for our well-being and she came across that way.

GB: Are you talking about practicum, Jess, or internship?

JH: Practicum. My first supervisor. She came across as very caring. We learned a lot about her personally and ourselves and how we learned. (Addendum, p. 273)

They appreciate the encouragement and validation provided by supervisors. There are references to how caring can be conveyed even when students are pushing back from the supervisor to gain more independence from the supervisor. Supervisors are described as nurturing and supportive even as they provide feedback designed to help students change some of their behaviors with clients.

References to how supervisors encourage the development of a learning environment approximating an optimal therapeutic environment usually include an after-the-fact awareness on the part of students that they were, in fact, experiencing a parallel process to that of a client. One of the members of the reflecting team noticed the connection.

CW: One of the deep things that came across as the panelists were talking was that what supervision provided was a safe environment and kind of an underlying theme was how often we talk about creating a safe kind of environment for the client, a place where they can share with us. That's exactly what the supervisors seem to have done with us in our program, to create a safe place for us to explore and to find where we're at in the therapeutic process in terms of the learning process. That came across to me as a kind of importance. (Addendum, p. 280)

They usually find this awareness to be surprising. One of the more subtle things a supervisor does is to mediate clinical values by fostering a learning atmosphere similar to that fostered by a competent therapist with a client.

### **Room to Grow**

There are a number of references to developmental ways of thinking and developmental metaphors suggesting that students feel like they have ample room to grow. Students expressed appreciation for the fact that they are not constrained by predetermined expectations that impose

simplistic goods and bads on their early attempts at clinical work. A number of times participants applaud the way the supervisor conveyed a sense of openness to experimentation by the students. For example, following references to feeling energized and motivated in practicum, a participant added:

LL: I would like to elaborate on that. When you feel comfortable and when I feel comfortable in supervision, it allows me to . . . I feel safer and actually I'm able to . . . I know there is no expert. We're all on the same level. That kind of thing. That feeling. I'm more able to express different ideas and to come up with new ideas, to challenge the ideas that I have, not me supervising, but my client. And what it also does is to move me into branching out and trying new ideas. (Addendum, p. 277)

One student reported "feeling at home" on the practicum team. Another compared the supervisor to the wise caring mother, discussed above, who nevertheless allows students to make mistakes or, as the student said, even to fall and bump our heads. One gets the impression that these students see the supervisor as one who balances active engagement with permission-giving availability in case students need feedback or consultation.

Supervisors know each student personally, allowing for personalized learning. There are numerous references to feeling safe and supported, but there are also references to being challenged to consider new ways of thinking. Commenting on how she felt, one reported:

VB: All those words. . . Safe and supportive and, I don't know, comfortable. I enjoy the experience. I really enjoy listening to the way my fellow practicum people. . . What do you call them? . . . Colleagues. Thank you very much. They assess what someone says and then we can talk about it and kind of go, "I never thought about it that way."

Collectively, we're like a whole person, like a whole real therapist who can figure out what we're doing. (Addendum, p. 272)

Students feel encouraged to stretch and to grow, to take risks trusting that whatever happens, they will learn how to proceed. One participant described learning that it was okay to relax and even be loud and crazy sometimes, clearly a reference to experimenting with various behaviors toward the goal of learning what behaviors fit and which do not.

There are ample references to the normal experience of negative and uncomfortable feeling states as one develops from inexperienced and unfamiliar with clinical work to more experienced and more familiar with the process. It is not always easy or fun. It can be daunting and discouraging. Students experience a high level of vulnerability in the early phases of practicum work with clients (Bear and Kivlighan, 1994; Bischoff, Barton, Thober, and Hawley, 2002; Borders, 1990; Duryee, Brymer, and Gold, 1996). They feel unprepared and unequipped alongside of feeling highly motivated to prepare themselves to work as competent mental health professionals. Sometimes the goal seems like it is a million miles away. All the more valuable then is the supervisor who can comfort and reassure the novice student that there is room to grow.

### **A Bad Experience Gone Good**

An example of how participants find ways to collaborate throughout the program is found in a story interpreted by at least three participants who, by chance, had been on the same practicum team in their second year. They were able, therefore, to report on and interpret the meaning of a shared experience. The student who initiated the recollection began by responding to a colleague's description of the supervisor as caring. She then begins to recall a specific incident involving a new client who seemed to dismiss the students, preferring instead to talk

directly to the supervisor who had been introduced with the title of “doctor,” with the implication that she was the expert in the room. In all subsequent segments of transcript, the researcher is designated by the initials GB while all others designate student participants.

AH: I think I’m remembering a little more about that initial experience. To me, it was always harder on the supervisor than the students, because then the client would turn to the supervision which kinda for me discounted ourselves as the therapist. Like, “Excuse me, I’m talking.” You know. She was looking for validation or looking for guidance from the supervisor. Speaking for myself, I felt limited with the supervisor with other students to be able to spread my wings or just take off running, because learning how to manage or maneuver or if this person wanted to talk or if this person wanted to talk, trying to figure that out before I could jump off and run.

GB: How would that have been better, Amanda?

AH: I think initially it had a lot to do with how the client saw the supervisor as the main person and we’re all just students. Which is true. Maybe we need that because not all of us are ready. (Addendum, p. 274f.)

She recalls feeling uncomfortable, but also feeling sympathy for the supervisor who seemed to have trouble managing the situation to everyone’s satisfaction. She also hints that maybe there was truth in the situation in the sense of dealing with the reality that they were, in fact, students with much less experience than the supervisor.

Other students began to share the recollection and the memory of what must have been an awkward situation. The introduction of hierarchy into the situation seems to have shocked and offended the students who were expecting, apparently, to be taken as seriously by the client as they had been by the supervisor.

JH: Whereas the client would look at us as just learning, each of us as therapists, Now that this is Doctor such and such and we were just students, it kind of went (sound as if strong exhaling). It kind of sucked out anything that we might have had. And, our supervisor did the best she could, she tried, remember, she tried to not look at them and tried to . . . but it had already been done. She did her best to try to make it . . . After they left, she did bring that back, “How did that feel? What was up with that first statement?” Then we actually had a dialogue about that whole experience after it happened.

(Addendum, p. 275)

One more student added to the last statement in the quote above about how the supervisor handled the situation after the client left. The student explains above that the supervisor did her best to rectify the situation, but failing that invited the students to talk about what had just occurred in a way that helped them recover the sense of collaboration.

The third student summarizes the meaning of the experience by noting how important it might be to introduce the team in a way that minimizes the element of hierarchy in the room.

LL: We processed it. I think the language is real important. If a client did walk in for the first time with a practicum team, it would be real important to just to keep everyone on the same level and have that established before the client came in. I think it would be more of a collaborative learning environment. That way. . . We have been learning from one another in that practicum. We not only learned from the supervisor, but we learned as much if not more, at times, from others in the group. (Addendum, p. 275)

This crisis of confidence turned out to be a learning crisis in which everyone present became more aware of how much they value the way the supervisor tended to strive toward the minimal amount of hierarchy. Where it is possible for students and supervisors to achieve that ideal, this

student reports, “I think it would be more of a collaborative learning environment.” It is interesting to hear her connect what they learned from this apparently negative circumstance to experiences of learning with and from each other in the practicum setting.

### **Second Interview: Focused Coding Results**

Focused coding of the second interview allowed me to identify major themes emerging in the conversation. It might help to summarize the larger movements within the second interview. Beginning with my lengthy opening statement, the conversation moved to an appreciation for the challenging aspects of grappling with new ideas in a safe environment before moving on to an appreciation of the relational aspects of interactive learning in which students “learn from each others’ learning.” The conversation emphasized the role of group decision-making in the evolution of a new professional identity allowing students to see themselves as competent and capable of making use of ideas which have the power to hurt as well as help. Participants report feeling connected, seeing themselves as integral parts of a group process to which they contribute. This feeling of being connected counters the fear of being alone or isolated in the process. The reflecting team heard a developing maturity of perspective, a progression from intimidation to connection, an appreciation for the supportive aspects of learning-in-community.

I chose to expand on the following major themes from the second interview: (1) the researcher’s opening statement which may have sounded like a public confession, (2) responses to faculty influence: strategies for dealing with the challenges of learning, (3) a deepening appreciation for collaborative learning, and (4) reflections on power.

### **Researcher’s Public Self-Disclosure**

Like it or not, the conversations with the students also included me (Hosking and Pluut, 2010; Watt, 2007). My presence is analogous to the role of the supervisor or faculty member in

other settings. I suggested the research project, designed how it would proceed, invited the students to volunteer to participate, and then facilitated the research interviews. I am in no way a neutral, unbiased, objective, detached observer. I am in all ways a participant-observer who is fully engaged in the shared meaning construction of the research conversations.

It is still slightly embarrassing, for some reason, to review how much I was talking at the beginning of the second interview. Blame it on caffeine, adrenaline, performance anxiety, a need to attract sympathy for myself, or anything else that might be possible. Whatever the case, I began the second interview with what I thought was a profound insight at the time. What if my own sense of self-doubt about how to proceed in the research process matches something of the same kind of experience in the students as they proceed in the learning process? What if my own experience of feeling overwhelmed runs parallel to some of their feelings of being overwhelmed by all the competing demands of participating in the OLLU training program?

I started off reporting that I was learning a lot about supervision and qualitative research. But that was not all. The emotional component demanded my attention. The reference to Canada is a reference to a research workshop I attended only a few weeks prior to the second interview, another one of the early learning experiences described earlier in the dissertation. The workshop was facilitated by three Taos Institute faculty members in Calgary, Canada in which several other doctoral students were present. The theme of the workshop was an overview of various ways to conduct research from a qualitative perspective.

GB: The thing that I wanted to let you know about is that as I have gone through this process I've had all kinds of doubts, second thoughts, am I doing this right?, am I screwing this up? I don't know what I'm doing. And when I went to Canada it only made



that worse. It really made me mad because I realized that I'm not thinking clearly about this. (Addendum, p. 282)

When I look back on it now, I was probably right on track with how I was feeling, given the immense challenges of maintaining a more-than-full-time private practice, teaching an academic course every trimester as well as a year-long practicum team every year, in addition to a dissertation project.

The end of all those conflicting reflections was a desire to engage the students differently in the second interview.

GB: So what's happened now is that as I have thought about new ways to engage you guys to get your thoughts, I'm realizing that if your hesitation is like mine, if you're having second thoughts and self-doubts or questions like mine, we're in business. That's what's going to make this thing work. Your honest thoughts and reflections about where you really are. What you thought a year ago, what you're thinking now. Any random thing you've got. That's what's going to make this thing work, okay? Am I coming through? (Addendum, p. 282)

Unfortunately, I have no idea what the participants heard. Since they were probably inclined to give me the benefit of the doubt, they may have interpreted my statement as an invitation to join me in my honest self-disclosure about how I was doing personally as a result of all the ups and downs of the research project.

In addition, I had decided to phrase the opening question differently with the hope that I might be able to engage the participants in a more open and personal level of reflection. After the interview I discovered, as Maxwell (2005) reported, that some other researchers (Kirk & Miller,

1986) had also experimented with asking less logical questions to evoke a more personal response to the researcher's curiosity.

GB: If I asked you, for example, what do you bring to the program? A program is like a collaborative learning community is what we call it. There are some people who are further along than others. Whatever it is that you bring, I want to know about that. I want you to be honest with me. In the future we're going to have more exchanges, questions, random thoughts. Okay? I'm open to all of it. If you have any questions about what I'm saying right now, ask them, and I'll throw it open in a second. Am I coming through? Okay. So, what I hoping we'll do, you see, is to be able to look into what's really happening with people as they evolve in the program. Their real thoughts, their real concerns, their real fears, their real angers, their frustrations. So, having said that, that's my way of inviting you guys to be honest. (Addendum, p. 283)

I had hoped the question, "What do you bring to the program?" might challenge participants to consider what they contribute to the co-creation of the learning environment of the program. It was a way of asking them to reflect on their experience of supervision from another angle, a more personal angle in which they might feel free to be more open in their reports of their thoughts and feelings about their experiences.

One brave soul had the temerity to interject that she was trying to figure out what I meant.

BJG: Well, I'm trying to figure out what you mean by what you bring to the program? Are you meaning personality, are you meaning work experience, attitude. I need more about that. (Addendum, p. 283)

Of course she needed more about that. Since I was already being honest about everything else, why not share with them some of my major assumptions about what happens in the program and what I suspected they might be thinking?

GB: When you come into the program, you bring who you are and that you may not have ever studied any of this stuff, maybe some, and if we define supervision as sort of a continual experience that's going on all the time, when faculty's there or not, what does a student bring to that experience? They bring excitement, they bring dreams, but they also bring "I don't know what I'm doing here." They bring "Collaborative what?" You know what I'm saying? They bring "What the hell is postmodernism?" And a lot of other stuff like, "Who does he think he is?" Stuff like that. I want to be able to hear. . . If I can hear that internal dialogue, I want to get that external, right? If we're all creating this together, see, we're testing assumptions. If that's really true, if that's really how it works, then what you guys are dealing with, what you're thinking about is not private. It's very public. The more vocal you are, the more participatory it is, it seems to me. Does that make sense? (Addendum, p. 283)

Even if it did not make sense, I was inviting them to recognize that a student's experience was likely multi-faceted, to say the least. They might naturally have a lot of questions about many of the new ideas and new experiences that come with initiation into a training program for mental health professionals.

I was hoping to hear them talk about what difference supervision and faculty influence makes as they wind their way through the hills and valleys of the program. I will never know what might have happened if I had simply begun with a briefer question which I related clearly to the original question in the first interview, "How would you describe your experience of

supervision?” I certainly did not consciously intend to influence or manipulate the way the participants responded as much as I wanted to be a fully open participant myself. I wanted them to see me as I saw myself, tentative, nervous, self-conscious, but also motivated and interested in learning as much as I could. I hope they heard me say something like, “Hey, we’re in this together.”

### **Responses to Faculty Influence: Strategies for Dealing with the Challenges of Learning**

The same student who had the temerity to say I was not making sense nevertheless volunteered to report first that while she brought an openness and a willingness to learn, she also found the process to be challenging. She dealt with the challenges by asking questions based on her earlier experiences. She was clear that sometimes she faced the challenges by asking questions and sometimes she put forth an opposing view. This seems quite honest in a way that might confirm she heard the basic intent of my public transparency after all.

A number of code tags from my initial coding of the second interview suggest that participants were aware of a wide array of ways they found to cope with and attempt to make sense of the demands of learning. They asked questions, compared new learning to old, worked on open-mindedness, invited dialogue, welcomed times when new learning fit with old learning, tested ideas, and learned from each other. Taken together, their responses indicate that they were always stretching and growing as a result of the constant demands of integration. They seem to be increasingly aware that learning evolves and that there is hope in that fact.

All is not sweetness and light apparently. In addition to expressions of appreciation for the more comforting and reassuring aspects of the learning environment, some of the elements of professional responsibility confront the novice student with a sobering sense of ambiguity and uncertainty.

VB: I think in learning the different, you know, approaches and theories and stuff, it's funny because we're going along thinking I'm a collaborative therapist and I didn't know it. It's like when you read your DSM-IV, you're going "Oh, my God, I've got Attention Deficit Disorder," "Oh, my God, I've got this disorder, I've got that disorder."

Everything you read you have, you know. I think it's the same thing. It's not that severe, but you can. I can make myself seem, I could probably write it up. I know myself, I know who I am. I can figure out how to make myself...

GB: You're reading yourself into the stuff you're learning? You know, it's not just an idea; I've got to remember that on a test. It's like you're testing it on yourself.

VB: Exactly.

GB: Experimenting with . . .

VB: (inaudible; people laugh.) It's like in our little cohort, they talk about how they use some of the techniques and the other things that you learn, because it makes you better, you know, it makes you...it could make you worse, too. You could take it and...there are very harmful things that we could do with the information that we have and the insight that we have. And I think that being able to understand and kind of see where you fit in and understand that you could probably fit into any one. It's your choice to figure out.

(Addendum, p. 285)

"It's your choice to figure out," captures the essence of the weight of responsibility on students as they develop strategies for facing such things. Note the references to discomfort and ambiguity. New ideas can threaten as well as stimulate curiosity.

Another student began a string of responses indicating a shared awareness that ambiguity and uncertainty do not dominate the students' experience of learning.

LL: My key comment would be is that what this program allows is the ability to experiment and expand, experiment with other truths out there. It may not be accepted, it may be accepted, but it's kind of an understanding that's it's okay, because that's what the program is based on, open-mindedness and learning new things, so we're more apt to throw things out there that might be questionable or brought up and discussed.

GB: You guys have emphasized that and, of course, it's rewarding to us to see that we're being consistent with your experience. Let me push something. I assume that when you come into the program, you don't really know that's the way it's going to be. You join in this collaborative learning community. What's that like when you get in there and find out I'm not getting in trouble here for thinking, I'm not getting trouble for having my thoughts. Do you know what I'm saying?

VB: It's not easy. You come in and you tippy-toe and then you realize that you have that where you thought you had an inch you actually have a mile, you start to settle down and you start to create and, it's kind of like having a relationship with your family. When you have a home to go to, you're going to take chances, you're going to challenge things, you're going okay, I'm going to take this job, crap, that didn't work. It's the same thing here, you're trying something new and you can. It's the same thing here. I may be going a little too far, but you can. You get that. That kind of security.

SG: You're also not ostracized when you want to go and test this out, something different than what the program teaches. You feel like it's okay. You're accepted. (Addendum, p. 286)

There is a clear sense of agreement here that alongside of coping with the anxiety generated by new learning, there is also an emerging sense of security. One is not ostracized or shamed, but

instead finds acceptance. The participants are not exactly saying so, but they are constantly referring to reactions and responses to supervision and faculty influence. Supervisors facilitate a process in which students find that they can and will recover from the anxiety because the ongoing integration process also lowers the anxiety at the same time. A renewed sense of confidence in one's future as a mental health professional gradually replaces the anxiety.

In the second interview participants reveal how their developing trust in the process encourages them to take risks with increasing confidence that they will find ways to integrate the anxiety of new learning into an emerging sense of security. Even their increasingly creative strategies for coping with the challenges placed before them by faculty influence are themselves nurtured and facilitated by faculty influence.

### **A Deepening Appreciation for Collaborative Learning**

One of the more poetic moments in the second interview came when one of the participants was talking about her awareness of personal growth. Then she added that she will miss having "fifteen mirrors" around with whom to share in a collaborative learning process.

VB: The more and more I'm in it, the more and more I know it is a way-of-being. I'm growing exponentially and hopefully it will keep going...

GB: Your experience is only enhanced by the...

VB: And I'm understanding what our limitations are. You don't always get that nice little mirror all the time, you know. You have fifteen mirrors that are constantly going and I appreciate that we've been together through all that because you learn and you grow and you...

GB: Talk about the fifteen mirrors. I'm going to remember that. That's the title of an article right there. What difference do the fifteen mirrors make?

VB: Even though my idea doesn't change, it can happen. I'm able to take what someone else understands and take that perspective because we're like-minded people. We hang around with people who talk like us, think like us, act like us, but in this situation you're put into a place where people aren't exactly like you. You learn about change and you learn about...It's about culture. (Addendum, p. 289)

How does one interpret her use of the word "mirror?" It seems ambiguous at best. However, the word mirror suggests a reflection and a "nice little mirror" suggests a pleasing or supportive reflection, unless she is being sarcastic when she uses the word. She seems to contrast an awareness of limitations to a more positive reflection in a nice little mirror. Somehow the metaphor makes her think of how her cohorts also provide some of the reflection she values. "You have fifteen mirrors that are constantly going," she tells, "and I appreciate that we've been together through all that because you learn and you grow." She values the practical effectiveness of being an active member of a collaborative learning community.

Another student picks up the theme to expand on how she makes use of the mirror metaphor. Her explanation might help us understand how the mirror metaphor would be understood by the other students.

LL: I can give you an example of that. During practicum, we come up with an idea or a way which is like shadowing or some kind of experiential thing and then we kind of talk about it within ourselves about that idea. That's the mirror and then you come up with something that we've all kind of agreed on and came up with so it becomes a community idea.

GB: So you have a communal decision-making thing. Don't you find the metaphor of a mirror interesting? You're looking at yourself, but everybody else is looking at



themselves when they're looking at everybody else. There are multiple reflections and refractions. I don't know. I find that metaphor fascinating. (Addendum, p. 288)

Could there be a clearer description of collaborative learning? The students take an idea and talk about it until it becomes a community idea, she says. This is beyond consensus-building. This is the co-construction of reality toward some kind of shared understanding.

Another statement of appreciation for collaborative learning came from a participant who reported that the experience of connection not only with other students, but also with faculty members, came as something of a surprise to her. This is the other poetic metaphor not only because of the word "connection," but also because of how it was presented and, perhaps, by whom. This participant exudes strength and independence. She expects the best of herself and does not tolerate fools gladly.

BJG: One idea that popped into my head hearing the metaphors and stuff is the word, "connected." And that's something that I got from this program that I haven't got in any other program is that you work hard and then you go to practicum and then you go to internship and talk to supervisors. It's like we're all connected in a way that I haven't ever felt before.

GB: That's new for you?

BJG: Yeah. And having assignments in class that actually promote being connected with each other and having the objectives or courses that actually promote that connection with each other whereas in another other programs that I've been in, they give you group work, but the whole program is not about group work and I think it has really helped me understand the importance of networking and going to somebody for supervision, it's okay to ask questions even if other people disagree with you or agree with you.

GB: The more connected we all are the higher quality the supervision? Help me there.

Say more...

BJG: It's more meaningful to me.

GB: Meaningful?

BJG: You can have a supervisor, but if you don't feel that connection with your supervisor, then there's really no supervision going on. (Addendum, p. 290f.)

She clearly values what she calls an experience of connection because of what it adds to the overall meaning of her learning experience. The experience of connection seems to have changed the way she thinks about networking and even the benefits of supervision, probably, in this context, a reference to post-graduation supervision required for full licensure. If she is using the metaphor of connection to refer to collaborative learning, it provides another example of a clearly articulated expression of appreciation by participants for that element of their training experience (Breunlin, Schwartz, Krause, Kochalka, Puetz, & Van Dyke, 1989).

### **Reflections on Power**

Various authors (Fine & Turner, 2002; Fine, 2003; Harper-Jaques & Limacher, 2009; Holloway, Freund, Gardner, Nelson, & Walker, 1989; Munson, 1987; Murphy & Wright, 2005) have drawn attention to the importance of the fact of power in relationships, especially in asymmetrical relationships where power is unequal no matter how respectful and egalitarian the more powerful person intends to be in that relationship. The relationship between student and faculty is one such asymmetrical relationship. From the beginning of my attempt to get approval from the institutional review board of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas to conduct research that included current students in the OLLU program in Houston, Texas, I have been acutely aware of the issue of power.

A key decision-maker in San Antonio expressed serious reservations about such research partly because of her lack of familiarity with qualitative research, but mainly because of her concern about the issue of power. She could not imagine that student participants would be able to interact openly and honestly without fears of a negative evaluation or some sort of punitive academic reprisal. Ultimately, I convinced her to allow me the chance to model lifelong learning for the students as the first acting faculty member to include students in a dissertation project. That is the background to a key section of the second interview.

The transcript speaks for itself, but the students might not have realized how intentionally I made sure to include some reflection on the matter of power with interview participants.

GB: When you come into a community like this, there are more experienced people and less experienced people, there are in fact faculty and students. One of the things I'm learning to be sensitive about is the power differential. There is a power difference because we have an evaluative function. Now we do not allow it to define who we are and what we do. When I first starting wanting to do this, there were people who thought I was crazy to want to do a research project this way exactly because they didn't think yall would want to talk. I almost did not get this thing off the ground at all because of the power issue. I know it's there and I want to ask you how we handle it, but it seems to me like we ought to at least be able to talk about what to do with that. How do we do that? You know what I'm saying? How do we do that?

VB: The first day that I walked into this classroom, maybe the second statement out of my professor's mouth was, "I'm not your professor; you're not my student. We are collaboratively working together as colleagues." That's what we were told. And I believe that I have written it on my forehead... (Laughter and indications of agreement).

GB: How do you learn to trust that, Veronica? Just because you hear us say, we're all on the same page; we're colleagues. We still give the tests...

VB: How do children learn that something is hot? Because you test it and it's true. And you can test and push and move and grow and it's still true. It's not until the day that I do something with that idea in my head that, yes, you are a more experienced colleague of mine. It's not until you prove that not to be true that it will be false. Having that experience, I don't expect to because it doesn't come about. Any patience, any concern, anything that must be resolved in a manner that (inaudible). You make a statement or you say, "What do you think? Here's what I think" and we'll figure it out. Without any feeling of...without feeling somebody's going to grade you. (Addendum, p. 292f.)

If anything, I interpret her response as an indication that she, and perhaps other students, was not overly concerned about the issue of power. That could mean she was minimizing the role of power in faculty-student relationships. On the other hand, she appreciates how she and other students remember how a faculty member told them they were already colleagues even though they had only arrived as students. But they did not take the faculty member's assertion at face value. Eager to test the power dynamics between faculty and students, they tested the reality of the assertion against how they were treated by faculty and supervisors in the collaborative learning community.

Three other participants spoke to the issue of power. One of them suggested that, of course, there is an evaluative component in the program because of the need for testing, but that does not make power an insuperable issue. Another student pointed out that even when it comes to testing, faculty and students have mutual responsibilities for tests and testing; faculty gives them, students take them. Each one has a unique responsibility within the logic of a professional

training program. A third participant who volunteered to sit in for a missing interview team member put a simple, yet eloquent spin on the matter of power differences between faculty and students. She is a middle-aged African American woman who knows about the abuses of power.

GH: I think your point of view is always looked at. They may be challenged, but they're not dismissed. I think you can bring your thoughts and ideas. Most of the time, they're important.

GB: Is that important to you that they're not dismissed?

GH: Yes, it is.

GB: You feel valued, respected...

GH: And validated, yes.

GB: Right.

GH: I'm contributing. I'm contributing to the process. (Addendum, p. 294)

When power is taken seriously and handled as thoughtfully as possible in a program emphasizing values consistent with a collaborative learning community, a student can feel validated and respected, included rather than dismissed so that, in the end, that student can report that she feels like she is contributing to the process.

### **What the Reflecting Team Heard**

I chose to include a reflecting team, discussed briefly in chapter one, in the research interviews as a way of making use of a familiar process which can often generate some surprising additional ideas about the original conversation. One way to check out what student participants in the research project were saying is to review what the reflecting team reported in their reflections on the two interviews. In the first interview (Addendum, pp. 279-281), the reflecting team noted how the students' experience of a caring and nurturing supervisor became

motivation to learn. They noted how student preferences for a non-hierarchical learning environment matched program rhetoric. They heard how students felt safe to make mistakes and to learn from each other. They could hear a developmental continuum in which dependent students struggled toward independence. Someone on the reflecting team noted how some student participants had become aware that what makes for an optimal learning environment also makes for an optimal therapeutic environment. Several comments were made about the nature of supervisory relationships in various contexts.

In the second interview (Addendum, p. 296f.), the reflecting team noted the progress students had made in their developmental journey. They noted that a student's experience of supervision evolves over time as the student evolves. They commented on the sense of community valued by almost every one of the participants, especially the mirror metaphor and its implications. One reflecting team member wondered what the researcher was thinking and how the participants were responding to him during the interview. We have covered most, if not all, of these themes in the major categories discussed above.

### **Conclusion**

The reader has a general sense of what the students valued and did not value about their experience of supervision. What do other students and supervisors experience? As I mentioned in chapter 1, I wanted to learn about supervision as well as research. Learning what other supervisors say helps me evaluate how well we are doing in the OLLU program. Note the recommendations of Hess and Hess (2008) in their bullet-points advice to supervisors by way of comparison with what the OLLU students were saying:

- \* Be aware of the role relationship
- \* Understand the power of respect, genuineness, and role-modeling

- \* Be knowledgeable
- \* Be concrete
- \* Be aware of the student's learning level and needs
- \* Do not be afraid to show your work
- \* Be careful not to indoctrinate
- \* Be aware that you might react to the student seeming to abandon your teachings
- \* Be present and emotionally available
- \* Be sensitive and involved in students lives without being therapeutic
- \* In evaluations, let the student lead
- \* In evaluations, be descriptive
- \* Take the pulse of supervision sessions
- \* Be aware of student shame and humiliation
- \* Consider the rewards

In this chapter I have reported on efforts reminiscent of the advice above to take seriously the challenge of listening carefully and respectfully to the voices of the students in their descriptions of their experience of supervision. I identified primary themes that, while not the only themes, seem to come to the surface most quickly.

The first interview generated data distilled to allow us to overhear the students think out loud about (1) the supervisor as mediator of program values, (2) room to grow, and (3) a bad experience gone good. In the second interview which I suggest was qualitatively different from the first, we overheard what I believe are more personal reflections on (1) the researcher's opening statement, (2) responses to faculty influence in terms of various strategies for dealing

with the challenges of learning, (3) a deepening appreciation for collaborative learning, and (4) reflections on power.

Taken together, one hears an overall effort to frame the supervision experience in positive terms, but not exclusively. There are appreciative references to supervisors, but again balanced by the awareness that students must take responsibility for their growth which includes risking differentiation from supervisors. There are appreciative references to consistency in the tone set by supervisors with program values, but also awareness that the process can be challenging and stressful. The interviews reveal a widely expressed appreciation for the growing sense of community and connection between the students who, in fact, were often expecting something quite different when they first enrolled in the program. That personal experience of the collaborative learning community seems to have enhanced their confidence in working collaboratively with clients. Unless the participants who spoke up about power were minimizing or equivocating about their real experience, one might conclude that they have learned to feel safe even in the face of power differentials between faculty and students.

We will see in the next two chapters how student language describing their experience matches Anderson's (1999, 2000) language describing the collaborative learning community and how integration anxiety may aptly describe a general experience among students as they evolve into future mental health professionals. There is an important relationship between the students' experience of integration anxiety and their evolution as professionals in the collaborative learning community.



## Chapter 8     A Collaborative Learning Community

Rather than identify tentative conclusions from the grounded theory analysis (reported in the last chapter) as a “theory,” I prefer to consider certain theoretical possibilities linking the important themes emerging from my analysis of the two conversations with the OLLU students. While only tentative possibilities, they might still yield practical benefit in their implications. *I would suggest that the students have created ways to appropriate values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with what I have labeled “integration anxiety,” the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis.*

How does one know when a theme or a theoretical hunch emerges out of one’s own interest and when it emerges out of the data? From a social constructionist point of view, there is no answer to that question because it assumes an impossible distinction between the researcher’s ideas and the ideas of the research participants which, in this case, include the researcher. Reflexivity refers to the complex interaction between the researcher and the data, a conversation if you will, that facilitates the creation of new ways of making sense of the interviews. If, in this case, we have managed to bring to greater awareness certain themes of which we had been slightly less aware before, then I would consider the project to be worthwhile.

It is true that I am approaching this project with the hope of making a contribution to the OLLU program by identifying potentially useful insights into how the students actually experience the impact of interaction with faculty and supervisors. I am guilty as charged if a critic charges me with bringing an agenda to my analysis. But that does not mean I have ignored the data. I was looking for what *was* there rather than what was *not* there. I did not really know what I would learn by approaching the interviews by using grounded theory methods of analysis,

however the results gave me additional insights into how the students manage to cope with the normal anxiety of training to become mental health professionals. Their references to the sustenance derived from creating a certain kind of community together allowed me to hear how they connect hope and stress in the context of an inherently demanding training program.

In this chapter I will report on student descriptions of their experience of supervision, both faculty-student supervision and community-student supervision, and the extent to which those descriptions reveal the influence both of the rhetoric about a collaborative learning community and the interaction inspired by the values implied in that vision. Highlighted references to a collaborative learning community include direct and indirect, implicit and explicit references. I will discuss integration anxiety in the next chapter.

As explained in chapter one, Anderson's (1999, 2000, 2007) compelling vision of a collaborative learning community emphasizes: (1) shared responsibility for learning, (2) dialogue as dynamic generative conversation in which there is room for all voices (McNamee, 2007), and (3) that transformation occurs in and through dialogue. She likes to talk about the 3 C's: Connect, Collaborate, and Construct. A collaborative learning community operates out of a commitment to three additional premises: (1) relationships and conversations are inseparable and influence each other, (2) experiential learning: collaboration by doing and (3) dialogical conversations are inherently constructive. The values inherent in the vision of a collaborative learning community influence a great deal of both the academic and clinical instruction in the OLLU program.

I will use four of Anderson's (1999, 2000, 2007) major elements of a collaborative learning community to organize the chapter. Those emphases are: (1) shared responsibility for learning, (2) dialogue as dynamic generative conversation in which there is room for all voices,

(3) that transformation occurs in and through dialogue, and (4) relationships and conversations are inseparable and influence each other. Segments of transcript will illustrate each of these emphases and the extent to which the students describe their experience of supervision, faculty-student and community-student, in language suggestive of the pervasive influence of the OLLU program's commitment to the ideal of a collaborative learning community. First, it is important to put the whole notion of collaborative learning in its wider context.

### **John Dewey's Role in the Development of Collaborative Learning**

It is likely that we owe a debt of gratitude to the American pragmatist, John Dewey (1938), whose driving passion was education. In his work on the link between education and experience, Dewey insisted that effective education must connect with the ordinary experience of the student.

It becomes the office of the educator to select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potentiality of presenting new problems which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgment will expand the area of further experience. He must constantly regard what is already won not as a fixed possession but as an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands upon existing powers of observation and of intelligent use of memory. Connectedness in growth must be his constant watchword. (p. 75)

A new philosophy of education, therefore, must be committed to empirical and experimental methods. Dewey was a proponent of the scientific method in education, a new concept at the time.

Like many educators today, Dewey (1938) grieved the disillusionment with education that sent many bright minds escaping from its lifeless clutches. "How many students," he asked

(p. 26), “were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them?” Everything depends on the quality of the student’s experience which has two aspects: (1) an immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and (2) its influence on later experience. The instructor’s task is clear given these parameters. He or she must facilitate the kinds of experiences which encourage the student to keep learning because there is meaningful relevance in the learning process.

Dewey emphasized the importance of participative democracy in the educational process. Why do we prefer the democratic and humane over the autocratic and harsh? We have been taught the value of democracy as the best of all social institutions. But what of its place in the classroom?

Can we find any reason that does not ultimately come down to the belief that democratic social arrangements promote a better quality of human experience, one which is more widely accessible and enjoyed, than do non-democratic and anti-democratic forms of social life? Does not the principle of regard for individual freedom and for decency and kindness of human relations come back in the end to the conviction that these things are tributary to a higher quality of experience on the part of a greater number than are methods of repression and coercion or force? (Dewey, 1938, p. 34)

Here Dewey prophetically identifies the connection between relationships and a more democratic approach to education so important in later theory about collaborative learning. Education is basically a social process.

Finally, the two chief principles of Dewey’s philosophy of experience are: (1) the principle of growth, or growing, as Dewey preferred, along a continuum that continues for a lifetime, and (2) interaction. Students learn by interacting with the instructor and with each other.

In that interaction, each one connects what is learned with his or her own experience. It is not long before the student is committed to lifelong learning, the ultimate prize, in Dewey's view. "The most important attitude that can be formed," he writes, "is that of desire to go on learning" (1938, p. 48).

### **The Evolution of Collaborative Learning**

We can safely conclude from Dewey's extensive influence on American education that one's philosophy of education matters in terms of what it allows the student to create with other students, including the teacher, in a formal educational setting. In many ways, Dewey's vision has yet to be taken seriously in education generally. Such a commitment to democratic learning must incorporate a bold willingness to allow people to interact with each other and think out loud without fear of judgment or intimidation by some institutionally sanctioned expert (McNamee, 2007). The fact that there is more and more consensus about the effectiveness of collaborative learning is due in some measure to the work of several devoted educators who continue to herald the arrival of a practical and effective approach to learning in the spirit of John Dewey. I will focus on two of the more important influences on the work of Anderson (1999, 2000, 2007) in the development of her unique vision of a collaborative learning community workable for the OLLU program.

**Kenneth Bruffee.** In his work on collaborative learning, Bruffee (1999; McNamee, 2007) begins with the assumption that "professors and students alike construct and maintain knowledge in continual conversation" (p. xi). One detects the influence of social constructionist assumptions in Bruffee's philosophy of education which emphasizes the importance of what he calls "reacculturation," an encouragement to allow students to grow and transform as a result of the co-construction of knowledge in which they share. He also emphasizes the importance of the

development of interdependence in the student. “With collaborative learning,” Bruffee writes, “they learn to construct knowledge as it is constructed in the knowledge communities they hope to join after attending colleges and universities” (1999, p. xiii). They learn to grow as they learn to think—together.

Bruffee (1999) draws a distinction between cooperative learning and collaborative learning, except that they share a common interest in constructive conversation.

We claim that students learn by joining transition communities in which people construct knowledge as they talk together and reach consensus. What teachers do in both collaborative and cooperative learning is to set up conditions in which students can learn together. One of the most important ways teachers do that is by organizing students into transition communities for reacculturative conversation (p. 84)

An educator’s role, by this logic, is similar to that of a therapist: to help students learn to cope with the intellectual challenges faced by their experiences of confusion, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

In his chapter on education as conversation, Bruffee (1999) says that “education initiates us into conversation, and by virtue of that conversation initiates us into thought” (p. 133). In other words, the reason we can think at all is because we can talk to each other. McNamee (2007) eloquently amplifies the point in her article on relational practices in education. Conversation transforms even the most individual tasks into collaborative ones. One of the most significant challenges facing college and university students is to learn to talk in new ways depending on their field of interest. Specialized language challenges one to tolerate a good deal of stressful puzzling alone and with others who are also in the process of learning the language of a wider world or of a specialized discipline.

Most students didn't mind examining and demolishing other students' preconceptions. But few liked exposing their own preconceptions to examination and demolition by their peers. Finding exposure frustrating and painful, they tended—sometimes fiercely—to resist the changes that the process led to. At the same time, however, most students found that this mutually challenging conversation made revising their preconceptions almost inevitable. For most, it was relatively easy, when teachers had challenged their preconceptions, to shrug the challenge off, willfully misinterpret or defy it. When a peer challenged their preconceptions, the challenge tended to stick. (Bruffee, p. 145)

Transformative learning takes place in an environment in which uncontrolled, open dialogue is the norm.

**John Peters and Joseph Armstrong.** Peters and Armstrong (1998) identify a kind of collaborative learning in which “people labor together in order to construct something that did not exist before the collaboration, something that does not and cannot fully exist in the lives of individual collaborators” (p. 75). They talk about the synergy that occurs when people collaborate, contributing to the effort individually and jointly. Thus, individuals learn, but so does the group. The meanings attributed to all the various interactions depend a great deal on the kind of relationship the members have with one another because of the interactive nature of knowledge construction.

In a group of collaborators, the group process moves from member to member, from member to group, and from group to member. Members don't just talk with one another. They also talk into the group and from the group. That is, as individuals talk to one another, they construct meaning from what is said and how it is said, and the result is meaning that the several people have constructed in the process of talking and

interpreting, talking and interpreting, and so forth. What is jointly said and interpreted becomes the context for and the focus of further talk and interpretation. (p. 76)

This description brings to mind what happens in the learning POD groups used in the OLLU training program (described in chapter 1) and the important role they play in the construction of knowledge within the collaborative learning community.

One of the more interesting suggestions found in Peters and Armstrong (1998) is the delineation of three types of teaching and learning. Type One is the traditional student-as-passive-receptacle approach to education in which the expert instructor dispenses accurate knowledge to the blank slate minded student. In Type Two learning, teaching still takes place by transmission of knowledge, but it also includes learning in which students share the knowledge with each other and with the teacher. Type Three learning, on the other hand,

is distinguished not only by a focus on joint construction of knowledge, but also by the designation of the teacher as a member of the group of learners and by the role of the group in the learning experience. The teacher is one of the participants in the collaborative learning experience. The teacher may and usually does have special knowledge of content, but his or her knowledge does not necessarily supersede that of the other learners in the group. (p. 79)

The instructor, in this way of thinking, must possess special skills as a facilitator of collaborative learning. Dialogue is the main way of sharing information in Type Three learning. Again, one hears language reminiscent of Anderson's (1999, 2000, 2007) description of a collaborative learning community.

Peters and Armstrong (1998) point out that Type Three teaching can be frustrating to students who find themselves in a situation where they are expected to take maximum



responsibility for their own learning as well as their contributions to the learning of others in the group. Students often feel like the teacher is suddenly changing the rules of the game. The authors share the following ways in which they approach both undergraduate and graduate classes (pp. 82-83):

- \*We try to get students involved in an episode of collaborative learning as early in the course as possible.

- \* We take every opportunity to “point out” when we or others in the group are doing something to promote a collaborative learning experience.

- \*We try to show the utmost respect for everyone in the group and everything that is said by anyone in the group.

- \*We’re not really sure whether trust follows respect or vice versa, but trust has to be in the mix along with respect.

- \*As facilitators, we have found that we need to know ever more content than we do as lecturers.

- \*The relationship among collaborators is vital to the process of collaborative learning.

- \*As a course progresses, we try to facilitate what we call a “level-izing” process; that is, we want all of us to see ourselves learning, and to see ourselves seeing ourselves learning.

In general, Peters and Armstrong (1998) encourage educators and students to experiment with collaborative learning, but they also warn about the possibility of frustration because of the years of exposure to Type One and Type Two approaches to teaching.

In the next section, I will present segments of transcript supportive of the usefulness of the theoretical possibility identified in the first paragraph. The four emphases laid out by

Anderson (1999, 2000, 2007) will provide the framework for hearing the students' voices: (1) shared responsibility for learning, (2) dialogue as dynamic generative conversation in which there is room for all voices, and (3) that transformation occurs in and through dialogue, and (4) relationships and conversations are inseparable and influence each other.

### **Shared Responsibility for Learning**

Anderson (1999, p. 66) writes, "Because I value the concept of relational responsibility, I want to invite others to experience it in action. I believe that to invite another person into this kind of process, I must first act relationally responsible." Those of us who have been in dialogue with her over the years can attest that she does it very well. In the segment of transcript below, a student suggests that the program allowed her to experiment and to expand. I responded to her statement which evoked responses from two other students relative to the process of learning that it was okay to take responsibility for their own thinking and learning.

LL: My key comment would be is that what this program allows is the ability to experiment and expand, experiment with other truths out there. It may not be accepted, it may be accepted, but it's kind of an understanding that's it's okay, because that's what the program is based on, open-mindedness and learning new things, so we're more apt to throw things out there that might be questionable or brought up and discussed.

GB: You guys have emphasized that and, of course, it's rewarding to us to see that we're being consistent with your experience. Let me push something. I assume that when you come into the program, you don't really know that's the way it's going to be. You join in this collaborative learning community. What's that like when you get in there and find out I'm not getting in trouble here for thinking, I'm not getting trouble for having my thoughts. Do you know what I'm saying?

VB: It's not easy. You come in and you tippy-toe and then you realize that you have that where you thought you had an inch you actually have a mile, you start to settle down and you start to create and, it's kind of like having a relationship with your family. When you have a home to go to, you're going to take chances, you're going to challenge things, you're going okay, I'm going to take this job, crap, that didn't work it. It's the same thing here, you're trying something new and you can. It's the same thing here. I may be going a little too far, but you can. You get that. That kind of security.

SG: You're also not ostracized when you want to go and test this out, something different than what the program teaches. You feel like it's okay. You're accepted. (Addendum, p. 286)

Several points could be made about this exchange. First, it was stimulated by the observation of a student, not the researcher. She framed her comment in terms of "what this program allows" which I take to mean the tone set by faculty in terms of relational responsibility and the kind of environment into which they found themselves co-participants in the learning process. The atmosphere is one of open-mindedness and learning of new things. As a result, she is free to experiment and expand, adding that she learned by experience that it was okay to learn in a way that made sense to her. What happens next? She adds, "we're more apt to throw things out there that might be questionable." One is free then to experiment and to expand.

Second, the researcher makes a rare reference to the collaborative learning community before asking what it's been like for students to come into such an environment. Somehow the program has managed to be consistent in the setting of a tone that matches the rhetoric of the ideal. This is exactly the kind of thing I wanted to understand better as a result of this project. I

framed my question as a curiosity about what it was like to have to learn that they would not get into trouble for learning to take responsibility for their learning.

Third, the next student's response is quite revealing of how many students probably experience the process of easing into this kind of learning environment. Her immediate response is, "It's not easy. You come in and you tippy-toe and then you realize that you have that where you thought you had an inch you actually have a mile, you start to settle down and you start to create." Most of these students have only been exposed to what Peters and Armstrong (1998) call Type One teaching and maybe Type Two on a rare occasion. We see in this student's response confirmation that students sometimes feel stressed as they accommodate themselves to a collaborative learning environment. She reports a sense of security that comes from having tested the waters to discover that it is okay to relax and be honest about one's thoughts and learning needs.

Finally, a student who did not share as much as others was motivated to contribute to the exchange. She celebrates the lack of judgment in faculty responses to thinking out loud even if one disagrees with "what the program teaches." Instead, she says, "You're also not ostracized when you want to go and test this out, something different than what the program teaches. You feel like it's okay. You're accepted." As a result of feeling okay, students find encouragement to take greater and greater responsibility for their own learning. I find considerable support in this segment of transcript for the notion that the values of a collaborative learning community are being experienced in tangible ways by the students.

## **Dialogue as Dynamic Generative Conversation in Which There is Room for All Voices**

This statement conveys not one, but two interconnected values operating in a collaborative learning environment. One is the commitment to a particular kind of conversation in which interaction generates new shared understandings. The other is implied in the first. A dialogue assumes democratic participation in learning, a commitment to hearing rather than speaking and to an egalitarian ethic rather than domination or insistence on a party line. The segments examined below indicate the pervasiveness of this value in the students' experiences of supervision. In the first segment, an African American woman in her early 50s who has seen her share of marginalization, engaged in the following exchange.

GH: I think your point of view is always looked at. They may be challenged, but they're not dismissed. I think you can bring your thoughts and ideas. Most of the time they're important.

GB: Is that important to you that they're not dismissed?

GH: Yes, it is.

GB: You feel valued, respected...

GH: And validated, yes.

GB: Right.

GH: I'm contributing. I'm contributing to the process. (Addendum, p. 294)

When she notes that her point of view is always considered rather than dismissed, she shares her awareness that she is part of a generative conversation in which she is an active and responsible participant. Her contribution may be challenged, but it is not dismissed. As a result, she feels valued, respected, and validated. Obviously, such experiences confirm a sense of belonging in

the conversation. She is not an outsider or a bystander. Rather, as she says, “I’m contributing. I’m contributing to the process.”

In the next segment, a student elaborates on her sense of how the inclusion of others in the learning process works to the advantage of all because they share a commitment to dialogical learning. Following my comments paraphrasing what one student found to be motivating and energizing, she adds the following.

LL: I would like to elaborate on that. When you feel comfortable and when I feel comfortable in supervision, it allows me to . . . I feel safer and actually I’m able to . . . I know there is no expert. We’re all on the same level. That kind of thing. That feeling. I’m more able to express different ideas and to come up with new ideas, to challenge the ideas that I have, not me supervising, but my client. And what it also does is to move me into branching out and trying new ideas so . . . It’s kind of a little mess . . .

GB: This gets into some interesting learning stuff, because I’m hearing you, you can relax and test, you can relax and be more open and test new ideas and the maybe practice those. You might not have without that safety. Can you say more about what that’s been like for you in that experience of thinking new thoughts and new ideas and how you’ve been experimenting with those?

LL: When you have more people and you have more input, then you’ve going to get different ideas. I think definitely the different cultural aspects and differences between people within the practicum as well as clients has helped me look at things differently.

(Addendum, p. 277f.)

Her response confirms a connection between what she refers to as supervision and how the process works to allow for transformative learning (Bruffee, 1999; Mezirow, 2000; Peters & Armstrong, 1999).

First, she seems to value the non-hierarchical aspects of the learning environment when she says, “There is no expert. We’re all on the same level.” In such an environment, “I’m more able to express different ideas and to come up with new ideas, to challenge the ideas that I have.” Second, I responded to her out of my interest in not only what she was learning, but also the process of how she was learning. It sounded like she had learned to engage others in a generative conversation that resulted in her having new thoughts and new ideas. Third, she responded that it was the mix of all the voices that enriched the process for her. The fact of more people added to her experience rather than detracted from it. She values, in addition, the different cultural aspects which seem also to have added richness to her learning.

### **Transformation Occurs In and Through Dialogue**

We have already heard something about this point in the segment above. One of the key values in a collaborative learning community is a belief that some kind of change, growth, expansion, or transformation will emerge from the dialogical process. Learning need not be limited to what Peters and Armstrong (1998) call Type One teaching in which adults are treated like little birds who can only be fed by the all-knowing parent. After an extensive conversation about a negative event involving a client that would not acknowledge the students are equals to the supervisor, one student recalled how the group handled the experience.

LL: We processed it. I think the language is real important. If a client did walk in for the first time with a practicum team, it would be real important to just to keep everyone on the same level and have that established before the client came in. I think it would be

more of a collaborative learning environment. That way. . . We have been learning from one another in that practicum. We not only learned from the supervisor, but we learned as much if not more, at times, from others in the group.

GB: In the group?

LL: That's why it's important. I love the way we have our supervision teams here.

GB: If I am hearing you correctly, even though you know you're students and the supervisor's the supervisor, that distinction you would prefer not to have that distinction made because you like that collaborative energy there. (Addendum, p. 275)

First, one could be cynical and interpret what the student reported as saying what she thought I might want to hear, but knowing the student as I do, I doubt it. In this segment, she makes a clear connection between the values of the collaborative learning community and the way the students learn from each other, experiencing transformation as a result. Second, here and in other places as I will show below, the same student repeated the theme that the values of the program helped her become less rigid in her thinking and more open to the transformative possibilities of the dialogical process.

Following a reference to valuing being on a POD team (described in chapter one) with people from other cultures, I picked up on a hint that she had been challenged by that, if not a little, maybe more than a little.

GB: Different perspectives from anybody there. Students, supervisor, clients...

LL: And it's tough because I'm not really more knowledgeable, but more accepting, more empathetic and able to see maybe different sides, you know, where they're coming from differently.



GB: Let me ask you about that, because there had to be a side of that was not so comfortable. Maybe a little stressful, challenging. Just briefly comment on what that was like, if you don't mind.

LL: Sure. In my internship, there were many Hispanic, first generation immigrants who had come from Mexico or Guatemala, whatever, but the experience I had was that I was thinking from a Caucasian or north European perspective and I noticed that they weren't quite getting what I was saying. There wasn't the connection there that I felt before. I shifted. Actually, I did a genogram and was able to gather more information about the family, their customs, different things, and so, that played a good part because I felt like I got closer with their culture. I understood a little bit more.

GB: You were evolving in your openness, it sounds like. You had a new idea then about something else to try that might open things up a little more. (Addendum, p. 278f.)

First, she makes a point to emphasize that the experience of being in a diverse group did not necessarily make her more knowledgeable, but rather it made her more empathetic and able to see other sides. In other words, that was experiential learning for her. It could not have come from instruction, but only as a result of the gradual kind of transformation that occurs when a group commits to a dialogical process. Second, since she was hinting that maybe some of her experience had been stressful or challenging, I wanted to give her a chance to talk about what that was like.

To my surprise, the story she told came out of her internship setting at a psychiatric hospital where students often have to work with people who have significant problems and families who often make things worse. In this case, however, she reports that she challenged her old tendency to charge ahead and, instead, created a space where she could learn from the client

and the client's family. It was a family from another culture whose language she did not speak. She began to work on a genogram, a family map that allows a therapist to hear about all the people in the family and their relationship not only to the client, but also to the kinds of problems the client seems to be having. Her openness to being changed by the needs of the family contributed in turn to her ability to be more helpful to the client and his or her family.

One last segment includes comments from the reflecting team about what they heard the research team talking about. In it we get to hear from a faculty member on the reflecting team and several other students who experienced something of the same thing happening throughout the second interview.

LBo: Well, if I was going to start reflecting, I would start with what strikes me most about this interview. And what strikes me most are the mature perspectives of the people who were out there. I was like, wow, where did we find these fantastic people? I realize that's a two-way process. I like the mature ways they said that.

LBr: I heard perspective and I noticed the language because there seemed like a progression the whole time we're talking. At the beginning, we talked about communication, things are not black and white, people are beginning to go along with the program and at the end, it's turning into a family. They talked about being comfortable with each other's thoughts. They started out thinking about supervision one way and at the end of it, thought about it completely differently.

PM: They started out talking about possible weaknesses and ended up talking about strengths... (Addendum, p. 296)

What happened that made several people take note of the same dynamic?

First, I was glad to hear the faculty member say that he was impressed with what he heard the students sharing about their experience of various aspects of the program. He makes note of what he called “the mature perspectives” of those he heard during the conversation. When he says, “I realize that’s a two-way process,” his meaning is a little ambiguous, but at a minimum he seems to be sharing his awareness that what impresses him grows out of the dialogical process in which we all participated that day. Others seem to pick up on the same theme.

Second, a student reported that she sensed a progression the whole time they were talking. This kind of feedback is what makes a reflecting team valuable. Because they sit slightly outside of the immediate dynamics of the conversation, they often sense things that occur only gradually to the conversational partners. She notes, “At the beginning, we talked about communication, things are not black and white, people are beginning to go along with the program and at the end, it’s turning into a family.” Something happened along the way during the learning process.

Third, yet another student named the progression in developmental terms when she reflected, “They started out talking about possible weaknesses and ended up talking about strengths.” Not only during the conversation she witnessed, but from the content of what she heard interview participants describe, she could hear the themes of development and transformation.

### **Relationships and Conversations are Inseparable and Influence Each Other**

I have suggested in another place (Boyd, 1996) that the kinds of conversations we have influence the kinds of relationships we can have. If conversations are exercises in the construction of things that never existed before (Peters & Armstrong, 1998), then it only makes

sense to link the quality of conversation to the quality of relationship. Some of the more moving comments in the interviews with the students touched on this point.

BJG: One idea that popped into my head hearing the metaphors and stuff is the word, “connected.” And that’s something that I got from this program that I haven’t got in any other program is that you work hard and then you go to practicum and then you go to internship and talk to supervisors. It’s like we’re all connected in a way that I haven’t ever felt before.

GB: That’s new for you?

BJG: Yeah. And having assignments in class that actually promote being connected with each other and having the objectives or courses that actually promote that connection with each other whereas in another other programs that I’ve been in, they give you group work, but the whole program is not about group work and I think it has really helped me understand the importance of networking and going to somebody for supervision, it’s okay to ask questions even if other people disagree with you or agree with you.

GB: The more connected we all are, the higher quality the supervision? Help me there. Say more...

BJG: It’s more meaningful to me.

GB: Meaningful?

BJG: You can have a supervisor, but if you don’t feel that connection with your supervisor, then there’s really no supervision going on. (Addendum, p. 290f.)

She reports feeling connected on multiple levels and that connection makes her experience more meaningful. I will comment on several aspects of her response.

First, she introduces the word “connection” and then explains that she refers to an experience she has not had in any other program. “It’s like we’re all connected in a way that I haven’t ever felt before,” she adds. Clearly such a novel experience impacts the way she participates with the others to whom she feels a special connection. Second, she alludes to her general experience that even in the classroom instructors promote opportunities for students to feel connected with each other. Third, if we might be wondering what all this has done for her, she responds, “I think it has really helped me understand the importance of networking and going to somebody for supervision.” It has helped her learn to value the link between relationships and learning. She is now a confirmed lifelong learner, to put it another way. Fourth, she makes a clear statement about connection and the kind of relationship one has with a supervisor when she says, “You can have a supervisor, but if you don’t feel that connection with your supervisor, then there’s really no supervision going on.” Simply because one has a supervisor does not automatically mean supervision is taking place in terms of ongoing learning. She accents one of the hallmarks of a collaborative learning community in which mutual respect governs the quality of the dialogical process.

### **Support for a Theoretical, Relational, Educational Possibility**

In the opening paragraph I reported a way of making sense of the grounded theory analysis with a theoretical possibility. *I would suggest that the students have created ways to appropriate the values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with I have labeled “integration anxiety,” the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis.*

The segments and comments above are offered as support for a thematic emphasis that ran through both interviews suggestive of the fact that these students have found the values

inherent in the vision of a collaborative learning community to be workable and helpful. They make it clear that they did not learn these things from an instructor talking to them in a classroom, but rather from the prolonged experience of shared learning with both faculty and other students. In addition, they did not accept at face value the style of interaction they saw embodied in the faculty and the philosophy they heard proposed. They tested those styles and those ideas in their own ways over a long period of time. They have weighed them in the balance and have declared them eminently useful in their ongoing development as mental health professionals.

I am reminded of Gergen's (2009) recent emphasis on education in a relational key where he proposes that "*the primary aim of education is to enhance the potentials for participating in relational processes—from the local to the global*" (emphasis Gergen's, p. 243). We can see the multiple circles (Gergen, 2009, pp. 247ff) that would define this education in a relational key in the students' description of their experiences of all the levels of supervision active in the OLLU program: (1) teacher and student, (2) relations among students, (3) classroom and community, and (4) the classroom and the world. McNamee (2007) argues similarly for a collaborative educational conversation and relational learning, identifying four resources: avoiding abstract positions, privileging narrative forms, fostering of community, and blurring the boundaries between classroom and "life."

### **Conclusion**

The OLLU-Houston training program did not invent the notion of collaborative learning or collaborative learning communities. These ideas have enjoyed a great deal of attention in recent years because they seem to be working. Cooper and Boyd (1994) hope that such pragmatic notions will be more than buzzwords and fads which lose their meaning and potency.

The results of my research encourage one to believe that they may in fact only now be coming to maturity. Cooper and Boyd (1994, p.1) express their understanding of collaborative learning communities this way:

The foundation of a collaborative learning community is *collaboration*—working together for common goals, partnership, shared leadership, co-evolving and co-learning—rather than competition and power given to only a few.

The focus of the collaborative learning community is *learning*—learning where students are actively demonstrating their understanding, rather than students passing written tests as the sole sign of knowing.

Collaborative learning communities help prepare learners young and old for real life, especially life they take responsibility for creating together (McNamee, 2007).

In this chapter I begin to share evidence for a theoretical possibility that attempts to make sense of themes running through the interviews with OLLU students. While not a theory *per se*, my use of a grounded theory analysis leads me to consider the following:

*I would suggest that the students have created ways to appropriate the values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with I have labeled “integration anxiety,” the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis.*

I have used four of Anderson’s (1999, 2000, 2007) characteristics of a collaborative learning community to show how those values find a voice in the voices of the OLLU students.

Having identified the first half of a theoretical possibility about the importance of the role of the collaborative learning community, in the next chapter I will identify the other half of the theoretical possibility as an experience of “integration anxiety,” a term that will specify the

unique kind of stress experienced by students in a mental health training program. In that chapter I will show that the students do not hide the darker side of their experiences in the program, but talk about them openly. They also make it clear that the special features of the OLLU program seem to allow them to cope with those stresses as they progress in their professional development.



## **Chapter 9     Coping with Integration Anxiety in a Collaborative Learning Community**

In the last chapter I suggested that the students have created ways to appropriate values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with what I have labeled “integration anxiety,” the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis. Alongside their descriptions of the more clearly positive aspects of their experiences of supervision, students refer to other kinds of experiences which, while not completely negative, challenged them in ways they had never been challenged before. This is close to what Barnat (1980) called the duality of the experience of supervision and is certainly what is meant by the many references to ambiguity in the literature (Hess, 2008). I suggest that we read the interviews this time from the point of view of how the trainees make sense of their lived experience of the developmental transitions toward the goal of the integrated therapist (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987).

This chapter allows the students to speak the truth about what the transformative process costs them and how they learn to pay the price. At first they do not know how they will pay the price. They begin with immense excitement and soon face the hard realities of integrating things that seem un-integratable, things too expensive for their limited budgets. They start with impressive altruism and soon face the daunting task of applying the theoretical to the practical. They arrive with smiles and soon find themselves frowning in frustration and confusion about things they have never considered before. It is, in every sense, a heroic struggle of tremendous significance and yet that significance can only be glimpsed in hindsight. It takes a unique brand of hope to deal with that kind of challenge. As one student told me recently, “This seems like a very long tunnel that we are going through, yet somehow we keep moving on in a very fast

pace.” It might surprise the students to hear that supervisors have their own versions of developmental anxiety, but the main focus of this chapter will be on the students.

First, I will explain what I mean by integration anxiety, a way to talk about how the students experience the transformative process. In order to make the case for the usefulness of the phrase “integration anxiety,” I define the term integration anxiety, including explanations about why each word is crucial to understanding how students engage both the *goal* of training, integration (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg and McNeill, 1997; Stoltenberg and McNeill, 2010) or competence (Falender and Shafranske, 2004), and the *process* of training which requires them to cope with anxiety. That process is emotional, intellectual, and relational.

Second, I will identify various references in the interviews to support assertions about the uniqueness of integration anxiety as it occurs intermingled with reports about growth and development. The students use language indicating that they account for their ability to cope with integration anxiety with references to the relational uniqueness of the collaborative learning community, supportive of Gergen’s (2009) vision of a relational approach to education. They value learning not only from faculty members, but also from each other as well. They struggled and grew together.

Third, I suggest that integration anxiety makes most sense when placed in the context of a developmental approach that accounts for the whole of the student’s experience, both growth and stress, including how supervisee anxiety is a normal aspect of professional development. If Shotter (1993, 1995, 2008) is right, I doubt if the stages of the developmental process are as orderly or as predictable as proponents suggest (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987). In fact, Hess (1997, p. 75) confessed and protested at the same time:

At this point, I must let you know that these stages are a matter of emphasis and transition rather than sharply demarcated stages or divisions. In fact, stage theorists regarding psychotherapy supervision tend to take themselves so seriously that they may have reified or made concrete a theory that is a convenient abstraction.

However, there are ample references in the literature relevant to the theme of coping with anxiety in supervision, some of them still relevant after a generation (Hess, 1980).

Fourth, the implications for supervision practice and also for the quality of supervision could be immense. Representing the voice of the student, Weatherford, O'Shaughnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor (2008, p. 52) remind us that "as trainees begin to navigate the often confusing and chaotic new roles and challenges in counseling and supervision, the supervisor is able to assist in the process of gaining a sense of balance and moving toward order and competence."

Supervisors can position themselves to help students cope with integration anxiety, but only if they have a clear understanding of its importance.

### **What Do I Mean by Integration Anxiety?**

It is probably not an accident that Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982, p. 14) include the word "intensive" in their definition of supervision as "an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship in which one person is designated to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence in the other person." The students would likely agree with the word intensive, especially the suggestion that the supervision process can be intense in the sense of stressful in addition to the sense of being concentrated into a relatively brief period of time.

Supervision sets a tone in any clinical training program, the goal of which is, among other things, attainment of a professional identity (Lerner, 2008) or competence (Falender and Shafranske, 2004), but however one conceptualizes the goal of the socialization process, a

beginning student almost always feels overwhelmed by the prospect of learning how to do psychotherapy (Weatherford, O'Shaugnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor, 2008). There may not be a way around that fact and we certainly cannot do away with supervision. Watkins (1997b, p. 603) suggested that "without the enterprise of psychotherapy supervision, the practice of psychotherapy, in my opinion, would become highly suspect and would or should cease to exist." Supervision is the cornerstone of the professional education of mental health professionals (Falender and Shafranske, 2004). It is "the primary means by which the entire allied health field is now taught" (Campbell, 2006, p. 1). Part of how students become experienced mental health professionals has to do with learning to integrate academic instruction and training in clinical skills.

What is that like for them? If the students allowed us to listen in on the way they experience the socialization process, what would it sound like? The research team conversations provide rich insights into their experiences. They seem to be aware that they are growing and developing increasing levels of competence, but they are tentative about their progress because of the newness of it all. They are curious, but uncertain about what to expect. In other words, reading the interviews from this point of view highlights descriptions of how they are experiencing this evolving process *while in the midst of the process*, allowing us to witness how they describe it from the inside. One hears them reflecting together on the various ways they attempt to make sense of multiple realities converging at the same time.

Integration anxiety refers to the creative tension that propels the student forward toward the promise of competence despite feelings of inadequacy. Integration anxiety is not good or bad, right or wrong, but a phenomenological description of what is probably a normal experience. One can hear the participants collaborate to construct various solutions to the problem of

integration anxiety. In addition to looking for references to anxiety and struggle, one must listen for ways they talked about confronting or overcoming integration anxiety. In other words, they are learning to cope with the stress of transformative impulses in the same way that clients often have to cope with the stress of change.

What is being integrated that creates the kind of student anxiety I label as integration anxiety? The students help us understand the process of exposure to new ideas which barely make sense to them before they are being asked to learn how to apply those ideas in a clinical situation. Learning narrative therapy or solution-focused therapy or a collaborative language systems approach to doing therapy is one thing. Allowing those abstract guidelines to actually guide one's responses to a client are quite another. What is the role of theory in one's training as a mental health professional? Nobody would suggest it should take a minor role, because theory conveys the accumulated wisdom of more experienced practitioners who have learned to be helpful to people who have real problems. But theory is not enough.

The literature over a whole generation shows the importance of clinical skills training in any program. Students practice listening skills, how to paraphrase a client comment, how to keep a conversation going with therapeutic questions, and a host of other skills without which the theories they learn would be useless. Students gradually absorb the various elements into which they have been immersed from their earliest moments in a training program. As they absorb and synthesize the different kinds of knowledge they find themselves creating together with faculty and other students, they find a sense of relief experienced as a growing sense of competence.

While the process might not be easy, it is not unrewarding. It can also be confirming of a kind of fit between the values of the program and the evolving style of the student. Undoubtedly, it is these moments of relief from the stress of integration anxiety that inspire the students to

proceed with increasing confidence that they are learning how to navigate the variegated terrain of psychotherapy. The normal developmental challenges of the integrative process make learning stressful.

AH: But learning can also validate and make you feel good if you were in line with that field and you didn't know what they were... (Addendum, p. 284)

What keeps students engaged and motivated before they know that “learning can also validate and make you feel good” about what is emerging from the integration process? I suggest that the term integration anxiety identifies an experience unique to those who traverse the obstacle course of a training program.

### **The Context of Supervisee Anxiety**

There is nothing new about supervisee anxiety. What I learned about trainee anxiety listening to the students in the OLLU program sounds like what others have learned about it in previous generations. That integration anxiety takes place in the context of growth and development implies a number of things. First, it suggests that anxiety and the growth process of integration are aspects of a unified experience. That is the logical implication of the developmental metaphor. Second, student anxiety is a normal experience. Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) note that they prefer the word anxious to describe the entry-level student, rather than neurotic, before observing that two factors, evaluation apprehension and objective self-awareness, account for much of the normal anxiety experienced by entry-level trainees. Third, it is, therefore, unavoidable. Rioch (1980) believes there is a direct connection between allowing the anxiety to occur and the possibility of it prompting significant learning. Fourth, it is essential to professional development. Both Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) and Stoltenberg and McNeill (1997) make the point that anxiety fuels motivation.

It is critical that a degree of ambiguity or conflict be introduced in order to create a sufficient (but not disabling) amount of disequilibria in the trainees. Growth is not encouraged if supervision or the experience of counseling becomes too comfortable.

(Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987, p. 63f).

For that reason, “balancing support and uncertainty is the major challenge facing supervisors of beginning therapists” (Ibid, p. 64).

### **Back in the Good Old Days**

A generation ago, before the widespread popularity which the developmental approach enjoys today, psychotherapists had to fight to understand students better. Barnat’s (1980) article stands out in terms of its advocacy for the experience of the student. To hear Barnat tell it, there was a time when curiosity about student experience was actively discouraged. In response to asking a senior member of the faculty about writing a paper on trainee experience, Barnat tells that the more senior teacher asked him in return, “Why should people want student observations when they can have professional ones?” (1980, p. 52). That attitude may indicate a prevalent lack of interest in the direct study of students’ experiences in another generation. Things have changed, but student anxieties have always been there.

Barnat (1980) argues that one answer to the senior faculty person’s objection is that there are some aspects of the learning process that can only be understood from the point of view of the one who is acted upon, i.e. the student who is on the frontline of what is a fairly complex “interactive and synthesizing process” (p. 52).

The transfer of technical skills (empathy) or a professional ethos (conflict resolution by talking) *is* the transmission of culture. To say that you have accounted for those processes, you have to address the issue of what the trainee does internally with the

material he or she is expected to master. The student has to look for a language to put these experiences into words. (Barnat, 1980, p. 52)

Barnat shares his fear that many students cope with all the competing anxieties of the training process by filling their heads with just enough scientific reasoning to discount the personal, i.e. by dealing with integration anxiety by refusing to take it seriously.

Barnat (1980) was prophetic in his endeavor to “preserve the data of change,” as he called it. He was determined to study the student, to find a way to collect data on the mental life of the beginning therapist. One reason the trainee change process was ignored, in his view, was because “there was probably a painful element to it” (p. 53). Barnat’s recognition of the fact of the mixed experience is what I am recognizing as integration anxiety.

This disharmony was probably the chief motivator behind my interest in psychotherapy.

The reactor, or reactive watcher, refers to my preconscious mode of experiencing. It is how I know what it means to live with myself. As my subjective shadow, it puts together from mood, ambiance, and style the conceptual schemes that help me navigate the clinical world. (Barnat, 1980, p. 59)

Barnat’s (1980) chapter is replete with this kind of eloquent and refreshing honesty. Over and over he confronts the memory of his own anxiety as a trainee and how important supervision was during that time. “Supervision at its best was a mutuality supporting the notion that I could transcend these struggles” (Ibid, p. 63). He talks about a sense of merging with the image of his supervisor on his way to feeling more and more competent. “Since ambiguity, like desperation, is a chief parameter of clinical life, I can only wonder: some trainees never seem to get the point” (Ibid.). I take his warning to be about coping with integration anxiety without giving up until one



begins to merge into the image of a more mature, more relaxed, more curious and compassionate psychotherapist.

In their chapter, “From Classroom to Clinic: Supervising the First Psychotherapy Client,” Weiner and Kaplan (1980) talk about the unique learning challenges facing beginning students. A major challenge, they suggest, is learning to integrate treatment techniques with personal authenticity. It can seem like a long distance between the *what* of clinical training to the *how* of clinical practice. Novice students find themselves doubting the efficacy of psychotherapy or their own efficacy as therapists or both. There are negative reactions to the stress of what I have called integration anxiety.

Especially important in this regard is the need for beginners to avoid reducing their anxiety in an unfamiliar situation by adopting either a distant, analytical, authoritative role at the expense of communicating warmth, or a friendly, reassuring role at the expense of objective exploration of unpleasant subjects.

(Weiner and Kaplan, 1980, p. 44)

There is a balance point at which students competently combine both a suitably friendly and a suitably detached position with regard to the client.

Beginning students usually feel unprepared for working with clients which is not the same as feeling unmotivated. Weiner and Kaplan (1980) emphasize the need for the supervisor to help students prepare for various eventualities that may arise which also helps them cope with the heavier aspects of integration anxiety. “Supervisors can help beginning therapists learn to integrate principles and practice by encouraging constant reflection on their *strategy* and *tactics*” (Ibid, p. 47). In my view, Weiner and Kaplan (1980), like Barnat (1980), emphasized the fact of dealing with supervisee anxiety by framing the process as integrative.

## **More Contemporary Discussions of Student Anxiety**

The second edition of Hess (2008) contains an entire section dedicated to “Perspectives of Participants” in which the students’ voice is privileged in speaking about the uniqueness of trainee experiences. Each of the pieces in that section addresses, in one way or another, the fact that students are learning to deal with a special kind of anxiety that goes with the special kinds of demands of a training program. Lerner (2008) talks about the anxiety-provoking aspects of internalization in which external experiences are gradually integrated into inner experience. Weatherford, O’Shaughnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor (2008) discuss the challenge of role conflict and role ambiguity, mentioning with approval the work of Olk and Friedlander (1992) in defining these terms. Intense feelings of anxiety are apparently the norm in graduate training (Skovholt and Ronnestad, 1992), but the new trainee is especially vulnerable to the negative effects of anxiety. Evaluations are a source of anxiety, of course, as well as observations and being videotaped.

Weatherford, O’Shaughnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor (2008) encourage their student colleagues to open up to the supervisor and to each other in dealing with anxiety. They write, “At times, new supervisees may not disclose the various feelings, thoughts, and behaviors elicited in the supervisory relationship, although these may be potentially helpful in facilitating the supervisee’s development” (p. 45). In the OLLU program, the collaborative learning community may allow for self-disclosure like the authors recommend.

Hess and Hess (2008) give point by point advice to both supervisees and supervisors. Discussing supervisee needs, they write (p. 60), “In our experience, good supervisors have a humility and a sensitivity that resonates with the student’s anxieties and uncertainties (Worthen and McNeill, 1996).” This is accomplished by creating a safe learning environment in which

students can be open and honest, by giving positive feedback, by not making evaluation the goal of supervision, by engaging in case review, by being responsive, by not yelling at the supervisees, by respecting supervisory time, by respecting both client and student confidentiality, by being aware of verbal and nonverbal communication, by not underestimating one's impact as a supervisor, by debriefing the supervisee, by helping supervisees find their voice, by considering supervision on supervision, and by being gentle.

Nilsson and Wang (2008) add a fascinating view of the international student's experience of anxiety. Foreign-born students often come to the United States with a whole host of challenges facing them that other students do not have to face (Mittal and Wieling, 2006). They face additional anxieties involving language and cultural adjustments that can create significant levels of stress. The international student's experience of anxiety may be metaphorical for all students in mental health training programs.

### **Trainee Anxiety in the Context of a Developmental Approach to Supervision**

The advent of the developmental approach to supervision was a major advancement in the training of mental health professionals. Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) put the developmental approach on the map with their important volume extending theories of human development to the professional growth of therapists-in-training. Borrowing from developmental metaphors, the authors suggested a model consisting of three levels with a final level reflecting a high degree of integration of all essential skill areas. The student's progress can be tracked across those three levels each complete with specific criteria for mastery at that phase of the training process. Each level brings to the student its own brand of challenges given the current development of the student. The goal is measurable change in three areas: self and other awareness, motivation, and autonomy. Eight domains help to guide the supervisor's focus: (1)

intervention skills competence, (2) assessment techniques, (3) interpersonal assessment, (4) client conceptualizations, (5) individual differences, (6) theoretical orientation, (7) treatment goals and plans, and (8) professional ethics. These domains find themselves included in current considerations regarding core competencies (Bowers and Gautney, 2005).

### **Self and Other Awareness**

First level students tend to be focused on themselves, a natural response to performance anxiety in the face of supervisor observation and evaluation. That same focus on oneself interferes with the student's ability to be fully present to the client in an empathic and understanding way. A second level student gradually begins to be able to focus on the client's experience. With development of the skill of empathy and understanding, the student finds the need to cope with emotional confusion about what to feel and what not to feel when working with the client's feelings. A student at the third level works with the client's emotional impact on him or her, but also understands how the client's thoughts and feelings affect the client. The student is more and more comfortable with the back and forth of working with clients, integrating the relevant tasks necessary for helping the client.

### **Motivation**

Level one students typically bring a high degree of motivation and enthusiasm to the challenges of a training program because they want to become experienced and helpful counselors and therapists. They bring a desire to get it right, to learn the right way to do things with little awareness of how the process will play out. Any early success helps them maintain that early high motivation. A level two student starts to see that things are not as they seem, that counseling is not so easily learned and that it is not always effective with certain clients. Increasing awareness of a lack of skill in any of the core competencies can be discouraging to the

student who may experience a drop in motivation. The level three student, having lived through the storms of level two, is recovering something of the early motivation but with a hard-earned wisdom that comes from integrating various experiences into an evolving personal therapeutic style.

### **Autonomy**

During level one a student will seem to be dependent on the supervisor because of a lack of skill or proper knowledge of how to obtain those skills. Level two students who have had some success find themselves longing for more independence and autonomy although it continues to elude them on any consistent basis. The level three student has learned enough self-confidence to work more-or-less autonomously from the supervisor. He or she also knows what to do in the event of feeling stuck or confused about what to do next. These are early glimpses of an openness to a lifelong commitment to occasional consultation with colleagues and other professionals.

Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) describe how the supervisory environment evolves along with the students. In level one, for example, a supervisor pays special attention to helping students stay motivated as they confront the challenges of performance anxiety. Given the amount of information to be mastered during the first phase, is it any wonder that students become overwhelmed from time to time? The patient supervisor remains constant and sympathetic with level one anxiety. In level two students experience “fluctuation, ambivalence, and confusion” (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987, p. 90) convincing them that they have lost the innocence of youth characteristic of level one. The flexible supervisor helps the students to resist the temptation of regression to level one certainties, but to bravely trust that the process moves toward a point of increasing integration. If patience and flexibility comprise the challenges for

the supervisor in the first two levels, level three requires wisdom. The students are becoming more autonomous in both their practice and their learning. Not every student progresses according the prescribed levels. That is where the supervisor must be wise in assessing student growth.

This review of various ways of making sense of the transformation process in a clinical training program gives us a context for hearing what the OLLU students said about growth and anxiety. Everything up to this point fits into making the case for the relevance of what I am calling integration anxiety as *a more precise way of talking about what the student actually experiences in the midst of the process*, including the importance of the collaborative learning community in coping with integration anxiety.

### **What the Students Said About It**

We will note, first, how a number of participants deal with the theme of challenges and how the program challenges them in different ways both as to the goal of training as well as the process of training. Second, some participants specify what they found challenging, i.e. learning new approaches which may collide with earlier experiences. Third, one participant refers to the aspect of integration anxiety that feels like apprehension. Fourth, we hear the stress which comes with integrating the kind of radical curiosity required for working effectively with people. Fifth, we hear how the growing awareness that ideas have power to hurt as well as help has a sobering effect. Sixth, a reference to how the program allows one to “experiment and expand” can bring its own kind of stress.

What may be most exciting about tracking this way of hearing the interviews stems from references to how the students coped with the anxiety of learning together. The collaborative learning community seems to provide a nurturing network of support that combats isolation and

loneliness. One student, discussed below, reported not only that she was almost surprised by the sense of connection she felt with the other students and with supervisors, but also how it enhanced her motivation. If the collaborative learning community makes a difference in helping students cope with integration anxiety, that way of thinking about the communal aspects of a training program might invite more focus on that aspect of the OLLU program and other training programs as well.

### **It's Challenging**

One of the more common words in the interviews was the word “challenging.” I believe that may be code for the subjective experience of integration. In the second interview, three students comment on the duality of the learning process in which they encounter new ways of thinking while integrating the new into the old. Note the words used to describe the experience.

BJG: I think what today what I'm bringing is an openness that is defined by my willingness to sit in a classroom and learn something. But also the challenges that I might present through my questioning based on my previous experience with that subject matter.

GB: You bring with you things that inform your questions...

BJG: Right. And sometimes they're formed in questions and sometimes they're formed in opposing views, but I feel all that's challenging.

GB: Challenges. (Addendum, p. 284)

### **Learning New Approaches**

She goes further in her discussion of what makes the process challenging to describe her thoughts about learning new approaches to helping people, including knowing what to say and when to say it.

GB: Would you mind if I interrupt you? What's that been like for you?

BJG: To me it's been a challenge on approaches ...

GB: Approaches

BJG: Where in some areas I feel like the client has right to be in their own space and create the conversation and the therapist is supposed to follow the client, blah blah blah. But there are some things they're supposed to say something. It quickly started to make that gray, what I thought. (Addendum, p. 287)

Another student makes reference to learning new ideas and new approaches and how the exposure to those new ideas is not always interesting in the sense of comforting.

VB: I think in learning the different, you know, approaches and theories and stuff, it's funny because we're going along thinking I'm a collaborative therapist and I didn't know it. It's like when you read your DSM-IV, you're going "Oh, my God, I've got Attention Deficit Disorder," "Oh, my God, I've got this disorder, I've got that disorder."

Everything you read you have, you know. I think it's the same thing. It's not that severe, but you can. I can make myself seem, I could probably write it up. I know myself, I know who I am. I can figure out how to make myself... (Addendum, p. 285)

One detects not so subtle references to the way in which the training program can be challenging in both stimulating and anxiety-provoking ways. One of the participants quoted above carries the idea further by identifying apprehension as part of the integration experience.

### **A Feeling of Apprehension**

She returns to the theme of describing what the integration process was like at first, but this time refers explicitly to the subjective state of apprehension.



BJG: I'm thinking about a feeling of apprehension that comes, too, because in this program so far, what I basically experience is that the learning very quickly becomes part of what your true intention is, that individual going therapy, you know, why do you want to be a therapist? When you're listening to a client, why do you think that? And if you are a person trying to get into this for any other reason, you know, besides the client, it quickly highlights that and attempts to change that. (Addendum, p. 287)

While exactly what she means by certain statements may not be clear, she is quite clear that the feeling of apprehension has to do with the process in which the learning is being integrated into a new sense of self. It "becomes part of what your true intention is," as she says. There may be a veiled criticism of certain others in her statement, "if you are a person trying to get into this for any other reason," however, the process has a way of exposing things or bringing things to light. That kind of vulnerability runs parallel to the willed openness she described earlier in the same interview.

### **Learning How to be Curious is Not Easy**

Another student expands on the theme of how the program is challenging and how the process is a mixed bag of plusses and minuses. She describes the kind of stress accompanying the encounter of one way of thinking with a new way of thinking. As Roberto (2002, p. 164) says, "In supervision, we assume that supervisees bring worldviews that color the way they assimilate information."

LL: I'm thinking the same thing. What we bring is our past knowledge and whatever we've accepted is our past knowledge. Maybe we've not already thought about and we're bringing that in. We're constantly... What this program does is like what postmodernism does is have us question it and make us open minded. So we start questioning what we've

learned, especially what comes from a medical model. You're going to question that categorization, you're going to question that. You're going to see the pluses and the minuses of how that works.

GB: When you come into the program, it's not like you come in as a blank slate. You bring all of your previous experience, right? You have a philosophy. You have some ideas and the new ideas sometimes collide with those and challenge those, right? And, so you guys challenge back, you're pursuing that dialogue. (Addendum, p. 284)

At one point I ask one of the students what it was like for her to realize she could be as curious as she wanted to be without getting in trouble, she replied, "It's not easy." She said she felt like she had to "tippy toe," which I take to mean she felt like she had to be cautious about some things.

While the process might not be easy, it is not unrewarding. Integration anxiety is not good or bad, it simply is. Stress can be either eustress or distress and sometimes both at the same time. The learning process can also be confirming of a kind of fit between the values of the program and the evolving style of the student. It may be stressful.

AH: But learning can also validate and make you feel good if you were in line that field and you didn't know what they were...

GB: Exactly. So you might bring an inherent agreement or fit with those ideas which I think a lot of us have experienced. (Addendum, p. 284f.)

In my reflection, I tried to repeat back a summary of what she said in which I accented, even in the context of validation, the stress that comes with the collision of new ideas. Again, I believe that in various ways the participants are describing a deeper shared experience of what I am calling integration anxiety, the awareness that the process is not linear, but involves an ongoing

coordination of the new with the old. Part of the experience is a sense of relief that comes with moments of a breakthrough or a sense that things are lining up in a way that makes more sense than it did at the beginning.

### **People Can Get Hurt**

There were also references to emerging ethical sensitivities to how ideas can be used to help or to hurt. I alluded to this serious side of things in Chapter One. Such an emerging awareness of the power that comes with working with people who trust the mental health professional creates its own kind of stressful responsibility.

VB: (inaudible; people laugh.) It's like in our little cohort, they talk about how they use some of the techniques and the other things that you learn, because it makes you better, you know, it makes you...it could make you worse, too. You could take it and...there are very harmful things that we could do with the information that we have and the insight that we have. And I think that being able to understand and kind of see where you fit in and understand that you could probably fit into any one. It's your choice to figure out.

GB: You're hinting at something else as well. That hopefully, maybe, we come in learning how and when to use these ideas, not just learn them, but how to use them. That, in fact, we can hurt people if we're not careful. So we have to know how to use these things. (Addendum, p. 285)

In different words, the student describes the ethical awakening and awareness that comes with accepting the responsibility of being a mental health professional.

### **Implications for Community-Student Supervision**

I was curious about how the above participant's experience would fit with the idea of supervision. I asked about the social aspect of learning, acknowledging that much of the shared

experience of integration is with other students in addition to faculty. Two students pick up the theme and elaborate on how informal communal decision-making takes place. In response to my curiosity about how their experience in groups fits with the notion of supervision, she shares an awareness of the socialization process.

GB: How can we frame that as supervision? I'm interested in understanding the process, not the word. I don't know if the word really works for me. Apprenticeship or whatever. Socialization. There's a process there where you guys are supervising each other...

VB: Well, that's exactly what it is.

GB: Just because we're faculty, doesn't mean we're the only ones who can supervise you. You know what I'm saying?

LL: I can give you an example of that. During practicum, we come up with an idea or a way which is like shadowing or some kind of experiential thing and then we kind of talk about it within ourselves about that idea. That's the mirror and then you come up with something that we've all kind of agreed on and came up with so it becomes a community idea. (Addendum, p. 289)

The OLLU program values what Roberto (2002, p. 160) calls apprenticeship-oriented supervision which encourages "more autonomous planning and technique through a deliberately increasing collegial, egalitarian, and open-ended stance on the part of the supervisor."

### **What's It All About?**

Another student concludes the discussion by noting the connection between that shared experience of learning and what happens with clients. Everything that happens in a training program prepares both students and faculty to be able to provide high quality mental health care

for clients and patients. In this sense, competence (Bowers and Gautney, 2005; Falender and Shafranske, 2004) is a compact way of talking about the ultimate goal.

GB: So you have a communal decision-making thing. Don't you find the metaphor of a mirror interesting? You're looking at yourself, but everybody else is looking at themselves when they're looking at everybody else. There are multiple reflections and refractions. I don't know. I find that metaphor fascinating. Sorry, Amanda, what were you saying?

AH: We're supposed to turn that to the client. (Addendum, p. 289)

In one brief sentence the student manages to remind us all of why the students agree to endure the boot camp experience of the training program in the first place. The whole point is to prepare oneself to be helpful to clients.

### **It Helps to Talk About It**

In an indirect allusion to the values of the collaborative learning community, the student who said "We're supposed to turn that to the client," shared an appreciation at this point that helped to confirm my original curiosity to talk to the students about their experiences. She seems to be aware that even talking about the process the way we did in the second interview allowed her to hear some things that added value to her experience.

AH: It's a valuable time for me that we sat down here.

GB: How, Amanda?

AH: Just that outlet. Like you were saying, how things are highlighted as you go along doing therapy through the program, but then also things where we're human just like the people who come to see us and maybe in some ways we didn't think they were or that we

don't know and start unconsciously like we're having to talk about something...(slight laughter) ...that's going on with you, not somebody else.

GB: Ah. And how does that fit with supervision or a supervisor...

AH: When I'm able to go and have that kind of work that out and lay that out.

GB: So the analogy is that the student and supervisor is like the client and the therapist. Is that what you're saying? Like they had a place to work things out, that's another place to work things out. So, the whole experience is about learning and if supervision is going on from one end to the other, then all of it is supervision, then what do you do with that part?

AH: You're just always learning. And that sometimes there aren't answers, just perspectives. (Addendum, p. 290)

We could stop right there in my opinion. "You're just always learning," she says, announcing that the sum total of the impact of her experiences adds to her commitment to lifelong learning. But that is not all. She also adds that "sometimes there aren't answers, just perspectives," revealing something of how she is adapting to her experience of integration anxiety.

### **What Difference Might It Make?**

Supervisors who endeavor to embody the values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community need to pay close attention to what we learn about normal trainee anxiety. Integration anxiety specifies what is generally called "supervisee anxiety" (Hess, 2008). By further defining supervisee anxiety in terms of the nature of the internal conflict between hope and anxiety, between old learning and new learning, and between one's vision of oneself as a mental health professional and one's doubts about that vision allows supervisors to be more specific and precise in their response to student anxiety. One might think that all trainees could be diagnosed with an Adjustment Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and rightly

so. They volunteered to endure a process that will challenge them in ways they cannot imagine, although most enter a training program convinced that they can handle whatever happens. It is analogous to the experience of the new soldier who must survive the challenges of basic training or the experience of athletes returning to the rigors of spring training after months of not playing under stress.

What advice would students give supervisors if the supervisors were willing to hear it? Supervisors need the kind of advice provided by hearing the voices of students in training. Most students might have trouble believing the truth of what Rioch (1980) said when she suggested that “the supervisor is torn in the same way the student is” (p. 75). Supervisors are always learning just like students. They do not always know exactly what to do and face their own versions of ambiguity and confusion.

One can hear, if one is attuned to hearing it, the connection between the experience of anxiety and maximizing that experience for the sake of integration. Integration anxiety can fuel motivation and perseverance as well as negative feelings. Weiner and Kaplan (1980) conclude their chapter by saying, “To provide support in the face of sources of anxiety that are interfering with learning, supervisors need to reinforce what beginning therapists are doing well along with pointing out their errors in judgment and technique” (p. 49). Hess and Hess (2008) conclude their discussion with these words of advice:

One of the most important qualities a supervisor can possess is being wholly present. The supervisor ought to listen to the supervisee in order to encourage him or her to find the right words. Supervision is not therapy. Yet the impact the supervisor can have on changing lives (of both the supervisee and the client) can be just as great. A good object

(i.e., a supervisor who is genuine, open, honest, responsive, and informative model for the supervisee) will stay with that person for life. (p. 69)

A good supervisor functions like a catalyst for positive integration of all the competing aspects of the student's experience.

Nilsson and Wang (2008) offer profound advice from the point of view of the international student which allows us to make the connection between the fact of integration anxiety and how it is handled by the supervisor.

To help reduce the stress associated with evaluation, it is important that the supervisors lay out specific expectations, evaluation criteria, and consequences for poor performance early on in supervision. For international students, the evaluation of supervision may be even more anxiety provoking than for U.S. students, because they may feel that they are being evaluated and judged not only on their clinical competence but also with respect to language proficiency and familiarity with U.S. culture. It is critical to process these concerns and address them via developing clearly defined counseling-related goals and required tasks as well as indicators of achieving these goals, all of which may also strengthen the working alliance. (p. 76)

In my opinion, the uniqueness of the international student is metaphorical for the U.S. student. It helps to hear that there is a human being behind the face of the student. One may be a student in a rigorous training program, but one is not defined by that status. One is first and foremost a fellow human being worthy of dignity and respect.

We saw in the last chapter how students made creative use of interactional skills implied in the vision of the collaborative learning community. They also learned to relax and to remain open to learning not only from faculty, but also from each other as well. The kind of advice and



encouragement that would be given to supervisors who take the concept of integration anxiety seriously sounds much like the advice given to anyone ascribing to the vision of a collaborative learning community.

### **Conclusion**

Weatherford, O'Shaugnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor (2008) point out the obvious when they suggest that "The supervisor who is skilled at managing supervisee anxiety is an asset to new trainees" (p. 45). Based on what I learned from the students as they describe their experiences of integration anxiety, I have a completely new appreciation for the role of the supervisor as one who helps students manage their anxiety. In addition, I believe that framing their experience as integration anxiety gives the supervisor a more precise understanding of the challenges they face and how to address the peculiar admixture and intermingling of anxiety and hope.

Far from saying what the researcher wanted to hear, the OLLU students were profoundly honest about their actual experiences of supervision in the program. It may help to define supervision in its widest possible terms here. They have learned from membership in a collaborative learning community that they can rely on each other for support and creative interaction throughout the trials of the transformative process of professional development. In the next section, I will experiment with an innovation that allows us to listen from within the interview conversation to understand how students affirm the elements of a future they hope they are creating together.

## **Chapter 10    The Shotter Filter Introduced**

In this chapter I will introduce the Shotter Filter, an experimental use of some of the implications of the work of John Shotter (1993, 2008) as an additional device through which to listen to participants' voices in the interviews. Shotter's work builds on assumptions shared by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and social constructionism (Gergen 1994, 1997, 2009). Elements of Shotter's vision challenges the researcher to listen for how participants collaborate to create future possibilities together. One listens to the conversation as if listening to a planning meeting in which various options are reviewed, evaluated, and approved for future use. One can easily hear a significant negotiation in process in which future preferences are being negotiated. What is affirmed for inclusion in the tentatively approved future of the training program? The Shotter Filter operates like a lens through which one can see more clearly than could be seen before or, in this case, a sensitive antennae which allows us to hear how participants interpret supervision and faculty influence as part of their personal and communal development.

Over the years I have appreciated the challenging insights and the unique perspectives of the English social constructionist, John Shotter, who has written extensively about the relevance of a dialogical approach to understanding human interaction much indebted to Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, Goffman, and others. Shotter is not only a philosophical psychologist, but I would consider him to be the premier philosophical social constructionist alongside Gergen (1994, 2009). Hoffman (2007) recently referred to Shotter as the new "in-house philosopher" of the burgeoning collaborative, constructive, conversational approaches to psychotherapy. Ironically, Shotter (2005, 2006, 2008, 2010) may now be moving away from the basic tenets of social constructionism just when many of us have become convinced of its usefulness in working with

clients and students. No doubt he will continue to challenge our thinking about the extent to which we are inextricably and ethically bound up with one another.

In this chapter, I will introduce the Shotter Filter, an experimental analytical frame or lens for examining the extent to which Shotter's thought helps us hear the ways in which participants in the research interviews, including the researcher, interact with one another to negotiate a shared future of their choosing. The Shotter Filter is a way to analyze the interviews by asking: *How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future?* As I see it, there are at least four other questions that provide the various strands of the filter.

1. What are they talking about?
2. What background agreements seem to be operating?
3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?
4. How are they engaging each other?

These questions are designed to encode some of the major aspects of Shotter's thought over the years. It may be an overly simplistic application of a complicated philosophy of social relations, but represents an honest attempt to find a way to experiment with another analytical tool which might allow us to hear the students' voices differently.

### **Background**

In their edited volume, Smith, Harre, and Van Langenhove (1995) intended to offer alternatives to what they called a too limited epistemology in psychology. They invited a range of thinkers to talk about the "alternative conceptual foundations for psychological inquiry" (p. 2), including many thinkers already noteworthy for their suggestions for a new paradigm. In a section called, "The Turn to Discourse," Shotter (1995), discusses dialogical psychology,

reiterating many of the basic themes of his unique version of social constructionist implications for theory and research (cf. Harre and Gillett, 1994).

First, and key to the focus of the Shotter Filter, Shotter (1993, 2008) observes famously that “our ways of talking function to determine our forms of life.” Our interactive moments are, in fact, negotiations of future meanings. All psychological talk points to the future and future possibilities. Via conversation, we create the future together. Our language, then, becomes an indicator of future actions. To say that we are shaping mutual understandings together means to become aware of the extent to which we are, at the same time, shaping our future relations. The kind of future we have depends on the kinds of conversations we have, because the kinds of conversations we have are the kinds of relationships we have (Boyd, 1996). Therefore, when we are in conversation we are actively shaping a preferred version of future realities from those possibilities. When research participants review elements of experience that work for them, they talk about the future in similar terms that function as goals and guidelines that determine our forms of life together.

Second, Shotter emphasizes, as most social constructionists do, the importance of the interactional flow between people. He is interested in how human beings develop and sustain their ways of relating in the continuous flow of interaction. Shotter suggests that we look for what he calls “joint action,” i.e. the way human beings create realities larger than themselves. In the back and forth, give and take of normal conversation, we shape mutual understandings together equipping us to generate consensus about what to do next and how to get it done. We are constantly negotiating expectations and anticipations in our dialogically constructed realities. Joint action approaches the future with a radically open lack of commitment to any pre-determined order. We make things up as we go along. This is how human beings get from one

day to the next. In the inherently constructive influence of that dialogical dynamic, we change and are changed by our interaction.

Third, Shotter's insights allow us to detect the radically moral element in our shaping of reality together. One cannot consider the possibility that all of our interaction amounts to the co-constructing of future ways of being without instantly encountering the inescapable question: What realities ought we to be creating together? Rather than watering down individual contributions to the social construction of reality, Shotter's viewpoint elevates the importance of personal responsibility. We are constantly positioning ourselves with regard to each other in our ways of talking. Each utterance, unique and creative in its own right, becomes part of an ongoing meaning-making process analogous to the lifeblood of communal existence.

Furthermore, in the process of shaping reality together, we are simultaneously engaged in the continual shaping and forming of each other. Now we are confronted with how our positioning and talking matches with the values inherent in the future possibilities we hope to bring to life. In brief, it does matter how we treat each other, precisely because we are, in those micro movements, committing ourselves to a particular kind of community. The moral of the story is: Be careful how you talk to each other because you are going to get more of the same. Even one person who minimizes and disregards his or her impact on the process sets a tone which must be dealt with by all the others. We cannot *not* inject meaning into the future we are creating together. The vision of a genuinely collaborative learning community challenges all participants, students and faculty, to gage the level of consistency between our day-to-day interaction and the values suggested by our common vision.

## Recent Emphases

Throughout his work, Shotter talks about the continuous flow of interaction that takes place between people everyday, the radical relevance of which is heard in his classic reminder that “our ways of talking function to determine our forms of life” (1995, p. 177). Shotter (2000, 2005, 2008) is deeply influenced by Wittgenstein and often sounds like Goffman (1959, 1967) in his attention to the microsocial. What interests Shotter is how people develop and sustain the ways they relate to each other in conversation and how they make sense of their lives and surroundings together. He is as passionate as anyone writing today about the need to attend to the overlooked and almost invisible ways we construct worlds together from within our dialogically structured ways of being. This way of talking about talking directs our attention to an inherently constructive and formative activity taking place between people all the time. In that space between them, people construct different forms of life and different ways of being. These interactive moments amount to negotiations of future meanings.

Shotter (2008) recently revisited his earlier work on conversational realities, expanding on his original emphasis on a rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism to what he now calls a *relationally-responsive* approach. He has become, as Gergen (2009) has done, even more radically relational than before. He reminds us that we are meaning-generating beings who create and are created by conversationally developing relationships. This view assumes that people are creative agents rather than passive respondents to outside forces. There are obvious implications for how we understand each other from within the interdependent continuously flowing processes of living together.

In this dialogical/conversational version of social constructionist thought, we live in a dynamic creative process of negotiating expectations and anticipations in our efforts to

understand each other. We are relationally responsive beings who rely on language to negotiate the various meanings of our relating. These are dialogically constructed relationships. Within these conversations, each utterance is unique and creative in the ongoing creation of meaning in the interplay between speaker and listener. Out of this back and forth we create shared understandings together.

It is tempting to read Shotter as if he is sorting out new ways to balance ontological and epistemological assumptions influencing human interaction. Human being is set against a conversational background in which we come to see ourselves as inherently meaning-generating beings whose social being cannot be separated from all the different ways we make sense of and co-create reality together. In addition, our knowing is a knowing “from within” as opposed to traditional Cartesian notions of the outside objective knower separated from the known. Shotter (2008) has emphasized the importance of connection and “withness” as ways to understand how humans generate knowledge together as opposed to an “aboutness” approach to understanding.

Explaining what is different in his revisited edition of *Conversational Realities* (1993), Shotter (2008) reemphasizes points he has been making for years. We need to turn away from all mechanistic ways of understanding and relating to one another and, instead, “we must *notice* what it is we are already actually doing in our relations to and with each other; we must recognize and attend to how we ourselves do the work of making sense of ourselves and our world to each other” (Shotter, 2008, p. 6). In order to do this,

we shall need to shift from a focus upon how we understand objects to how we understand each other – a shift of interest away from a world of separate, independent individuals to a world of interdependent, continuously unfolding processes; away from an interest in how events in the past lead what we take the meaning of events occurring in

the present moment to be; a shift in concern, in other words, from epistemology (with the gaining of objective knowledge) to one in practical hermeneutics, to do with the everyday, practical, embodied meaningful relations with each other. (Ibid.)

This quotation gives the reader a good summary of Shotter's mission in recent writing as well as a feel for his distinctive writing style. If anything, then, he believes we should move away from epistemology and move toward a greater appreciation and greater control over our own "ontological skills" as he calls them (Ibid.).

Shotter (2008) suggests in his recent work that social science theory has to some degree neglected what he calls "our embodied feelings" (p. 12) when in fact it is these "contingent action guiding feelings" that guide us in our relating. He describes, as only he can do, the elements of our shared conversationally intertwined activities together. As Shotter (2008) writes, "I want to explore what is involved in conducting our studies from within an unceasing flow of turbulent but nonetheless formative, embodied, social activity" (p. 13). This is what I would like to do in this more experimental aspect of my research with the students in the OLLU training program: to study the ways they talk about their experience of supervision from within a dialogue with them about their evolving notions of supervision.

### **Future Possibilities**

A distinctive aspect of Shotter's unique vision is his emphasis on the extent to which psychological talk always seems to point forward toward future possibilities. In his contribution to the Harre *festschriften*, Shotter (1990) explained how his evolving interest in the notion of responsibility led him to turn away from psychology as a natural science in favor of its being a moral science whose goal is to help people take responsibility for the ways in which they create their lives for good or ill. He found Harre's notion of negotiations useful in seeing the world



differently. Shotter realized that “how the source of an action is ascertained, and how the attribution of a moral responsibility for it influences future action, struck me as a fundamental, ineradicable, and irreducible part of any proper characterization of the nature of any genuinely social activity” (1990, p. 209). Conversation always seems to point to the future. The implications of such an insight are mind-boggling, in my opinion.

This awareness made me wonder about the extent to which we are more-or-less continually negotiating the future together. What if, in fact, that is what the OLLU students are continually doing in their conversations with faculty and supervisors, but also with each other? The problem is that we hardly ever stop to ask ourselves what future possibilities we are negotiating. Whose future possibilities? Who wins and who loses? Are we creating what we want or perhaps increasingly creative ways to avoid taking responsibility for the future we create together? If we are continually creating the future together in all the various ways we relate to each other, many of which are, if Shotter (2005) is right, remain outside of our focus, then we ought to be able to detect some of the ways those negotiations take shape.

In his elaboration of dialogical psychology, Shotter (1995) reviews key points in his way of thinking. He talks about his fertile notion of “joint action,” borrowed from symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), a way of describing that sort of knowledge that belongs to no one and everyone at the same time. Joint action means we are continually creating realities larger than any individual. Katz and Shotter (2004) call it “mutual responsiveness” and Gergen (2009) writes appreciatively of these insights, calling them “co-action” in his recent work. These are morally loaded ideas.

## **The Ethics of It All**

We position ourselves in relation to others in our ways of talking. We cannot do otherwise. It is impossible not to respond to each other; we are instinctively and inherently responsive beings. Even choosing not to respond is itself a response. We are more-or-less continually positioning ourselves to others whose counter-positioning influences us and so forth again and again as we shape mutual understandings together. If this is the case, we are highly sensitive to all aspects of communication with each other. As Shotter (1995) reminds us

The importance of the 'tone' of one's actions, and the way in which it can work to set, or to transform, the anticipated possibilities for action in a situation--whether your speech or writing invites the other in as an equal conversational partner, say, or positions them only as menials to obey--cannot be overemphasized (167).

In other words, it does matter how we position ourselves with each other! We create accountability with each other. We create and sustain together conversational forms of being which continue to function to create and sustain our lives together in a kind of dialectical dynamic. We must learn to acknowledge these "unique others" (Shotter, 2005) with whom we create and share our own futures.

To be consistent I intend to take seriously the extent to which participants in the research project will be actively creating knowledge together, including the researcher. They will be co-creating what Shotter (1993, 2008) calls a third kind of knowledge, a developing practical kind of knowledge from within the situation, a knowledge that contributes to the socialization of the student as a full participant in the process of professional identity development. Shotter urges us not to avoid the importance of words-in-their-speaking including our struggles with language and the practical tensions that emerge in conversation.

An important aspect of this third kind of knowledge is the ethical dimension which pushes us to consider what kind of knowledge we are actually creating together. Shotter (1993, 2008) refers to psychology as a moral science in this context, emphasizing that we all share a distinctive corporate responsibility for what emerges from our dialogically constructed understandings. One can hear the students asking, more or less, what they ought to be creating together for the sake of their transformation as mental health professionals. Professional socialization deserves such a careful moral grounding.

Such moral deliberations cannot be decided in advance. They must grow out of that third kind of practical knowledge continually generated in dialogue. What actually happens in that dialogue?

The major change introduced is this: we must abandon the attempt simply to *discover* and *explain* our supposed 'natural' natures, and turn to a study of how we actually do treat each other as being within the context of our everyday, conversation intertwined, communal activities--a change which leads us on into a concern with 'making,' with processes of 'social construction' (Shotter, 2008, p. 22).

This further describes the kinds of processes in which I am interested as I conduct group interviews with student participants in the research project. I want to avoid as much as possible the dilemma of what Shotter (2008) calls "already determined meanings" (p. 24) which tend to stifle, control, prohibit, and generally discourage accepting moral responsibility for knowledge generated in the process of conversation. Students will sense that the question, "What ought we to be creating together here?" is quietly lingering in the background of the conversation. We are, ultimately, creating moral guidance together.

### **An Analysis Informed by Shotter's Work**

In recent work, Shotter (2008) develops further the idea of *joint action*, another way of attending to the uniqueness of the dialogical perspective. He encourages us to venture into uncharted waters in which that very lack of specificity and the lack of any pre-determined order allows those involved to specify and define reality together. This kind of joint action is dialogically structured.

Joint action comes into being when, in their meetings with each other, peoples' activities become spontaneously and responsively intertwined or entangled with those of the others around them. In such an intertwining, some very strange events occur--when after a time of mutual influence the participants separate again, they can no longer be simply described as before. Although they may still retain their identity, they can no longer be thought of as unchanged in their being, their way of being in the world. They will have come to embody different ways of perceiving, thinking, talking, acting, and valuing; they will now have changed in their *ontological skills*. (Shotter, 2008, p. 37)

Is Shotter not talking about *socialization* here? Is this not an eloquent way to talk about how transformative learning takes place in a collaborative learning community? This is how an emphasis on process-as-content (Gehart, 2007) encourages participation in a kind of conversation that creates the possibility of change for everyone involved.

Shotter's way of discussing joint action suggests a kind of analytical lens, a way of proceeding into the type of conversation he describes. It invites careful consideration of the details of such a back-and-forth as well as the kind of radical openness that suspends judgment while anticipating the unanticipated, the unintended, and the unpredictable. As he says, "Indeed, it is precisely its lack of any pre-determined order, and thus its openness to being specified or

determined *by those involved in it*, in practice--while usually remaining quite unaware of their doing it--that is its central defining feature” (2008, p. 39). I intend to follow Shotter’s lead into these “novel spheres as yet unknown to us” (ibid.) by conducting research which amounts to the kind of practical investigation into the myriad of ways in which people create meaning together.

Shotter (2008) summarizes his unique perspective in the following concluding statement in the book’s final paragraph.

To the extent that we cannot rely on already established conventions or rules, to the extent that we cannot plan our next step ahead of time, we must find the relevant features influencing our next step in what becomes present to us as we take each step. Only as we actively engage, as we bodily move around within our surroundings, do these influences become known to us. If we cease our active involvement, they cease. Hence, we must always create the relevant, sequentially unfolding *ways of relating* ourselves to events in our circumstances, for another next first time, in the very course of our involvements.

(206)

With these eloquent words, Shotter encourages the researcher and the student to slow down and, with great care and maximum openness, to pay attention to the small steps taken together in dialogue. Only in the midst of that process will we be able to create together how to go on with our mutual socialization. We must attend to what Shotter (2008, 91) calls “these intricately timed, creative intertwinings and interweavings” present in our embodied interactions with each other, because in those interweavings one finds “the new openings, the new possibilities we need to discover, if we are to develop our relational abilities further” (91).

## **The Shotter Filter**

This kind of analysis allows the researcher to hear how participants, including the researcher, engage in the co-construction of future possibilities. True to my social constructionist commitments, which have been spelled out in earlier chapters, I have chosen to make use of John Shotter's (1993, 2008) basic emphases to create a "filter" that will allow me to listen for the kind of thing Shotter thinks we often overlook because of commitments to more traditional ways of thinking about how people make sense of reality together. The Shotter Filter provides an analytical lens or framework that might allow us to determine not only how the future is present in the interviews, but how the conversational partners are engaging each other toward the goal of constructing that preferred future together. It will allow us to listen carefully to how interview participants position themselves with each other. It might give us a way to notice unspoken agreements and commitments that make coordinated action possible.

I have been influenced recently by the work of Gale (2000) and Gale, Lawless, & Roulston (2004) who have written about discursive approaches to clinical research. Gale, Lawless, and Roulston (2004) introduce several analytical methods to help them consider how conversation influences the construction of identity and social interaction. They share assumptions similar to those guiding my research with the OLLU students. Their chapter introduces various elements of conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis along with pieces of text and how the methods were used to amplify a hearing of how people position themselves with each other. This kind of research requires careful attention to the micro-level view of interaction and looks for evidence of turn-taking, pauses, overlaps of turn, misspoken words, and other "paralinguistic features" explained by the authors who are also influenced by

the work of John Shotter. Their work inspired and modeled for me the kind of careful analysis I wanted to be able to conduct with the Shotter Filter.

Specifically, the Shotter Filter asks a simple question: *How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future?* Four other questions provide the various strands of the filter: (1) What are they talking about? (2) What background agreements seem to be operating? (3) How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand? (4) How are they engaging each other? Each of these questions attempts to add an element to our understanding of what might be going on in each of the excerpts from the transcript of the interviews. By asking what the participants are talking about, we establish the content of the conversation for that section of the dialogue. Asking about background agreements allows the researcher to imagine what shared understandings are already guiding the participants in their handling of the content. To ask how they are relating themselves to the topic at hand gives us a chance to infer possible attitudes or stances taken by participants as they discuss the content in question. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by asking how participants engage each other as they interact with one another is to come to the heart of Shotter's recent emphasis: how are we present to each other and how are we noticing how we engage the others in the dialogue?

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have introduced the reader to the work of John Shotter, the English philosophical psychologist whose unique interpretation of social constructionism continues to influence relational therapies. A general overview of Shotter's thought also endeavored to give a flavor of how he writes and talks about his major concerns which include the radical extent to which our relationships are conversationally developed and developing. In addition, Shotter's early awareness of the extent to which we are negotiating future possibilities together provides a

central focus for the Shotter Filter. Other unique ways of thinking and talking give us clues for an analytical tool designed to amplify our ability to hear research participants from within their spontaneous interaction with each other.



## Chapter 11 The Shotter Filter Applied

For experimentation with the Shotter Filter, I chose to focus on four basic themes as a way to hear how key aspects of the OLLU program are discussed in the interviews: Program, Supervisor, Group, and Self. Shotter's (1993, 1995, 2008) contribution is to have created a new way of listening to how people create reality together in conversation. The Shotter Filter makes it much easier to detect the subtle negotiations taking place in the interaction between participants without their express acknowledgment that a negotiation is taking place. This device may allow us to test the possibility, outlined in chapter 8 (p. 133) on the collaborative learning community and chapter 9 (p. 157) on coping with integration anxiety in the collaborative learning community, that the students have created ways to appropriate values implicit in the vision of the collaborative learning community as a way to cope with what I have labeled "integration anxiety," the normal developmental stress of the need to integrate academic and clinical instruction into a workable synthesis.

I fear that something may be lost by analyzing a text without the benefit of allusions to physical movements visible on the videotape, but still a great deal more depth is created after applying this analytical tool. The Shotter Filter asks: *How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future?* As I outlined in the previous chapter, four other questions provide the key strands of the filter.

1. What are they talking about?
2. What background agreements seem to be operating?
3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?
4. How are they engaging each other?

The Shotter Filter will be applied to the four themes identified above (program, supervisors, group, and self), the results of which will be written in a format to answer the four questions related to the Shotter Filter. Excerpts from the interview transcripts will be chosen on the basis of their ability to convey a general sense of how participants talked about the theme and, where possible, allowing for variety in terms of hearing from as many students as possible.

### **Program**

The students affirm their interest in co-constructing a training program characterized by: diversity, openness, non-hierarchical relationships between faculty and students, mutuality, and shared responsibility. These are clearly values implicit in the vision of a collaborative learning community. They want to negotiate an atmosphere free of fear in which it is okay to make mistakes and where it is safe enough to accept constructive criticism. They prefer a dynamic, creative, and collaborative learning environment which is both challenging and non-confrontational and in which, hopefully, transformative learning is a possibility. Elements of the experiential learning process involving students and faculty ought to parallel elements of the therapeutic process involving clients and therapists.

### **Excerpt from Transcript**

GB: Just a reminder. The opening question is: How would you describe your experience of supervision? Let's just allow those first thoughts you have to come up. We'll just brainstorm and then we'll take it from there. OK?

VB: Diverse.

GB: Diverse?

SG: Provides a learning experience.

GB: A learning experience. Just brain storm and what comes to mind first and we'll pursue that.

BJG: Open

GB: Open

LL: Supportive

GB: Supportive?

VB: Entertaining.

GB: Entertaining? Isn't that fun? You see we aim to please here.

LL: It's a positive experience. Supervision actually puts you on the same level as the professor. You don't feel...

GB: How would you describe that? Collegial? Collaborative? What?

LL: I'm just saying there's a . . . There's no expert. You're on the same level as the supervisor.

GB: Non hierarchical. The same level as the supervisor

GB: OK. What other thoughts? Now yall keep going. And you can be more personal if you like. How would you describe your experience of supervision? Don't hold back. This is the time for us to think out loud for a little while. We'll pursue any of these.

SG: Constructive criticism.

GB: Constructive criticism? Can you say a little bit about that?

SG: The supervisor provides things that you can work on that they see. . . Open discussion of things that you need to work on should work on.

JH: I think they challenge you to do your best. They know you can do better. They push you to do better because they know you personally. (Addendum, p. 270f.)

**1. What are they talking about?** Here, in the first few minutes of the first interview, students can be heard listing typically one or two word descriptions of their experience of supervision however, the words seem to be more accurately descriptive of basic values of the training program in general. Right from the start, the students seem to have a reservoir of positive descriptive words to convey elements of the learning environment in supervision that they value most. The students go on to explain that they prefer an atmosphere in which it is safe to take risks, to make mistakes, and where there is support enough to learn to integrate constructive criticism into the developmental process. Their descriptions match a good deal of what the literature identifies as an ideal supervisory environment (Wetchler, 1988; Wetchler, 1989; Wetchler, Piercy, and Sprenkle, 1989; Wetchler and Vaughn, 1991). One could speculate about who said what and why, but in general the content of the excerpt reveals the kinds of descriptive words faculty and supervisors most want to hear.

**2. What background agreements seem to be operating?** One can speculate that participants wanted to cooperate with the interviewer while being as complementary of the program as possible. There was not one negative description in the whole excerpt. Participants can report that they have experienced each of the things listed, implying that they are aware of the ideal program values and that they can be realized in actual experience. Had they instinctively agreed to be complementary of the program and supervisors? Clearly, the students had somehow agreed to take turns and allow as many participants as possible to speak up. In other words, they were behaving together in response to my invitation to brainstorm. The interviewer did not ask specifically for negative descriptive words. The group had apparently decided to focus on the best of their experience of supervision to the exclusion of everything else.

**3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?** As mentioned above, the group seems to have decided on groupthink for the first few minutes of the interview. They related themselves to the topic as a cooperative team. There is clearly a sense of “we-ness” about the excerpt, a togetherness that seems instinctive for the participants. They were answering as if they had decided to create as many possible quick answers to the opening question as possible. It presents an example of coordinated action in response to the opening question as well as a response to my invitation to brainstorm.

**4. How are they engaging each other?** Without making a lot of eye contact, although the videotape reveals a great deal of looking at each other throughout the interviews, participants consciously and patiently waited for each other as they expanded on the list begun by the first respondent. They agreed to agree with each other during the first few minutes of the interview. One might say that they were practicing with each other exactly some of the words used to describe their experience of supervision. In subtle ways they reached out to each other to make room for the thoughts and opinions of whoever wanted to speak next. I relied mainly on reflecting back what a participant said and on open-ended questions (Boyd, 2003) which allows space for a respondent to expand on what was just shared. I did not judge, argue, or indicate any negative response to participant responses.

I did, however, interrupt a respondent at one point to ask an open-ended question about her reference to a lack of hierarchy in the interaction with her supervisor.

LL: It's a positive experience. Supervision actually puts you on the same level as the professor. You don't feel...

GB: How would you describe that? Collegial? Collaborative? What?

LL: I'm just saying there's a . . . There's no expert. You're on the same level as the supervisor. (Addendum, p. 270)

The interruption may have generated a sense of befuddlement for the poor participant who simply repeated what she had offered in the first place. In addition, I may have been pushing a particular word without allowing the participant to use her own words. She may have become mildly annoyed depending on how one interprets "I'm just saying there's a . . . "

A more successful example of the interviewer's use of open-ended questions can be found in the following exchange.

SG: Constructive criticism.

GB: Constructive criticism? Can you say a little bit about that?

SG: The supervisor provides things that you can work on that they see. . . Open discussion of things that you need to work on, should work on. (Addendum, p. 271)

In this case, I both reflected back the words used by the participant and followed up with an open-ended question. The student then elaborated on her response with a deeper understanding of "constructive criticism" which includes the supervisor helping the student hear things the student needs to practice more intentionally. The supervisory environment helps with integration anxiety.

How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future in this first excerpt? A short answer is that the whole group responded with a remarkable degree of coordination to enact or embody the words they were using to describe their experience of supervision. One could sense the safety, openness, and support identified by participants. An unspoken mutual respect pervaded those first few minutes of the first interview, leaving one to wonder about the

extent to which those first few minutes set a tone for how participants positioned themselves throughout the interview.

### **Supervisors**

The students affirm their preferences for supervisors who are: caring, respectful, encouraging while challenging, both effective teachers and supportive consultants. Supervisors are the faculty face of the whole training program. Such a supervisor relates to students as colleagues, exhibits hope and confidence in students' evolving skills, is open to sharing personal experience where relevant, and is secure enough to facilitate a genuine dialogue. They allow students to experiment, disagree, and differentiate. These kinds of supervisors are open to modeling for students, valuing engagement in their interactions with students. The importance of the supervisory alliance is amply supported in the literature (Brock and Sibbald, 1988; Herrick-Hutt, Scott, and King, 1983; Kaiser, 1992; Wark, 1995) and, therefore, supervisory influence can be embraced with the least amount of defensiveness when it takes place in a supportive and nurturing relationship. As one student put it, "You can have a supervisor, but if you don't feel that connection with your supervisor, then there's really no supervision going on."

### **Excerpt from Transcript**

JH: OK. I'm finally speaking up. Especially my first supervisor, I think she genuinely cared and had concern for our well-being and she came across that way.

GB: Are you talking about practicum, Jess, or internship?

JH: Practicum. My first supervisor. She came across as very caring. We learned a lot about her personally and ourselves and how we learned.

GB: Is that connected to the caring? You said she was very caring. You learned a lot about her personal style?

JH: Her personal style and what she expected. I called her Mother Hen sometimes because she had to let us fly. She did such a wonderful job. It was almost like a nurturing experience.

GB: Nurturing.

JH: Just like our mothers. When it comes time to go, we would push back on that. And she would say, you guys are ready. I will have to let you go and let you try. (Addendum, p. 273)

**1. What are they talking about?** In this exchange, the focus is on her experience of her practicum supervisor during her second year in the program. She describes her as “genuinely caring and had concern for our well-being.” The student notes that she felt like she was able to get to know her supervisor personally, implying that her supervisor exhibited a willingness to be public which nurtured the bonding between participant and supervisor. In fact, the student says, “I called her Mother Hen sometimes,” indicating that she experienced that phase of supervision as a nurturing experience. She ends by adding that she felt like she had to push back sometimes in order to get the Mother Hen to allow her chicks to fly.

**2. What background agreements seem to be operating?** Her phrase, “I’m finally speaking up,” can be interpreted a number of ways. Perhaps she meant she was finally ready to speak or perhaps she felt some inner sense of expectation to contribute to the conversation. She wanted to jump in and add her own personal recollection of a wonderfully nurturing practicum experience which may have ultimately impacted her own way of working. Another background agreement, building on the first few minutes of the interview, might have encouraged her to feel safe about sharing her experience. After all, her supervisor allowed herself to get to know them



personally. There seems to have been an unspoken agreement throughout this part of the first interview to be positive and complementary.

**3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?** The student movingly relates herself quite personally to her memory of a caring and almost maternal supervisor. She shares her gratitude for the manner in which the supervisor related to her as a student. Clearly, this student revels in her memory of her time with that supervisor. She relates herself to the topic appreciatively and complementary. I simply reflected what she said and asked for clarification to allow her room to expand on her thoughts.

**4. How are they engaging each other?** The tone set by the student was quite personal, almost warmly reflective of a transformative aspect of her training. After clarifying which supervisory experience she was talking about, she continued smoothly with her earlier description of the supervisor's caring manner. She pauses for me to ask how her learning about the supervisor personally might have been connected to the caring she experienced. I then expressed curiosity about how her learning was connected to the supervisor's caring. She elaborates that she learned about the supervisor's personal style and about what she expected. Her reference to the Mother Hen metaphor was double-sided apparently. She felt both cared for and, like a child determined to explore her environment, somewhat stifled at the same time, pushing back against the Mother Hen to find herself on her own terms. We are talking about adult students, after all.

The interviewer's question, "Are you talking about practicum, Jess, or internship?," abbreviated her full name implying a sense of informality in relating to her. It conveys a sense of personal admiration for her as a student, but how did she interpret the interviewer's taking liberty with her name in that context? It may be impossible to know. It certainly did not seem to

interrupt her recollection of her caring supervisor. I may have come close to distracting her, however, when I asked, “Is that connected to the caring? You said she was very caring. You learned a lot about her personal style?” On one level, the question is awkward and not well framed. On another, I risked implying that she should focus more on learning about her personal style.

How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future in this excerpt? The student is affirming her appreciation for a supervisor who was both open and caring which set the tone for the next few exchanges about the importance for a student of the kind of relationship that student has with her supervisor. She is unequivocally recommending that all supervisors consider following in the footsteps of her practicum supervisor. She might also be underlining the importance of caring in relationships with clients who, like her, often respond positively to a nurturing and caring listener. In her ideal future, supervisors are both caring and wise enough to allow students to differentiate and to make mistakes as they experiment with independence. This kind of supervisor helped her with her unique experience of integration anxiety.

### **Group**

The students affirm their appreciation for a cohort group in which they can: learn from each other, feel comfortable, enjoy learning with colleagues from different backgrounds and cultures, value interaction with fellow students, encounter people who want to change their thinking, learn the value of dialogical and collaborative learning, value the inescapability of influencing each other, engage in learning activities that promote group connection, and experience solidarity rather than aloneness. A number of participants expressed appreciation for the kinds of relationships they have created with other students. Clearly, these descriptions match the vision of the collaborative learning community.

One participant who previously expressed appreciation for the communal aspects of the training program added an even more profound observation in the second interview. She seems to know she will miss having her classmates around after she graduates. She refers to them as “fifteen mirrors” that have provided a multi-faceted learning reflection process for her.

### **Excerpt from Transcript**

VB: And I’m understanding what our limitations are. You don’t always get that nice little mirror all the time, you know. You have fifteen mirrors that are constantly going and I appreciate that we’ve been together through all that because you learn and you grow and you...

GB: Talk about the fifteen mirrors. I’m going to remember that. That’s the title of an article right there. What difference do the fifteen mirrors make?

VB: Even though my idea doesn’t change, it can happen. I’m able to take what someone else understands and take that perspective because we’re like-minded people. We hang around with people who talk like us, think like us, act like us, but in this situation you’re put into a place where people aren’t exactly like you. You learn about change and you learn about...It’s about culture...

GB: How can we frame that as supervision? I’m interested in understanding the process, not the word. I don’t know if the word really works for me. Apprenticeship or whatever. Socialization. There’s a process there where you guys are supervising each other...

VB: Well, that’s exactly what it is. (Addendum, p. 288f.)

**1. What are they talking about?** In this excerpt the student elaborates extensively and poetically about her appreciation for the people with whom she shares the program. Specifically, she seems to be voicing her awareness that they have been instrumental to her own personal

growth. She will miss her classmates after they graduate. They share many commonalities that have helped her feel a strong sense of connection with them. Her use of the mirror metaphor is both clever and profound to the degree that it implies that they are all mirrors, but also that to the extent that mirrors are reflective, she knows she is able to see herself in the others in her cohort group. Somehow the whole experience she wants to describe contributes to professional development as well as personal transformation. I wondered to what extent she is talking about supervision taking place between students.

**2. What background agreements seem to be operating?** She begins with a revealing phrase, “I’m understanding what our limitations are.” Who is the “our” she refers to? She feels safe in assuming that other students are in agreement with her experience of limitations. Contrary to the fear that participants might not be forthcoming and reveal anything negative or troubling, she points out that all is not sweetness and light. Students also learn that they have limitations. She relates herself to the topic both appreciatively and with some level of concern about what might happen once she no longer has access to the fifteen mirrors. She assumes that some sort of cohesion exists between the members of the cohort group. She adds, “I’m able to take what someone else understands and take that perspective because we’re like-minded people.” One wonders if other participants would agree with her perspective. We learn from each other, she seems to be saying, as well as it has been good to be able to be with such like-minded people. They have incorporated the values of the program that encourages the development of a collaborative learning community.

**3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?** The student wants to express her appreciation to her cohorts, but also implies it might be different out there in the big bad world without them. One detects a subterranean anxiety about being a mental health professional

without her friends. It sounds like I became distracted by the fifteen mirrors metaphor while relating to it appreciatively wanting to hear more about how the metaphor works. The student expands on what she means, probably feeling some pressure about having to respond to the interviewer's curiosity about the mirror metaphor. "We're like-minded people," living within a single culture most of one's life, "but in this situation you're put into a place where people aren't exactly like you." She seems to be implying that the adjustment might have been stressful at times, although she has learned how to change and grow.

**4. How are they engaging each other?** By introducing the rich metaphor of the fifteen mirrors, the student hooks my curiosity about how she is using the metaphor. I want to know more about what she means. Perhaps my complementary curiosity flatters her, but perhaps it also becomes a distraction for her as well. I next ask an open-ended question, "What difference do the fifteen mirrors make?" The question also expresses an appreciative curiosity about her use of the mirror metaphor which should engage her in an extended dialogue in which they co-construct a richer meaning out of the fifteen mirrors metaphor.

Wanting to be consistent with the original research question, I asked, "How would you describe your experience of supervision?," before asking another open-ended question, "How can we frame that as supervision?" I then launch into a statement about a personal interest in what the word supervision means which risks disengaging from the student who is pouring her heart out about her experience of collaborative learning. Her closing line, "Well, that's exactly what it is," seems hollow somehow, probably an attempt to disengage from the new topic having to do with how students may be supervising each other.

How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future in this excerpt? Both the student and the interviewer found the mirror metaphor intriguing, notwithstanding its ambiguity.

Nonetheless, to the extent that the student was accurately expressing the experience of her cohorts, they had successfully created elements of a collaborative learning community together. They will miss each other and that experience of community after they graduate. Their experience will only enhance their desire to recreate that experience in other contexts where they will attempt to instill the values of the program in new cohorts and possibly in those whom they endeavor to serve. Now they know what can happen in a group committed to a particular set of values that hope to bring out the best in everyone in the group.

### **Self**

The students affirm a willingness to contribute to a process in which the individual student can: feel validated by a match between personal values and program values, experience transformative learning, feel supported and encouraged while also being challenged to take risks to learn new ideas and new skills. They want to feel interested and engaged, increasingly motivated to evolve as individuals while developing as professionals. They prefer a learning environment which enhances reflection and self-awareness. They want to feel safe enough to learn to think for themselves and to develop toward increasing professional competence. Many, if not most, of the words used to describe the program in the above section are words describing an environment in which the self of the student can find a way to new connections and new experiences of oneself. Many of these experiences parallel what Mezirow (2000) calls transformative learning. Shotter (1997), on the other hand, might talk about the social construction of our inner lives; even private or personal experiences grow out of our ongoing interaction with others.

### **Excerpt from Transcript**

BGJ: One thing that I was thinking about was that my practicum experience this year has been engaging.

GB: Who's engaged?

BGJ: Me. Which is very important because if I don't feel like it is interesting, I'm not engaged, (laughter)...

GB: She's just like that.

BGJ: After working a full day, to come into a practicum and it not be interesting or not have people there motivated and not have challenges provided and not have supervisor ready to go, even though they've worked a full day, is kind of ...

GB: So engaging translates into motivating, energizing, interesting . . . Which facilitates the whole learning thing. That's a value. Okay.

LL: I would like to elaborate on that. When you feel comfortable and when I feel comfortable in supervision, it allows me to . . . I feel safer and actually I'm able to . . . I know there is no expert. We're all on the same level. That kind of thing. That feeling. I'm more able to express different ideas and to come up with new ideas, to challenge the ideas that I have, not me supervising, but my client. And what it also does is to move me into branching out and trying new ideas so . . . It's kind of a little mess . . .

GB: This gets into some interesting learning stuff, because I'm hearing you, you can relax and test, you can relax and be more open and test new ideas and the maybe practice those. You might not have without that safety. Can you say more about what that's been like for you in that experience of thinking new thoughts and new ideas and how you've been experimenting with those?

LL: When you have more people and you have more input, then you've going to get different ideas. I think definitely the different cultural aspects and differences between people within the practicum as well as clients has helped me look at things differently. (Addendum, p. 277f.)

**1. What are they talking about?** The first participant introduces the theme of feeling engaged by her practicum experience which, she explains, makes it easier to feel motivated at the end of a long day. She then introduces another theme, related to the first, that practicum ought to be engaging in the sense that something is wrong if she cannot feel engaged by her practicum. She appreciates feeling motivated and challenged in her practicum experience. Another student enters the exchange to elaborate on what the first student said. However, she seems to introduce a new theme related to feeling comfortable and safe in practicum. Because of that safety, she explains, she feels free to express different ideas as well as to come up with new ideas. She feels encouraged to think creatively in a minimally hierarchical practicum environment. The kind of synthesizing necessary to move beyond integration anxiety occurs more smoothly in this sort of environment.

**2. What background agreements seem to be operating?** It is interesting to note how comfortable the first student feels not only to applaud the way she felt engaged by her practicum experience, but also to express a criticism that something is wrong if people, including the supervisor, are not ready to go when students arrive for practicum. She assumes an agreement around the idea that students who work full-time have a right to expect that they “get their money’s worth” once they reach practicum. It is okay even to complain or to assert one’s right to expect a quality experience. The second student seems comfortable with entering the dialogue with what she indicates is an elaboration on the first theme. She does, in fact, talk about how she



has benefited personally from the comfort and safety of her practicum environment. It has encouraged her to try new ideas and new practices. It has helped her deal with the theme of differences, especially cultural differences apparently. As a result, she explains, “it has helped me look at things differently.”

**3. How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?** The first student seems to want to relate something personal and specific, honestly confessing that she appreciates the way her practicum experience has helped her feel motivated to learn and practice working with clients at the end of a long day. I interjected, or at least attempted to interject, humor by asking “Who’s engaged?” The first student was only recently married. After she humorously suggested that somebody better keep her engaged, the interviewer quipped again, “She’s just like that.” The researcher reflected the words she used. At that point another student entered the exchange to elaborate on something somebody said. It is not clear if she was elaborating on what the first student said or on the interviewer’s comment, “So engaging translates into motivating, energizing, interesting . . . Which facilitates the whole learning thing. That’s a value. Okay.” She also introduces a subtle element of confession that some aspects of the learning process have been challenging for her in terms of dealing with differences and learning to think differently than the way she thought before coming into the program.

**4. How are they engaging each other?** The first student volunteered to report that she appreciated the way her practicum team experience was “engaging” which made the whole thing more interesting. I attempted to approach her response with humor which implied an encouragement to continue with what she was saying. Somehow she felt safe enough to report more honestly that, on the other hand, she knew what it was like to unmotivated and unchallenged if the practicum environment was less than engaging on a particular evening.

Something inspired the second student to elaborate on what she heard, but rather than engaging the first student by expanding on what she said or engaging the interviewer, she introduced a completely new theme related to what in her practicum experience made her feel safe and comfortable, all of which inspired her in her personal growth.

I attempted to affirm the second student by complementing her on introducing “some interesting learning stuff.” I basically paraphrased what she had just explained before asking, “Can you say more about what that’s been like for you in that experience of thinking new thoughts and new ideas and how you’ve been experimenting with those?” In response to my curiosity to know more about her experience, she added that more people means more ideas and more input, all of which has helped her deal with differences.

How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future in this excerpt? It is easy to detect how each of these participants assert the need for practicum to consist of certain attributes that contribute to a student’s motivation or comfort level when dealing with differences. They suggest for the consideration of all witnesses to their words that they would be active partners in the construction of the kind of environment that contributed to them personally. Their experiences of engagement and safety contribute to their identities as mental health professionals who will value the same for those with whom they work.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have experimented with a simple interpretive lens taken from the work of social constructionist scholar, John Shotter (1993, 1995, 2008), whose work primarily asks us to look from within the ongoing interactions of dialogue partners. The Shotter Filter asks: *How are participants interacting to negotiate a preferred future?* Four questions provide the key strands of the filter: (1) What are they talking about?, (2) What background agreements seem to be

operating?, (3) How are they relating themselves to the topic at hand?, and (4) How are they engaging each other? I chose excerpts from interview transcripts to illustrate interaction related to the following themes: Program, Supervisor, Group, and Self.

The results of using the Shotter Filter shine a bright light on the extent to which the theoretical possibility outlined in chapter 8 on the collaborative learning community and chapter 9 on coping with integration anxiety in the collaborative learning community might be accurate and useful. In each of the four categories examined using the Shotter Filter there are references to the connection between the values and the relationships that grow out of a collaborative learning community and what the students learned. They seem to connect feeling safe, feeling engaged, feeling motivated, and feeling connected to coping with the learning challenges confronting them. In chapter 5 (p. 81) I suggested that the students' tentative vulnerable evolving identities are *relational* identities comprised of all the continually fluctuating layers of relationally-responsive influences (Shotter, 2008) operating in the training program. I suggest that the Shotter Filter allows us to hear more precisely how the students experience that co-creation of a learning community in which they become confident mental health professionals.

Because of the relatively artificial nature of a research interview, the Shotter Filter might not have faced much of a challenge compared, for example, to the transcript of a fast-moving therapy session. I would like to experiment further with the Shotter Filter with a transcript of a couple's therapy session in which those involved are struggling to find ways out of the future they have already created to a different future more aligned with their negotiated preferences. Furthermore, there is an inherent connection between that preferred future and how those engaged in its construction treat each other.

Another transcript I would like to analyze using the Shotter Filter would be a conversation between a group of students without a faculty member present. It would have less of the feel of an interview and more of the spontaneous interaction of ordinary conversation. I can imagine the Shotter Filter helping a management group identify where and how they are creating one future together when they may be wanting to move in a completely different direction altogether. I believe there may be other uses for the Shotter Filter.

## **Chapter 12    Something for Everybody: An Evaluation**

Somewhere along the way, I learned to use a P.I.E. approach to any project. P.I.E. stands for Plan, Implement, and Evaluate. Chapters one through five of the dissertation details the **Plan** aspects of the project while chapters six through eleven describe elements of the **Implementation** phase. Even if it is not absolutely required in a qualitative dissertation project, I think it might be interesting to include an **Evaluation** of the research process and to summarize, from a variety of angles, how the findings or, as I prefer to call them, the collaborative creations, might be useful in addition to what innovations have been created or explored. One of the first things one realizes at the end of such a process is all the things one could have or maybe should have done differently. I will attempt to summarize what I think I learned.

### **Writing For a Number of Audiences**

There are a number of audiences for whom I am writing. Of course I am writing for my dissertation advisor and several other readers directly involved in evaluating the dissertation to see if it meets doctoral level requirements. I hope they will be able to detect that I worked hard to meet the standard of telling two compelling stories, one about the content and the other about the research process itself. But there are also other audiences that matter to me. First, I suppose I am writing for myself. As I have said over and over, I wanted to learn something about qualitative research and clinical supervision. Second, I am writing for the OLLU students past and present who have enriched my life (the mere thought of whom makes me feel emotional sometimes, in a good way). Third, I am writing for colleagues on the faculty of the OLLU program, but also for all the supervisors present and future as well as all the other training programs whose goal is to prepare competent and integrated mental health professionals. Fourth, I am writing for other

researchers for whom I now have immeasurably more respect and regard having endured what I have endured the past few years.

### **How Does One Write For Oneself?**

A dissertation is a much more public project than I realized before I began. But it fell upon me to exercise a great deal of self-agency and good old fashioned proactivity to plan and implement the multiple aspects of the project. This dissertation contains elements of activism, journalism, biography, historiography, systematic analysis, and experimentation. I have learned to respect the complexities of delving deeply into someone's experience of something. I am no longer surprised that qualitative research has blossomed into a vast, deep, and richly thought-provoking academic discipline that seems determined to enhance respect for alterity and diversity. I was pleased to learn about research as intervention and that one's desire to improve the lives of co-researchers was okay. The purpose of social science research ought to be, according to Christians (2003), "enabling community life to prosper" (p. 227). The goal is not data collection, but community transformation.

Reading the handbooks of Denzin and Lincoln (1998, 2003, 2008a, 2008b) gave me a glimpse of a whole new world in which researchers went to a surprising amount of trouble to understand the reality or realities of others. I value the learning that comes from having to deal with Institutional Review Boards and students who are so eager to learn and do well that it almost breaks your heart. I value the privilege of being able to have the interview conversations with current students, some of whom have now graduated, who have given me and others precious gifts in the form of shared experiences.

I am writing for myself as a supervisor who wants to do a better job. Learning about supervision has opened my eyes to generations of thought and consideration about how to train

others who dream of being able to help people professionally. What an immense responsibility. Who among us is really able to bear it, except for colleagues, faculty and students, with whom we share the journey and without whose companionship none of it would be worth the effort? Not only must we attend to the obvious requirements for basic competency, we must attend to the quality of the relationships through which professional values are mediated. Supervisors learn to encourage most of the students with whom they work while having to discourage a few others who need to be doing something else besides psychotherapy. Just because they need it does not mean they can do it.

Related to my role as a supervisor, I have noted a difference in my psychotherapy practice in which I am more attentive not only to how clients use language, but also how I respond to how they position themselves with me and others through their use of language. Having coded and analyzed transcripts in micro detail for many hours seems to have imbued me with a new and greatly appreciated skill for analyzing therapy conversations. I was not expecting this emerging skill and have found it fascinating that the research process also leaves a residue of permanent effect on one's way of listening and hearing.

### **Here's To the Real Heroes: The Students**

The students allowed me into an inner sanctum that helps us all appreciate the dizzying array of experiences which they struggle to integrate alone and together. They gave voice to the intricacies of multiple new experiences all demanding attention and acceptance at the same time. I hope they can detect the empathy and the genuine respect behind my feeble efforts to capture some of the various textures and hues of their colorful attempts to survive the socialization process. By identifying what I am calling integration anxiety, I do not intend to find something negative about enduring a training program, but rather to normalize the unique admixture of both

the motivating goal of integration and the more-or-less constant experience of a kind of anxiety about whether or not they are up to the task and whether or not they will ever arrive at the promised land of feeling like a competent mental health professional.

I hope the students might also detect that they are in good company with generations of other trainees who survived the transformation process and who, even if they have managed to forget what the process was like, wish them well. It would probably help either to provide them with a Student's Guide to Supervision at the earliest possible moment after they are accepted into a training program or perhaps even invite them to co-author with faculty some kind of narrative map to give them a sense that the journey is doable. While it may be true that the map is not the territory, sometimes having a map provides some measure of comfort and reassurance before taking the next treacherous step into uncharted territory. Knowing that others have not only taken the same road, but have survived gives one hope for one's own survival. I want to remind them that if they first considered becoming a mental health professional because they wanted to help people, they will be able to do that in ways they cannot imagine when they first entered the program.

### **For My Esteemed Colleagues and Fellow Supervisors**

It is likely that supervisor training opportunities should be more rigorous and demanding in terms of exposure to the vast literature on supervision, especially in the past thirty years. Holloway and Carroll (1999) have outlined the extensive training required of supervisors in the United Kingdom. The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (1991) has outlined the process of becoming an Approved Supervisor. A complete curriculum for supervision training would include an awareness of the recent developments in supervision theory (Hess, 1980, 2008; Watkins, 1997) as well as research focused on the experience of



trainees, as I have done in this dissertation. It might also contain elements of basic learning theory and the different ways people learn alone and together. It would provide helpful ways to encourage students to become consumers of the psychotherapy arts as a way of both addressing personal issues while witnessing a role model in action. Hopefully, it would be a positive role model. The success of the collaborative learning movement and the vision of a collaborative learning community only emphasize further the absolute necessity of negotiating learning goals and ways over developmental hurdles with those who are in the process of having to face both.

Between the eager motivated novice who appears before us on the first day of class and the goal of core competencies (Bowers and Gautney, 2005) there is a vast frontier completely unknown to the beginning student and almost as overwhelming to the supervisor in a completely different way. Johnson's (2007) work on what he calls transformational supervision may provide a significant new development in his call for being more intentional about mentoring (Johnson and Ridley, 2004). Transformational supervision balances what Johnson (2007) names as transactional supervision, a more traditional and hierarchical supervision style. One way to read the results of the interviews I had with the OLLU students is to hear them asking for more transformational supervision to help with the integration anxiety.

### **For Researchers: You Have My Utmost Respect**

If this project makes even the smallest contribution to some aspect of qualitative research, I would be thrilled. I have hoped to push the envelope by involving a group of students, rather than individual students, in a collaborative conversation process, but also by creating and implementing the Shotter Filter in honor of the work of John Shotter (1993, 1995, 2008). It was a sincere effort to experiment with what I consider to be some of the richest insights into the practical implications of social constructionist theory I have ever read.

Several things occur to me when I reflect on the collaborative research process that motivated me at the beginning. As I have reported earlier, the kind of collaborative research I would like to have done, in the manner of Gehart, Tarragona, and Bava (2007), did not fit the hectic schedules and program demands of the students in the OLLU program. I quickly learned about the importance of an emergent design, however. Making things come together as originally imagined is more than mere mortals can do. Research requires incredible patience with institutions and people who have nothing directly to do with the research. Our first student interview took place months later than I had originally hoped. What could I do? Then, the third interview that seemed so crucial to me when I was first mapping my design, turned out not to happen at all for a host of perfectly good reasons. I am jealous of those who have more time to spend on research. I had just enough time to spend on this project to make me wish I had twice as much.

Another thing that I learned was the amount of rich data one can generate with fairly simple analytical strategies. I am glad now that circumstances nudged me toward learning about grounded theory and especially the way Charmaz (2006, 2008a, 2008b) interprets and applies the methodologies unique to that tradition. While of course it took a lot of time, the line-by-line coding of both interviews, not just once, but several times, opened doors into the language and life worlds of the students that I have never visited before. Those strategies, it seems to me now, amount to rigorous and systematic ways to slow one's self down as one reads and interprets what one is reading. Even now I am quite sure I could go back over the interviews again and hear something I have not heard before.

### **What About The Element Of Program Evaluation?**

One could read the entire research project as an attempt at a program evaluation although I promise it was not on my mind at the beginning of the project. A conversation with my friend, Seamus Prior who teaches on the faculty of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, started me wondering about how qualitative research differs from program evaluation. Patton (2002) points out that many of the tools of qualitative research apply to program evaluation. Program evaluation was not my original goal nor was it in my mind very much throughout the project. It is true, however, that many of the strengths of the OLLU program grow directly out of the uniqueness of its theoretical commitments, especially attempts to create together a collaborative learning community. A former client (Molitor, 2006) volunteered to write about his and his wife's experience with a practicum team. He and I had written a proposal for a presentation at the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy a few years back. His background in psychology and psychotherapy allowed him to generate an informed reflection on their experience. He wrote, "It seems to me in my experience as a client that the therapy received from the practicum group is at least as effective as that received from the very best of traditional therapists" (Ibid., p. 14).

I have been warned to avoid the logical fallacy of tautology (finding in the program what we created the program to do) in my eagerness to identify what works for the students in our program. It is probably good advice. On the other hand, to suspect that I have not found anything disturbing or anything that concerns me would be false. For example, I am concerned that there were few if any references to the word "competence" in the interviews. There were some, but in light of the importance given the criteria of competence in current literature about supervision

(Falendar and Shafranske, 2004), that dearth of references identifies what some might consider a possible weakness in the program.

If program evaluation also includes a kind of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, and Yaeger, 2000), then we seem to have succeeded even though I did not approach the project from that perspective. The students, in fact, volunteered aspects of their experience that they valued highly and would affirm for inclusion in future experiences. They also complained about feeling unengaged and unmotivated at times, among other things. Were they discouraged from talking about aspects of the program they did not appreciate or value? It may be true, but I was not aware of wanting to signal a desire to hear only positives. The students were only asked to reflect on their experience of supervision, not on other aspects of their total experience in the program. If they had begun to comment on the negative aspects of academic assignments, we might have heard a great deal more complaining!

### **Innovations Created and Explored**

Several innovations grew out of the research process. First, the idea of interviewing a group of students rather than individuals placed a special emphasis on the group collaboration element of the program. It allowed us the opportunity to listen in on the developmental process as it takes place. A constructionist approach draws attention not only to how humans construct reality, but how they do that *together*. It is in their interaction that meaningful behaviors arise and fit within the tentatively mapped future. Furthermore, I included myself in the conversation because I am already in it on many levels. I have been on the OLLU-Houston faculty for several years and maintain relationships with students even after they graduate. Many of them contact me for post-graduate supervision of their client work that counts toward the hours required for

full licensure. I am also a learner like them. We all participate in an ongoing socialization process that does not stop at graduation or licensure, but continues throughout one's lifetime.

Second, including a reflecting team as part of the research team may be new. The use of a reflecting team process in therapy (Andersen, 1991, 1992, 1993; Friedman, 1995) opens up new possibilities for a more public co-creation of meaning and hopefully addresses the issue of power by attempting to minimize structural hierarchies. The OLLU program has always used reflecting teams as part of the practicum process. I am not aware of other qualitative research that included a reflecting team as part of the data gathering phase of the project. In this case, the reflecting team allowed me another way to hear what the research participants were saying.

Third, I derived satisfaction from finding a way to create and to experiment with the Shotter Filter, a device for listening to the student interviews almost as if listening to a collaborative planning meeting in which we are planning the future of the program together. As I have detailed previously, the work of John Shotter (1993, 1995, 2008) challenges one to interpret human interaction roughly as attempts to negotiate the future together. A simplistic application of the Shotter Filter gives the researcher a tool for analyzing the student interviews to see what unique insights we might get compared to other methodologies. When one reads the interviews through the lens of a curiosity about what the students are affirming for inclusion in the future students and faculty are creating together, we can hear them engaged in an ongoing reflection-evaluation process that allows them some sense of control over the dual environments of process and content.

Fourth, linking the vision of a collaborative learning community and the concept of integration anxiety grew out of my attempts to understand how the students manage the tension of all the challenging elements of the training process. One can clearly detect references to a

duality or multiplicity of experiences in the interviews. Integration anxiety provides a way of normalizing the ambiguity of student experience. It is not a negative term nor is it positive. It is meant to be descriptive and, therefore, useful to both faculty and students as a way to make sense of the inevitable stresses of professional development. Anxiety describes a kind of baseline of experience which challenges students to creatively cope with the stresses of all the competing demands of integrating multiple levels of expertise at the same time. I imagine a continuum with *eustress* at one end and *distress* at the other. Students move back and forth along the continuum more-or-less constantly. Competence seems like a faraway country when they first begin the training program, but it calls to them throughout their development and the possibility of drawing nearer to the Promised Land spurs them on, motivating them to persevere in the socialization struggle. Once they cross the river into the world of measurable competence, they discover that the journey has only begun again, but this time they have effective tools for the adventure.

### **Missed Opportunities**

The first thing I experienced as I neared completion of the dissertation is all the things that could have and maybe should have been done differently. But nonetheless, it is interesting to reflect on regrets and hopefully not-too-damaging omissions. As I mentioned several times in the previous report, it grieved me to have to cancel the third interview with the students because of my expectation that a third interview might have added another level of validity to my analysis. I eventually came to accept that the students were overwhelmed with the demands of their own lives and seemed not to want to pursue a third interview in any case. In addition to learning about grounded theory before making use of its methodologies, I created the Shotter Filter with which I conducted a second and experimental level of analysis. To listen to the interviews as if

participants are negotiating the future together fascinated me and made me want to use the Shotter Filter again.

Furthermore, I wish I had been able to create a way to generate more thoroughly collaborative reflections from participants on each and every aspect of the project. Out of respect for signals sent that they were too busy or too preoccupied to engage in the unknowns of a dissertation project, I chose to make maximum use of the reflections I did have, mainly in the interviews themselves.

I wish I had known more about focus group research (Zuckerman-Parker and Shank, 2008). Linville, Lambert-Shute, Fruhauf, and Piercy (2003) reported on a focus group project designed to understand how graduate school students saw various aspects of the department. Their research process resembles the one I created for my project. They encountered many of the same advantages and many of the same disadvantages I encountered. Their process was more structured in some ways than mine, but still seems to have allowed a wide range of responses from participants. The authors expressed similar concerns about having said too much and having been too directive in their interaction with group members. Even sensitive topics were not off-limits. Participants addressed what they experienced as a lack of cohesion among faculty. The authors expressed their hope that the project might be one way to hear voices that have often been ignored. “We have given voice to graduate students who often feel more like ping pong balls than paddles” (219).

Rather than end this chapter with a traditional conclusion, I have written the next chapter as an example of what might be done with the results. My original goal was to make a contribution to the students, past, present, and future, in the M. S. in Psychology Program of Our

Lady of the Lake University-Houston. To them I dedicate this dissertation project with the sincere hope that it will enrich the OLLU program in many ways in the months and years ahead.



## **Chapter 13    Three Jokes and Words of Encouragement**

There is something magical about transformation. To watch a client or a student gradually live into a preferred vision of herself or himself is like witnessing one of those golden orange Hawaiian sunsets or a perfect crimson rose in the spring. The miracle of integration may not sound poetic, but the outcome of the process rivals the most gifted poet. There is, in fact, artistry in the way students gradually integrate all the overwhelming bits of information that begin to flood them from the first day of class in the OLLU training program.

There is a famous parallel in the world of music. In his Mozart biography, Solomon (1995) writes in his chapter, “A Composer’s Voice,” (forgive the length of the quotation; I think it is worthy of consideration):

At a certain point in his development, a gifted young composer becomes more than the sum of the influences he has absorbed from tradition, more than simply an amalgamator of other composers’ styles, more than an imitator, more than a disciple, more than a transmitter of conventions. He becomes an adept, he speaks in a tongue that has not previously been heard, he finds his voice. He has discovered a style; or, perhaps, a style has discovered him. Henceforth, a recognizable portion of our musical language will be identifiable as his language, embodying his rhetoric, his devices, his formal structures. On closer examination, however, we see that there is no such fixed point, no single work or cluster of works representing Mozart’s epistemological break with an imitative past and the forging of his personal identity. Instead of a clear dividing line we see a process that has long been adumbrated. And when it comes, it takes him, and us, unawares. Only afterward does one realize that it has happened, and still, one is not quite sure exactly when and how it occurred. (p. 115)

But are we not glad it did? To consider that Mozart would not have become the Mozart who's playful and soulful music still touches us today if he had given up on the process of integration haunts me. If he had decided that it was enough to mimic other artists or if he had decided, given his father's neurotic obsession with fame, that he would rebel against fame and settle for mediocrity, what might have become of Mozart? What inspired him to live into his vision of musical innovation?

Before I conclude this dissertation project, I would like to share three jokes that I liked to tell many years ago when I offered workshops for mental health professionals around the state of Texas. Somewhere along the way it occurred to me that those three jokes told in the right order captured almost everything I learned from this dissertation project and now want to share with those who helped make it possible.

### **Remember Why They Are Here**

The first story is one I told in an article I wrote (Boyd, 2002) about psychotherapy and spirituality in the November 2002 issue of the *Journal of the Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*. The story involves a lady who went to a pet store to buy a parrot who would, the pet store owner promised her, learn how to talk. Weeks passed without the parrot speaking a word. Beginning to suspect that something might be wrong, the concerned pet owner returned to the pet store to report that the parrot was not talking. "What should I do?," she asked the pet store owner. He dismissed her concern with a smile and told her to be patient while she makes the parrot's cage more comfortable with some fancy new parrot furniture. Weeks passed. Not a word from the linguistically challenged parrot. Again, the lady returned to the pet store only to be told each time she returned, there were several other such trips, to be patient, but to make sure to add some new accessory or parrot toy to the cage to help the parrot become more comfortable

in new surroundings. One day the lady returned to report that the parrot had died. Ever the hopeful salesperson, the owner asked if the parrot ever said anything. “Yes, in fact, he did,” she told him. The parrot’s last words were, “Anybody around here ever hear of birdseed?”

There are a number of ways to apply this joke to the experience of new students as they enter a training program to become mental health professionals. The students come to us full of promise that they will eventually learn how to talk (and listen)—to real live clients. They are hungry, eager little birds ready to gobble up any bit of morsel passed along to them. They want to be sustained and nurtured for the transformative process about which they know very little. They are hopeful and motivated, but they are also dependent on the faculty to some degree for trust-nurturing sustenance. As one student reminded me about what she brought to the program, “sometimes they’re formed in questions and sometimes they’re formed in opposing views, but I feel all that’s challenging” (Addendum, p. 284).

On the other hand, given the importance of learning as much as possible as quickly as possible about theories and models and various clinical techniques, etc., it is relatively easy to forget about their subjective experience of the professional development process. Perhaps the collaborative learning community helps us to avoid the worst of student discouragements, but faculty and supervisors get caught up in the nuts and bolts of a program and can sometimes forget about the individual student’s need to be fed. They are often sustained, as I have learned from this project, by each other. They learn to feed themselves eventually, but that unavoidable vulnerability and tentativeness nags at their awareness from beginning to end. The meaning of the experience changes as they evolve, but that integration anxiety demands their attention like hunger pangs. They depend on those of us who have more experience in the field to know how to feed them as they learn how to do all the things a professional helper must learn how to do. We

must be careful not to forget the importance of relationships while we are distracted by the temptation to teach them the latest therapeutic magic.

### **But Am I Ready for the Real World?**

The second joke-story (Bothwell, 1988) involves a woman who finds herself in a psychiatrist's office lamenting the state of her husband who works for a large firm as a door-to-door salesperson. "Every night before he goes to bed," she explains, "he sets the alarm for 5:00 A.M. When the alarm goes off, he leaps from the bed and goes to the bathroom where he turns on the light and starts chanting passionately in the mirror, 'You are the world's greatest salesman!'" The psychiatrist, confused, comments by asking for more information. "There's more. I'm trying to sleep, right? This clown comes back to the room and starts doing pushups while continuing to chant, 'You can sell! You can sell!' over and over and over. After a few minutes, I give up and go downstairs to make his high-protein breakfast."

By now the psychiatrist looks like she is beginning to wonder who the real patient is. The woman continues, "Then he goes and takes a cold shower, dries off with a coarse towel, puts on his best three-piece suit, comes downstairs for his breakfast whistling at the top of his lungs and chanting, 'You can sell! You can sell! You can sell!' I don't know how much more I can take." By now the psychiatrist has to inject, "It's very hard to see what the problem is. He sounds like an extremely motivated professional." Exasperated, the woman cries out, "Doctor, I can't get the man to leave the house!"

Developmental approaches to supervision (Stoltenberg and Delworth, 1987; Stoltenberg and McNeill, 1997; Stoltenberg and McNeill, 2010) describe how the beginning student arrives highly motivated, but anxious about her or his evolving competence. One can detect that same hesitation that the "highly motivated" husband experienced in the above story. Students continue

to experience movements of excitement and confidence, but never separated from the ever-present integration anxiety. The role of the competent supervisor looms large during this phase. Weatherford, O'Shaughnessy, Mori, and Kaduvettor (2008, p. 52) remind us that "as trainees begin to navigate the often confusing and chaotic new roles and challenges in counseling and supervision, the supervisor is able to assist in the process of gaining a sense of balance and moving toward order and competence."

I have noticed that I often feel like the wife who complains, "I can't get the man to leave the house!" Student hesitation and fear of risk-taking, especially in the practicum setting, reveals an uncomfortable kind of paralysis about feeling adequate to helpfully engage the client sitting in front of them. The student in this case has no choice but to deal with the discomfort as a way of working through to a higher level of comfort. They struggle to be able to relax and learn from the client, apparently preferring to heed the voice of their own performance anxiety. Little do they know that everyone of us who went through the training process experienced some variation on that same theme.

The point then is this: much of the time you are going to feel unprepared to face the real world of working with clients. So get over it. What you are experiencing is normal. Sorry. There is no shortcut to some of the more frightening aspects of the emotional process of socialization. The students in the research interviews confess that they feel apprehensive about the challenges they face. They say things like "It's scary," indicating that some level of low-grade fear accompanies their tentative efforts. When I asked one student what it was like to realize that she could be curious out loud without getting into trouble, her response was, "It's not easy."

An obvious question might be: Why then do they not give up if there is so much anxiety about their ability to perform competently? If there is that much hesitation to step out into the

real world of working with clients, why not resign oneself to the fear and drop out of the program? But they do not do that. Unlike the highly motivated, but paralyzed salesman, the OLLU students manage to leave the house. They find hope in the occasional experience of success. They hear each other and faculty encouraging them to persevere and to withstand the fear with the knowledge that they are, in fact, evolving and developing into the vision of a competent professional.

### **Master the Fundamentals.**

The third story (Bothwell, 1988) is one of my favorites because of its humble realism. At the end of a long life of courageous service, a beloved ship captain dies, leaving the ship to the faithful first mate who not only inherits the ship, but also the captain's cabin and the box. Everyone aboard noticed that the old captain would not come out on deck in the morning before he opened the box, took out a yellowed piece of heavy paper, studying it intently before replacing it in the box. The first mate, believing he has before him in the box the key to the late captain's success, removes the piece of paper. With trembling hands he opens the box and reads the words, "Port is the left. Starboard is to the right."

No matter how long one has been doing professional work. No matter how successful one becomes. No matter how much experience one has, one always needs reminders about the importance of one's basic way-of-being. The advice cannot be improved upon: Master the fundamentals. If you can remember which side of the ship is which, you will always know which way to pull into the harbor. The totality of the training experience will ultimately be distilled into a few basic rules or theoretical markers that will guide the battle hardened student now prepared to undertake the next phase of the professional development journey.

What one finds written on the piece of paper found in one's personal captain's box will be different depending on the immense variety of factors influencing one's personal development. One cannot depend on the words written on someone else's piece of paper. One must take responsibility for one's own learning. The evolving student must take seriously the need to compile and summarize the essence of one's learning adventure in order to write those special words on the sheet of paper in the captain's box to be reviewed every morning before going on deck to work with clients. That so-called personal understanding nonetheless remains the product of innumerable interactions with fellow travelers with whom one shares in the co-construction of reality, a third kind of knowing (Shotter, 1993, 1995, 2008). Social constructionists are fond of recalling the words of Wittgenstein (1953, no. 154) to the effect that we do not need to be overly concerned with explanations as much as *descriptions* of the practical circumstances that help us to say "Now I know how to go on."

As one accumulates the various levels of experience of those kinds of circumstances allowing one to say "Now I know how to go on," one develops a more highly integrated sense of confident competence that one knows enough to move forward. An inner voice says, "Well, at least I know enough to get started." The process does, in fact, lead to transformative learning. And that learning is more than one stressful moment after another. As one student said of her experience of the OLLU program, "learning can also validate and make you feel good." Remember that. It can make you feel good. What a relief! There are moments along the way when the student catches glimpses of the future professional she or he is becoming at that very moment. It is enough apparently to sustain the student through the worst aspects of integration anxiety.

### **In Closing . . .**

In his description of transformative learning, Mezirow (2000, pp. 7f) writes about what he means by the term “transformative learning:”

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our take-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

That is what happens on the personal level. The learning process, to hear Mezirow tell it, almost guarantees a kind of hopefulness that one is evolving toward the goal of professional competence. But that is not all. Mezirow (Ibid.) also notes an important second half of the definition.

Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight.

Transformation requires others with whom one shares the journey. It is the element of “participation in constructive discourse” and the learning with and from others that makes a training program successful.

This project began with a goal of making a contribution to the OLLU training program by attempting to take seriously the actual experience of the students as they find ways to make sense of all the different kinds of influence to which they are subjected. The successful student who finds a way not only to endure the process but also to make the most of it also finds ways to make the most of both faculty-student supervision and community-student supervision. They manage to cope with and to invest in the transformation of integration anxiety into the earliest



forms of professional competence. The role of the collaborative learning community is the key to their success because it frames the conversation as one that enriches both students and faculty alike.

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## Addendum

## **Glenn E. Boyd Interviewing OLLU Students Regarding Supervision**

First Interview: March 28, 2009

GB: Just a reminder. The opening question is: How would you describe your experience of supervision? Let's just allow those first thoughts you have to come up. We'll just brainstorm and then we'll take it from there. OK?

VB: Diverse.

GB: Diverse?

SG: Provides a learning experience.

GB: A learning experience. Just brain storm and what comes to mind first and we'll pursue that.

BGJ: Open

GB: Open

LL: Supportive

GB: Supportive?

VB: Entertaining.

GB: Entertaining? Isn't that fun? You see we aim to please here.

LL: It's a positive experience. Supervision actually puts you on the same level as the professor. You don't feel...

GB: How would you describe that? Collegial? Collaborative? What?

LL: I'm just saying there's a . . . There's no expert. You're on the same level as the supervisor.

GB: Non hierarchical. The same level as the supervisor

GB: OK. What other thoughts? Now yall keep going. And you can be more personal if you like. How would you describe your experience of supervision? Don't hold back. This is the time for us to think out loud for a little while. We'll pursue any of these.

SG: Constructive criticism.

GB: Constructive criticism? Can you say a little bit about that?

SG: The supervisor provides things that you can work on that they see. . . Open discussion of things that you need to work on should work on.

JH: I think they challenge you to do your best. They know you can do better. They push you to do better because they know you personally.

GB: How do you respond to that?

JH: You usually say, “You’re probably right.”

GB: Which is the politically correct thing to do? You can laugh in here. Just because the cameras on; you can laugh in here. You know how I am. I’m not tense about laughing.

AH: It’s a good illustration of how it actually works in terms of techniques, of ways of asking, ways of talking . . . I find it a good modeling to see how the supervisors do it . . . The physical characteristics, how they sit, how they move, how they touch, how they stop.

GB A movement, a physical movement...

AH: I guess for myself it validates that anything is OK. Anything goes. It’s okay to be animated and crazy and loud

GB: I think that’s good, Amanda. You don’t have to do it exactly like the supervisor but it gives you a chance to see what that might look like . . . to inform your own experience. Each of you will have to develop you own styles and you will. OK. What other thoughts, initial first response to “How would you describe your experience of supervision?” Anything else?

VB: It’s really open in the sense that you can really just...there’s things that you probably wouldn’t . . . be afraid of losing your license or tenure to ask somebody. You can make those

mistakes. You can ask those questions and, I'm pretty sure, our supervisor's very open to you asking those questions, like "Is that right?

Can it be done another way?" And she offered that information as well. I'm very animated and she was very clear to say, "You know," she knew me, she said, "With this client maybe we shouldn't move around, maybe we shouldn't make some body movements, maybe we should lower our tone a little bit," and I wouldn't have been able to do that with that client and she would have never come back to me as a client, but because she was able to . . . Now I realize how to test those waters before I'm just me . . .

GB: So how to assess where the client is and what sort of . . .

VB: She knew where her client was and she knew I was just too much that day.

GB: Just that day, huh? (laughter). Veronica, you said something that made me think of the word, Safe. You used the word, "Open," like safe . . .

VB: All those words. . . Safe and supportive and, I don't know, comfortable. I enjoy the experience. I really enjoy listening to the way my fellow practicum people. . . What do you call them? . . . Colleagues. Thank you very much. They assess what someone says and then we can talk about it and kind of go, "I never thought about it that way." Collectively, we're like a whole person, like a whole real therapist who can figure out what we're doing

GB: You feel like a whole real therapist? It makes that many of yall to make one of us, you know.

VB: You know? That's how I think. We each bring our own and it's funny how specifically like they did a personality test that says these people need to be together. They complement each other. They can learn from each other and create a certain environment to insure that those clients are getting the best quality care we can possibly provide for them.

GB: Wow. That is cool. That's a synergy thing, I think, that I hadn't even thought of.

Let me follow up on something you said, Veronica. You said "Enjoy." That sounds like you're still learning, but you're also. . . There's something about motivation in that.

VB: Absolutely. Especially . . . Our clients are really diverse. We're seeing a different scope of clients. We're actually working with. . . I'm in a bilingual practicum first of all. . . We're continually speaking in English, speaking in Spanish. I don't know. I'm in my element, I guess. I'm kind of . . . I don't want to speak for my colleagues, but it's what I'm used to. When we're growing up, we don't ever speak just one language and so ultimately that . . . Being able to do that really makes it come across more as you're really creating and fostering a therapeutic environment because you're putting more of you into that session.

GB: That is remarkable. I hadn't thought about how if that's the way you grew up, going back and forth between two languages in that practicum setting, you're more at home and you're learning in an environment that feels more at home for you. Interesting. Okay. Any other thoughts about how you would describe your experience.

JH: OK. I'm finally speaking up. Especially my first supervisor, I think she genuinely cared and had concern for our well-being and she came across that way.

GB: Are you talking about practicum, Jess, or internship?

JH: Practicum. My first supervisor. She came across as very caring. We learned a lot about her personally and ourselves and how we learned.

GB: Is that connected to the caring. You said she was very caring. You learned a lot about her personal style?

JH: Her personal style and what she expected. I called her Mother Hen sometimes because she had to let us fly. She did such a wonderful job. It was almost like a nurturing experience.

GB: Nurturing.

JH: Just like our mothers. When it comes time to go, we would push back on that. And she would say, you guys are ready. I will have to let you go and let you try.

GB: Do you mind if I ask you about that? When you begin pushing back, what was that like? You were ready to... You were open for something different. What was that about?

JH: I think it was. . . She's even commented. . . She probably says that about all the practicum team. . . She always thought we were one of the more advanced practicum teams that she had when she first started. We were able to grasp everything, to grasp things quickly in the time that we had and so I think that I just wanted to have a little more freedom to do things. She would even comment that she was a different supervisor with the previous practicum teams because she had a different group of students and she knew then that she was use to going in and out of our sessions. Some of us, especially me, would be going, "No. Let us...If we going to fall, let us fall." I think she wanted to keep us from falling. Let us bump our heads.

GB: Even if we make a mistake or bump our heads, we're still learning.

JH: We're still learning and she was always there to pick us up.

AH: I think I'm remembering a little more about that initial experience. To me, it was always harder on the supervisor than the students, because then the client would turn to the supervision which kinda for me discounted ourselves as the therapist. Like, "Excuse me, I'm talking." You know. She was looking for validation or looking for guidance from the supervisor. Speaking for myself, I felt limited with the supervisor with other students to be able to spread my wings or just take off running, because learning how to manage or maneuver or if this person wanted to talk or if this person wanted to talk, trying to figure that out before I could jump off and run.

GB: How would that have been better, Amanda?

AH: I think initially it had a lot to do with the client saw the supervisor as the main person and we're all just students. Which is true. Maybe we need that because not all of us are ready.

JH: I remember when that happened. The dynamics shifted with that particular client in the room. She might have actually said that when we were all being introduced. the dynamics about . . . I just recently talked about that. I don't remember now. But it shifted.

AH: It was uncomfortable.

JH: Whereas the client would look at us as just learning, each of us as therapists, Now that this is Doctor such and such and we were just students, it kind of went (sound as if strong exhaling). It kind of sucked out anything that we might have had. And, our supervisor did the best she could, she tried, remember, she tried to not look at them and tried to . . . but it had already been done. She did her best to try to make it . . . After they left, she did bring that back, "How did that feel? What was up with that first statement?" Then we actually had a dialogue about that whole experience after it happened.

LL: We processed it. I think the language is real important. If a client did walk in for the first time with a practicum team, it would be real important to just to keep everyone on the same level and have that established before the client came in. I think it would be more of a collaborative learning environment. That way. . . We have been learning from one another in that practicum. We not only learned from the supervisor, but we learned as much if not more, at times, from others in the group.

GB: In the group?

LL: That's why it's important. I love the way we have our supervision teams here.

GB: If I am hearing you correctly, even though you know you're students and the supervisor's the supervisor, that distinction you would prefer not to have that distinction made because you like that collaborative energy there.

AH: It puts a level of hierarchy in the room when we were all colleagues at the same level and so ...when we processed it later, it was like we were therapists-in-training. So it would have been okay just to It was all beyond my level and I guess it was, however it happened, put it, was just open and not meaning to hurt, that we're students, because it wasn't sure if we were therapists. And then again, for the client, and it might be different for different clients. All of the sudden distinctions were made so it was like they were talking with us and all of a sudden it wasn't our answer that was wanted or respected or had clout to it.

GB: Did you guys want to reflect on that?

BGJ: In my practicum, we do frequently introduce the situation. When we have a new client, we break it down and, ok, these two people will be your therapist and co-therapist and this is the reflecting team and this is, you know, our teacher, our supervisor for the learning experience. I do agree it has a lot about with the client, and what their expectations are, and perceptions of the whole situation, but my experience has been quite different and I don't know if that has to do with the personalities in that group or my personality or probably a combination of the client's personality. You know what I mean? I actually found some security in that at first because it was a new experience. I hadn't ever worked with a client as a therapist before. So, I found safety in that. Walking into a situation. Let me rewind. Going into a therapy situation that had already been started, involving myself in a therapy that was already in the middle or at the end, I felt I needed that safety net if there was ever a situation where the expectation wouldn't be because



I'm sitting in front of you, I'm already going to know the history, what you've been working on, what you think, because that's not realistic.

GB: You could defer to your co-therapist there.

BGJ: Yeah. You sometimes have experiences where you say, "Let me talk to my supervisor first." I need ...ok hold on that because I don't know the procedures on that. I need to talk to my supervisor." I guess it just depends on where you're coming from on that or the tone or a lot of things could be going on in that situation. I just had a different experience. One thing that I was thinking about was that my practicum experience this year has been engaging.

GB: Who's engaged?

BGJ: Me. Which is very important because if I don't feel like it is interesting, I'm not engaged, (laughter)...

GB: She's just like that.

BGJ: After working a full day, to come into a practicum and it not be interesting or not have people there motivated and not have challenges provided and not have supervisor ready to go, even though they've worked a full day, is kind of ...

GB: So engaging translates into motivating, energizing, interesting . . . Which facilitates the whole learning thing. That's a value. Okay.

LL: I would like to elaborate on that. When you feel comfortable and when I feel comfortable in supervision, it allows me to . . . I feel safer and actually I'm able to . . . I know there is no expert. We're all on the same level. That kind of thing. That feeling. I'm more able to express different ideas and to come up with new ideas, to challenge the ideas that I have, not me supervising, but my client. And what it also does is to move me into branching out and trying new ideas so . . . It's kind of a little mess . . .

GB: This gets into some interesting learning stuff, because I'm hearing you, you can relax and test, you can relax and be more open and test new ideas and the maybe practice those. You might not have without that safety. Can you say more about what that's been like for you in that experience of thinking new thoughts and new ideas and how you've been experimenting with those?

LL: When you have more people and you have more input, then you're going to get different ideas. I think definitely the different cultural aspects and differences between people within the practicum as well as clients has helped me look at things differently.

GB: Different perspectives from anybody there. Students, supervisor, clients...

LL: And it's tough because I'm not really more knowledgeable, but more accepting, more empathetic and able to see maybe different sides, you know, where they're coming from differently.

GB: Let me ask you about that, because there had to be a side of that was not so comfortable. Maybe a little stressful, challenging. Just briefly comment on what that was like, if you don't mind.

LL: Sure. In my internship, there were many Hispanic, first generation immigrants who had come from Mexico or Guatemala, whatever, but the experience I had was that I was thinking from a Caucasian or north European perspective and I noticed that they weren't quite getting what I was saying. There wasn't the connection there that I felt before. I shifted. Actually, I did a genogram and was able to gather more information about the family, their customs, different things, and so, that played a good part because I felt like I got closer with their culture. I understood a little bit more.

GB: You were evolving in your openness, it sounds like. You had a new idea then about something else to try that might open things up a little more. Would you say that worked or was that helpful?

LL: That worked. I asked questions about questions. Just asked them a little more about what does that mean? Terms that they used or issues that they brought up were different than the ones I would have thought of.

GB: Different from the ones I would have thought of. Maximum openness. Thanks. Let's stop and very quickly, let's listen to the reflecting team and we'll wrap it up.

#### Reflecting Team

LBr: I heard lots of talk about family, feeling nurtured and cared for which turned into motivation to evolve into more aspects of being willing to learn more.

NE: What I noticed is that you guys talked about the nonhierarchical aspects of supervision which is interesting because it is the view that we're taught in providing therapy. I think it's kind of a neat cycle that we're supervised in that manner and ultimately we do therapy the same way.

JT: What I thought was interesting, to go along with that, was that what was comforting to one student in terms of their gaining somewhat of a hierarchy at times that gave them the ability to make a mistake or to look for the resources, was perceived by other students as restricting at times when the hierarchical position was in place. The other thing was the importance of language and the language we use with our clients.

PM: It seems to me there was kind of a continuum where in the beginning it was very comforting to have that nurturing space to take risks and to grow, but then that changed somewhere along the way and they needed the freedom to actually push back and to do it on their own.

GH: What captured my attention was the ability to integrate. I liked the story she told about her background and her ability to go into a different culture and learn how to integrate and learn how to relate to them. I thought it was real interesting.

Visitor (JMc): What I focused on was hearing you talk about not knowing if you could give your best because you weren't in the same place as the Hispanic clients and that took a lot to step back and allow yourself to say, You know what, I need to let go of whatever this is and get to know more about these people before I can be of any help to them.

JT: I liked hearing Veronica telling her story and she said that her supervisor knew she was too much for them that day and kind of taking a step back to where the client is and I think that took a lot of courage.

CW: One of the deep things that came across as the panelists were talking was that what supervision provided was a safe environment and kind of an underlying theme was how often we talk about creating a safe kind of environment for the client, a place where they can share with us. That's exactly what the supervisors seem to have done with us in our program, to create a safe place for us to explore and to find where we're at in the therapeutic process in terms of the learning process. That came across to me as a kind of importance.

BW: I'm thinking, I'm wondering if there are some of them that have had more than one supervisor. No one said anything about it. I was just wondering how it changed from their second year experience to their third year experience. Do they see their supervisors the same or do they kind of feel like their supervisors provide that push back or do they provide that freedom now. I would like to know more about that.

PM: They mentioned several about their supervisor in practicum knowing them well enough to provide that, but I wonder if in internship they had that same personal connection with their supervisor.

LBo: I was struck by a lot of consistency between what everyone was saying about their experience in supervision and I was also struck by the level of consistency between the philosophy of the supervisors and the philosophy of the program. The way that comes together is kind of interesting to hear that.

PA: I thought I heard like what you just said about they said about the supervisor modeling, the image came to my head about what we've been learning as far as the philosophical stance and having that, creating that, so when somebody talks about, I think when Veronica was talking about her mood and stuff, that's what came to my mind.

## **Glenn E. Boyd Interviewing OLLU Students Regarding Supervision**

Second interview: June 13, 2009

GB: I'm Glenn Boyd. It's June the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Interview number two of the research project with the students of Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston. We're continuing the conversation from March the 28<sup>th</sup>. I wanted to say a couple of things and thank you guys. I'm going to try to relax a little more. I'm learning a lot about what I hope to be learning about. I wanted learn a lot about qualitative research and supervision. What I'm learning is that in any research project there are two compelling stories that have to be told. One is about the research itself and the other is about the content. So, that's exactly right. The thing that I wanted to let you know about is that as I have gone through this process I've had all kinds of doubts, second thoughts, am I doing this right?, am I screwing this up? I don't know what I'm doing. And when I went to Canada it only made that worse. It really made me mad because I realized that I'm not thinking clearly about this. So what's happened now is that as I have thought about new ways to engage you guys to get your thoughts, I'm realizing that if your hesitation is like mine, if you're having second thoughts and self-doubts or questions like mine, we're in business. That's what's going to make this thing work. Your honest thoughts and reflections about where you really are. What you thought a year ago, what you're thinking now. Any random thing you've got. That's what's going to make this thing work, okay? Am I coming through?

Group: Heads nodding affirmation. A couple of vocal affirmations.

GB: If I asked you, for example, what do you bring to the program? A program is like a collaborative learning community is what we call it. There are some people who are further along than others. Whatever it is that you bring, I want to know about that. I want you to be honest with me. In the future we're going to have more exchanges, questions, random thoughts.

Okay? I'm open to all of it. If you have any questions about what I'm saying right now, ask them, and I'll throw it open in a second. Am I coming through? Okay. So, what I'm hoping we'll do, you see, is to be able to look into what's really happening with people as they evolve in the program. Their real thoughts, their real concerns, their real fears, their real angers, their frustrations. So, having said that, that's my way of inviting you guys to be honest. I want all of it, okay? How many of you got the email about the questions? So, I'm prepared to just sit back and listen now. Let's see if we can harvest some more thoughts about what you think this conversation ought to be about. And then we can maybe think about at the end what the next one ought to be about, if in fact that ought to be the last one. Okay. So, what are y'all thinking about?

BJG: Well, I'm trying to figure out what you mean by what you bring to the program? Are you meaning personality, are you meaning work experience, attitude. I need more about that.

GB: When you come into the program, you bring who you are and that you may not have ever studied any of this stuff, maybe some, and if we define supervision as sort of a continual experience that's going on all the time, when faculty's there or not, what does a student bring to that experience? They bring excitement, they bring dreams, but they also bring "I don't know what I'm doing here." They bring "Collaborative what?" You know what I'm saying? They bring "What the hell is postmodernism?" And a lot of other stuff like, "Who does he think he is?" Stuff like that. I want to be able to hear. . . If I can hear that internal dialogue, I want to get that external, right? If we're all creating this together, see, we're testing assumptions. If that's really true, if that's really how it works, then what you guys are dealing with, what you're thinking about is not private. It's very public. The more vocal you are, the more participatory it is, it seems to me. Does that make sense?

BJG: I think what today what I'm bringing is an openness that is defined by my willingness to sit in a classroom and learn something. But also the challenges that I might present through my questioning based on my previous experience with that subject matter.

GB: You bring with you things that inform your questions...

BJG: Right. And sometimes they're formed in questions and sometimes they're formed in opposing views, but I feel all that's challenging.

GB: Challenges.

LL: I'm thinking the same thing. What we bring is our past knowledge and whatever we've accepted is our past knowledge. Maybe we've not already thought about and we're bringing that in. We're constantly... What this program does is like what postmodernism does is have us question it and make us open minded. So we start questioning what we've learned especially what comes from a medical model. You're going to question that and categorization, you're going to question that. You're going to see the pluses and the minuses of how that works.

GB: When you come into the program, it's not like you come in as a blank slate. You bring all of your previous experience, right? You have a philosophy. You have some ideas and the new ideas sometimes collide with those and challenge those, right? And, so you guys challenge back, you're pursuing that dialogue. But I hear you bring an openness, an attitude of openness to learning, right? Your story from last time was metaphorical for me. You learned stuff you didn't know you didn't know.

AH: But learning can also validate and make you feel good if you were in line that field and you didn't know what they were...



GB: Exactly. So you might bring an inherent agreement or fit with those ideas which I think a lot of us have experienced.

VB: I think in learning the different, you know, approaches and theories and stuff, it's funny because we're going along thinking I'm a collaborative therapist and I didn't know it. It's like when you read your DSM-IV, you're going "Oh, my God, I've got Attention Deficit Disorder," "Oh, my God, I've got this disorder, I've got that disorder." Everything you read you have, you know. I think it's the same thing. It's not that severe, but you can. I can make myself seem, I could probably write it up. I know myself, I know who I am. I can figure out how to make myself...

GB: You're reading yourself into the stuff you're learning? You know, it's not just an idea; I've got to remember that on a test. It's like you're testing it on yourself.

VB: Exactly.

GB: Experimenting with . . .

VB: (inaudible people laugh.) It's like in our little cohort, they talk about how they use some of the techniques and the other things that you learn, because it makes you better, you know, it makes you...it could make you worse, too. You could take it and...there are very harmful things that we could do with the information that we have and the insight that we have. And I think that being able to understand and kind of see where you fit in and understand that you could probably fit into any one. It's your choice to figure out.

GB: You're hinting at something else as well. That hopefully, maybe, we come in learning how and when to use these ideas, not just learn them, but how to use them. That, in fact, we can hurt people if we're not careful. So we have to know how to use these things.

VB: Right.

LL: My key comment would be is that what this program allows is the ability to experiment and expand, experiment with other truths out there. It may not be accepted, it may be accepted, but it's kind of an understanding that's it's okay, because that's what the program is based on, open-mindedness and learning new things, so we're more apt to throw things out there that might be questionable or brought up and discussed.

GB: You guys have emphasized that and, of course, it's rewarding to us to see that we're being consistent with your experience. Let me push something. I assume that when you come into the program, you don't really know that's the way it's going to be. You join in this collaborative learning community. What's that like when you get in there and find out I'm not getting in trouble here for thinking, I'm not getting trouble for having my thoughts. Do you know what I'm saying?

VB: It's not easy. You come in and you tippy-toe and then you realize that you have that where you thought you had an inch you actually have a mile, you start to settle down and you start to create and, it's kind of like having a relationship with your family. When you have a home to go to, you're going to take chances, you're going to challenge things, you're going okay, I'm going to take this job, crap, that didn't work it. It's the same thing here, you're trying something new and you can. It's the same thing here. I may be going a little too far, but you can. You get that. That kind of security.

SG: You're also not ostracized when you want to go and test this out, something different than what the program teaches. You feel like it's okay. You're accepted.

GB: You're not punished for thinking something other than ...

BJG: I'm thinking about a feeling of apprehension that comes, too, because in this program so far, what I basically experience is that the learning is very quickly becomes part of what your true intention is, that individual going therapy, you know, why do you want to be a therapist? When you're listening to a client, why do you think that? And if you are a person trying to get into this for any other reason, you know, besides the client, it quickly highlights that and attempts to change that.

GB: Would you mind if I interrupt you? What's that been like for you?

BJG: To me it's been a challenge on approaches ...

GB: Approaches

BJG: Where in some areas I feel like the client has right to be in their own space and create the conversation and the therapist is supposed to follow the client, blah blah blah. But there are some things they're supposed to say something. It quickly started to make that gray, what I thought.

GB: Wow. So you see that's where I'm interested in what happens to those preconceptions, those prejudices, the pre-judging, the knowing. We can't not do that, but then when you come into the process you begin to find out what you don't know. I'm wondering what that's like. That's interesting.

SG: It just makes me think that we're challenged. They ask, "Why do you think that? It's okay to think that, but why do you think that?"

VB: Not confrontational.

SG: Right.

VB: Challenging, but not confrontational. I think part of learning is that it is okay to speak your mind. I'm the kind of person who speaks her mind and it doesn't mind, regardless, ...

GB: I think we're aware of that. (Laughter)

VB: When you're in a comfortable environment where you can have that safety, where you can speak your mind, a lot of times you have people who want to change your mind, but here it's somebody wanting to change your mind, but "I understand completely your point of view. I listen to you, can you listen to me?" That's the kind of environment I always wanted, but I couldn't really verbalize it. I didn't really know that that's the environment I wanted to be in, because...

GB: Wow.

VB: Because you must know what you know, you know? Don't ask me about certain things...

GB: Veronica, you could have gone into a black and white program, "Do this, Don't do that," but you wouldn't get to be you, would you? The way you talk things out and the way you do things. Is there a downside to coming into a program that's not so...

(Multiple voices and laughter)

VB: The more and more I'm in it, the more and more I know it is a way-of-being. I'm growing exponentially and hopefully it will keep going...

GB: Your experience is only enhanced by the...

VB: And I'm understanding what our limitations are. You don't always get that nice little mirror all the time, you know. You have fifteen mirrors that are constantly going and I appreciate that we've been together through all that because you learn and you grow and you...

GB: Talk about the fifteen mirrors. I'm going to remember that. That's the title of an article right there. What difference do the fifteen mirrors make?

VB: Even though my idea doesn't change, it can happen. I'm able to take what someone else understands and take that perspective because we're like-minded people. We hang around with people who talk like us, think like us, act like us, but in this situation you're put into a place where people aren't exactly like you. You learn about change and you learn about...It's about culture...

GB: How can we frame that as supervision? I'm interested in understanding the process, not the word. I don't know if the word really works for me. Apprenticeship or whatever. Socialization. There's a process there where you guys are supervising each other...

VB: Well, that's exactly what it is.

GB: Just because we're faculty, doesn't mean we're the only ones who can supervise you. You know what I'm saying?

LL: I can give you an example of that. During practicum, we come up with an idea or a way which is like shadowing or some kind of experiential thing and then we kind of talk about it within ourselves about that idea. That's the mirror and then you come up with something that we've all kind of agreed on and came up with so it becomes a community idea.

GB: So you have a communal decision-making thing. Don't you find the metaphor of a mirror interesting? You're looking at yourself, but everybody else is looking at themselves when they're looking at everybody else. There are multiple reflections and refractions. I don't know. I find that metaphor fascinating. Sorry, Amanda, what were you saying?

AH: We're supposed to turn that to the client.

GB: Hey, that's how that's supposed to work, isn't it? Okay. So some of you who haven't spoken. In general, let's think out loud. What's it like? Some of you are first year, no you're second and third year, right? Gail? Another thing I'm interested in since we're already talking

about it... If I said, how has your experience and your thinking about supervision evolved, what would you say?

AH: It's a valuable time for me that we sat down here.

GB: How, Amanda?

AH: Just that outlet. Like you were saying, how things are highlighted as you go along doing therapy through the program, but then also things where we're human just like the people who come to see us and maybe in some ways we didn't think they were or that we don't know and start unconsciously like we're having to talk about something...(slight laughter) ...that's going on with you, not somebody else.

GB: Ah. And how does that fit with supervision or a supervisor...

AH: When I'm able to go and have that kind of work that out and lay that out.

GB: So the analogy is that the student and supervisor is like the client and the therapist. Is that what you're saying? Like they had a place to work things out, that's another place to work things out. So, the whole experience is about learning and if supervision is going on from one end to the other, then all of it is supervision, then what do you do with that part?

AH: You're just always learning. And that sometimes there aren't answers, just perspectives.

GB: What other thoughts do you guys have?

BJG: One idea that popped into my head hearing the metaphors and stuff is the word, "connected." And that's something that I got from this program that I haven't got in any other program is that you work hard and then you go to practicum and then you go to internship and talk to supervisors. It's like we're all connected in a way that I haven't ever felt before.

GB: That's new for you?

BJG: Yeah. And having assignments in class that actually promote being connected with each other and having the objectives or courses that actually promote that connection with each other whereas in another other programs that I've been in, they give you group work, but the whole program is not about group work and I think it has really helped me understand the importance of networking and going to somebody for supervision, it's okay to ask questions even if other people disagree with you or agree with you.

GB: The more connected we all are, the higher quality the supervision? Help me there. Say more...

BJG: It's more meaningful to me.

GB: Meaningful?

BJG: You can have a supervisor, but if you don't feel that connection with your supervisor, then there's really no supervision going on.

LL: That's what I wanted to touch on when she said connected. When I looked through some material, there's a lot of evidence to prove that the characteristics of the supervisors we have here fall in line with preferences with what people want.

GB: Students you mean?

LL: Students. The whole arrangement here allows for that, so I'm suspecting that people would have more positive experience in that type of environment than with the typical situation where you have the supervisor in a group supervision kind of thing.

GB: I tend to agree with you. What I'm hearing you say is that the values of the program are more conducive to the kind of supervisor who is preferred by students, according to the research: relationships, knowledgeable, collaborative, there's a whole thing. You wouldn't believe the

work that's been done on that. So, what are the implications of that? If we're all connected and we're all evolving together and we're . . . Help me here.

LL: I was saying that I feel more value in my education because I do have that component. I have supervisors that I have been able to bounce ideas off of and have helped me to change, and not just the supervisors; I see them the same as my cohorts, that we're at the same level. I feel that the hierarchical system is not here, so to speak. I mean, it is in a way, in my eye, when there is no expert there are new ideas and room for people to have new ideas and they're not looked down upon or seen as inferior.

GB: Let me follow up on that. When you come into a community like this, there are more experienced people and less experienced people, there are in fact faculty and students. One of the things I'm learning to be sensitive about is the power differential. There is a power difference because we have an evaluative function. Now we do not allow it to define who we are and what we do. When I first starting wanting to do this, there were people who thought I was crazy to want to do a research project this way exactly because they didn't think yall would want to talk. I almost did not get this thing off the ground at all because of the power issue. I know it's there and I want to ask you how we handle it, but it seems to me like we ought to at least be able to talk about what to do with that. How do we do that? You know what I'm saying? How do we do that?

VB: The first day that I walked into this classroom, maybe the second statement out of my professor's mouth was, "I'm not your professor; you're not my student. We are collaboratively working together as colleagues." That's what we were told. And I believe that I have written it on my forehead... (Laughter and indications of agreement).



GB: How do you learn to trust that, Veronica? Just because you hear us say, we're all on the same page; we're colleagues. We still give the tests...

VB: How do children learn that something is hot? Because you test it and it's true. And you can test and push and move and grow and it's still true. It's not until the day that I do something with that idea in my head that, yes, you are a more experienced colleague of mine. It's not until you prove that not to be true that it will be false. Having that experience, I don't expect to because it doesn't come about. Any patience, any concern, anything that must be resolved in a manner that (inaudible). You make a statement or you say, What do you think?, Here's what I think and we'll figure it out. Without any feeling of...without feeling somebody's going to grade you

GB: See what you think. It's not an either/or. It's not that it's either hierarchical or not. There are elements of both. We emphasize the non-hierarchical by continually emphasizing that and it sounds like you guys are beginning to trust that and, as you test it, you see for yourselves that we do mean that, right?

LL: Also, there are two components. You can't get around the fact that this is a school and that is a fact. We're going to be tested, but the other component is that here we do have grades, I mean, Leonard does grading, I suspect, on conversations that we have, podalogues and things like that, that is a qualitative type grade and when you have ...I feel very comfortable with the professors that we've had because they grade us on that. It's kind of like a participation type of thing ...

GB: You mean Bohanon grades fairly? That's not what I hear. (Laughter)

AH: Well, there are elements of tests that are our responsibility for all of the people involved, both the instructor and the student.

GH: I think your point of view is always looked at. They may be challenged, but they're not dismissed. I think you can bring your thoughts and ideas. Most of the time they're important.

GB: Is that important to you that they're not dismissed?

GH: Yes, it is.

GB: You feel valued, respected...

GH: And validated, yes.

GB: Right.

GH: I'm contributing. I'm contributing to the process.

GB: See, that's what we're hoping will happen. If this is an apprenticeship thing where you and we're all learning from each other...and you guys may doubt when we say that, but I'm telling you the truth. I learn from you guys every class. So I'm in supervision with you to some degree. Can you dig that? Okay. Let's hand it over to them in about two or three minutes. Pop gun style. Pop gun? Popcorn. Throw out some words popcorn style. And I'm also interested in where...no, let's see. Let's not cram too much in here. Give me a couple of words that you heard today or that you're thinking about that might point us to interview three.

AH: I can't think of anything.

GB: You want me to move on?

AH: Yeah.

GB: Gail?

GH: Openness.

GB: Openness.

SG: Safe environment.

GB: Safe environment.

VB: Collaboration and community.

GB: Okay. Bridgette.

BJG: Attitude.

GB: Attitude. Who has the attitude? (Laughter). Just kidding.

LL: What came up for me was creating the collaborative content and process.

AH: I'm ready now. Mirrors.

GB: Mirrors. I don't think we'll have a third interview in two weeks because I'm trying to slow down. I was pushing and rushing this to try to get it done. I'm not in this by myself. Do you have any thoughts about how long we should wait? When should we have a third interview? If we should have a third interview. Thoughts. Quick.

LL: Six weeks.

GB: Six weeks. Will we still be in school in six weeks?

SG: Four weeks. The end of July.

GB: So, the end of July. If we have an interview at the end of July... When do we have class at the end of July? We have class on the eleventh, so we have class on...

SG: The twenty-fifth.

GB: So, can we shoot for the twenty-fifth? (Indications of agreement) If that turns out to be our last interview, how do we wrap this up? I want to know how you want that last interview to be like, what you need that last interview to be like. Secondly, what kinds of other interchange and exchange can we use? We got the group email. I want to hear anything you've got. Anything, as far as what it's really like for you to be in supervisors, what supervisors ought to be doing, who decides, who says...who outside maybe ought to have a voice in the kind of student we're

creating. You know what I'm saying? We could talk to pastors, friends, doctors, lots of people, you know. Who would they make a referral to? What kind of person would they make a referral to? That kind of thing. Anything like that. I'd love to hear that. (Vocal affirmation) Okay. Thanks guys. Reflecting team. (Turning to camera, "Do you want us to move out of the way, Juan? Let's just part the Red Sea here real quick...")

### Reflecting Team

LBo: Well, if I was going to start reflecting, I would start with what strikes me most about this interview. And what strikes me most are the mature perspectives of the people who were out there. I was like, wow, where did we find these fantastic people? I realize that's a two-way process. I like the mature ways they said that.

LBr: I heard perspective and I noticed the language because there seemed like a progression the whole time we're talking. At the beginning, we talked about communication, things are not black and white, people are beginning to go along with the program and at the end, it's turning into a family. They talked about being comfortable with each other's thoughts. They started out thinking about supervision one way and at the end of it, thought about it completely differently.

PM: They started out talking about possible weaknesses and ended up talking about strengths...

LBr: Right. They talked about the black and white and ended up talking about a way-of-being okay with uncertainty and so the whole supervising issue that could have been kind of intimidating or someone seeming superior came to be something of a family.

NE: I think the thing they said about community, whether we're first year, second year, third year, each of us knows where we are in the process and what we have to offer and we're not alone in that community. We don't just have ourselves, we have our pod members, we have our

supervisors, we have practicum teams, we have other cohorts. I just liked what they had to say about community and networking.

PM: I was really struck with the metaphor about the mirrors. It made me start thinking about the hall of mirrors at the carnival where there are mirrors, there will be a mirror that's at a different angle that allows you to see something entirely different than if you were face on. And then there are those infinity mirrors where you have the two mirrors and it just goes on forever. How do you see supervision and what effect does it have on you, how it looks different from different angles and it just goes on forever. We know no idea how far back the effects of that will go.

SB: I was wondering about the supervisor even though we're trying to redefine the notion of supervision in different ways. What are the mirrors in this context? How do the fifteen mirrors work? That was one thing I was thinking about. When you have this conversation with your ongoing faculty member or your supervisor, what kind of conversation did we, in fact, in terms of opening up or closing down by these questions? Those are some questions I'm having. I'm curious how Glenn hears you in these conversations. How do you feel when he is asking you questions that are shaping up like, can you name it? And then at other times he supplies a phrase or two, what does it do for you in terms of how it shapes you in terms of what you take out of here into everyday life or into supervision or into your program?

PA: What struck me about it was the talk about being connected. And the whole thing about being a support system here even though we are challenged by the diverse things like schedules and practicum and supervision that I know this is a place where I can come and just let it out. I mean I really do feel like this is my second family. That was what really struck me. Talking about being connected to each other.

## OLLU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL REQUEST FORM

Complete by typing within the gray area (which will expand as needed).

Print and ensure signatures are on last page of this document.

Send two complete, signed hardcopies and two sets of all required supplemental materials to the IRB Chair.

DATE SUBMITTED TO THE OLLU IRB:

October 23, 2008

TITLE OF PROJECT: It Takes a Community: A Study of Supervision in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M. S. in Psychology Program

Estimated date research will begin: 09/01/2008    Estimated completion date: 09/01/2009

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Glenn E. Boyd, D.Min., LPC, LMFT

OLLU Faculty (Core Faculty, OLLU-Houston: M.S. in Psychology)

Department and Office Address: Psychology, 10701 Corporate Dr., Ste 220, Stafford, TX 77477

Phone: 7136423377    Email: geboyd01@comcast.net

Project is part of a dissertation to complete requirements for the Ph.D. program of the Taos Institute/Tilburg University (The Netherlands)

Note: At least one investigator must be an employee or student of OLLU.

ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH Provide a brief (no more than 300 words) description of the research.

**The purpose of this study is to understand the students' experience of supervision in the OLLU-Houston M.S. in Psychology Program. It is a qualitative research project aimed at a deep understanding of how students experience one of the central engines of the overall socialization process of future mental health professionals. The study will make use of interviews with individual students (and faculty), but hopes to host several dialogical interviews involving groups of students. A reflecting team model will allow students observing the dialogical interviews to add to the dialogue by discussing what they heard in the initial conversation. This layering process adds depth to data collection which deepens the meanings identified in the data analysis part of the project. The OLLU-Houston M.S. in Psychology program often describes itself as a "collaborative learning community." The project will make use of a collaborative/participatory approach to the research in general. It is influenced by a hermeneutic-phenomenological method of interpreting and describing in depth the students' (and faculty) experience.**

#### RESEARCH PURPOSE

**The purpose of this research is to study students' experience of supervision. Research questions include: How did you come to know about supervision? How has your understanding of supervision evolved during the program? What other ways might we understand supervision in addition to the traditional understanding? What suggestions would you make for enhancing the supervisory process in the program?**

#### DATA

Will all data be collected as part of this research and used only for this research?

Yes, data will likely be used as part of future publications

Yes No If No, explain:

Are any pre-existing data sources being used in this research (e.g., school, medical, employment, or other records)?

YES

If Yes, describe the type and source of the records:

#### **Documents describing the OLLU M.S. in Psychology Program**

*If pre-existing records are used, a memo of approval to access and use of the records must be included with the IRB submission packet. The memo should be on official letterhead and signed by an appropriate authorizing official.*

## PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Indicate the participant information in each category as appropriate:

Number of adult participants: Invitations will be offered to all current students

Total number of participants: 50 + or -

Indicate the participant population (check all that apply):

OLLU-Houston students in the M.S. in Psychology Program

Indicate the gender of participants: ALL

Only males    Only females    Both genders will participate

Indicate the race/ethnicity of participants (check all that apply): ALL

Hispanic    Black/African-American    White/non-Hispanic    Asian or Pacific Islander

American Indian or Alaskan Native    Other, describe

Briefly summarize the participant inclusion and exclusion criteria, and how each will be determined:

Inclusion: Current students who wish to participate

Exclusion: Current students who do not wish to participate

Explain any restriction to participation based on gender, race, or ethnicity: NONE

Will any non-English or limited-English speakers participate in the research?

NO



## PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Describe how participants will be recruited (when, how, and by whom): #

### **Public announcements, email, personal communication by the researcher**

Will any participants be recruited through existing records (such as a list of an organization's members, school records, etc.)

NO

*All recruitment materials, such as flyers, letters, advertisements, or e-mail/phone scripts must be included as part of the IRB submission packet.*

Will participants be recruited from any entity other than OLLU?

NO

Describe any incentives, compensation, or benefits which participants will receive for their participation.

**Students will benefit from enhanced understanding of the supervisory process in the program. Hopefully, their participation will be the beginning of a process that will continue as an integral aspect of the program.**

## RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND MATERIALS

Explain what participants will be asked to do and provide an outline of the study procedures:

**Students will participate in individual and group conversations focused on reflections on supervision and the supervisory process in the program. No advance preparation will be required. They will be invited to submit personal or private reflections on the process at anytime during the research process time frame.**

How much time is required for participation? **Volunteers will be asked to write responses to an initial research question, "How would you describe your experience of supervision in our program?" Three scheduled one hour group interviews will take place between classes on Saturdays. Any reflections on the process or the group interviews will take a few minutes of participants' time. Some follow-up individual interviews may be scheduled; those interviews will last no longer than one hour, probably less.**

List and briefly describe all materials (questionnaires, surveys, tests, interview questions, etc.) to be used in the study and provide available reliability/validity information.

**An initial questionnaire will ask participants to begin reflecting on the question, "How would you describe your experience of supervision in our program?" They will be asked to write a reflection in response to the question prior to group interviews.**

**Sample research questions include: How did you come to know about supervision? How has your understanding of supervision evolved during the program? What other ways might we understand supervision in addition to the traditional understanding? What suggestions would you make for enhancing the supervisory process in the program?**

**In addition, an emergent design approach will be used to include participants in the design of data collection and data analysis methods. These methods will ensure a high level of trustworthiness and authenticity of the results.**

#### RISKS

Risk can include physical, psychological, social or economic risk. Check a response to each as it pertains to your research:

- | Yes | No                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Use of records containing confidential information, such as medical, mental health, employment, financial, or educational records.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Observation of people in places where privacy can be reasonably expected.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Physical or psychological stressors, such as physical exertion, medical procedures, social isolation, sensory deprivation, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Use of deception. (Debriefing script must be submitted to IRB if research involves deception.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Recording of responses to surveys, questionnaires and interviews in such a way that the subjects could be identified, <u>and</u> identification of responses could reasonably place the participants at risk of civil or criminal liability or be damaging to the participants financial standing, employability, or reputation. |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Collection of data that could place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Collection of data that could be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Presentation of materials which subjects might consider offensive, threatening, or degrading.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Collection of sensitive information, such as information related to sexual practices, substance abuse, illegal behavior, medical conditions, psychological well-being or mental health.                                                                                                                                          |
|     |                                     | Other                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

If Yes was checked for any of the above:

Describe the risk: Audio and video recordings will reveal the identities of students who waive their right to anonymity. Only students who waive their right to anonymity will be included in group interviews.

Describe the precautions that will be used to safeguard participants' welfare: Students who prefer anonymity will be offered a confidential alternative individual interview.

## BENEFITS

Describe any potential benefits for individual participants and/or for humankind in general:

**Benefits include an enhanced understanding of supervision as well as contributing to the supervisory process of the current program and to future students, possibly to other training programs and the mental health profession in general.**

**The primary beneficiary of the research will be the M. S. in Psychology Program of OLLU-Houston and perhaps the programs on other campuses. Participants will benefit as a result of feeling a sense of ownership in the design and enhancement of the supervisory process in the program. They will be exposed to ideas regarding supervision and collaborative processes which will, hopefully, enhance their training as mental health professionals. The process itself will, hopefully, engender an ongoing interest in supervision that will become part of the academic and clinical conversations that are passed on from class to class.**

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Will data in this study will be collected in such a way that it is anonymous (there is no way to link a participant's identity with their data)?

No, if participants volunteer for the group interviews which will be recorded.

YES, if the student prefers anonymity, they will be offered a confidential individual interview.

Will names or identifying information (e.g., SSN, student ID) be associated directly with data, for example through a coded list linking participants' names to student IDs?

YES, for participants who agree to waive their right to privacy in the group interviews

Will any data be gathered through audio or video recording?

YES. Recordings may be kept for years for further research and/or publication of findings. The researcher will guarantee storage and protection of all recordings which may be posted on the OLLU-Houston website for observation by future students. Copies will be made available to the OLLU M.S. in Psychology Program for future use.

If Yes, explain and describe how long the recordings will be kept, how they will be stored, who will have access to them, what measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality, and when the recordings will be destroyed:

#### INFORMED CONSENT

Describe how informed consent will be obtained and by whom:

Informed consent will consist of a brief document outlining the purposes and parameters of the research, possible benefits and risks associated with participation, how the information gathered will be used and presented for evaluation. The document will be presented to potential participants in the research.

Check the type(s) of procedures which will be used to obtain informed consent:

Informed Consent  
Form Parental  
Consent Form  
Child Assent Form

Oral Consent  
Procedure

Other, describe

During a meeting designed for the purpose of introducing the research project, students will be invited to volunteer to participate in one or more ways (private responses to the research question, participation in group interviews, individual interviews which can be confidential if student prefers, and others which may emerge in response to evolving concerns)

Students will be invited to participate in the manner described above by the researcher. A group email may be sent out with the director's permission by the researcher to insure maximum exposure to the invitation to participate.

Federal regulations (Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects §46.116) require that informed consent documents include certain elements. Please ensure that your informed consent documents include the elements listed below and checkmark each to verify.

*Note: A document with guidelines and a template for adult informed consent is posted on the IRB section of the Academic Affairs website. It is suggested that you use the template in creating the informed consent form.*

Yes	Basic Elements (Required)
X	Statement that the study involves research
X	Description of the purpose of the study
X	Description of the procedures to be used
X	Statement of the expected duration of participation
X	Description of any reasonably foreseeable risks to the participant, or a statement that there are no known foreseeable risks
X	A description of any benefits to be gained, or a statement that there are no benefits
X	A statement of any costs to be incurred from participation, or a statement that there are no costs
X	Description of confidentiality procedures
X	Explanation that participation is voluntary
X	Statement of right to stop participation at any time without penalty
X	Statement of to whom questions/concerns about the research may be addressed
X	Contact information for the researcher and contact information for the IRB

X	Documentation of informed consent statement and signature lines for participant and researcher
---	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

N/A	Yes	Additional Elements (as applicable for research entailing risk)
X		Identification of any procedures which are experimental (typically if clinical/medical research)
X		A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject (typically if clinical/medical research)
X		Statement of to whom questions/concerns may be addressed and explanation of availability of compensation and/or treatment for injury
X		A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve risks to the subject (or to the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant), which are currently unforeseeable
X		Anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent
X		A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research, which may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation, will be provided to the subject
<p><i>Copies of all informed consent documents must be included with the IRB submission packet.</i></p> <p><i>Note: According to federal guidelines, if informed consent is obtained orally, a witness to the oral presentation is required. Also, the IRB must approve a written summary of what is to be said to the participant.</i></p>		

# IRB SUBMISSION PACKET CHECKLIST AND SIGNATURE PAGE

Two complete IRB Submission Packets (hardcopies) should be provided to the IRB Chair.

Each submission packet should include the following items. Please check each to verify:

YES

N/A

ITEM

X

Complete, signed OLLU IRB Approval Request Form

X

Copies of all recruitment materials

X

Copies of all research materials (surveys, tests, interview questions, etc.) and translations as applicable

X

Copies of all informed consent documents

X

Memo of approval to access existing data, if applicable

X

Memo of approval to access records, if applicable

X

Memo of approval to recruit participants at an entity other than OLLU, if applicable

X

Debriefing script if research involves deception

Other

List below:

Do not include copies of dissertation/thesis proposals or grant applications.

Make certain to keep a complete copy of your submission packet for your own records.

## REQUIRED SIGNATURES

I confirm that the information provided in this application is accurate and will be followed in the course of the research. I will notify the IRB of any changes or problems that occur during the research process.

---

Principal Investigator

---

Date

I confirm that this project has received my review and I have found the submission to be complete:

---

OLLU Department Head/Dean

---

Date



## **Invitation to Participate in Research Project for Ph.D. Dissertation**

Glenn E. Boyd, D.Min., LPC, LMFT

I was recently accepted into the Ph.D. program of the Taos Institute/Tilburg University. The program is a collaborative project of the Taos Institute, formed in 1993 to promote social constructionist ways of thinking and working, and Tilburg University in the Netherlands. The program requires the writing of a dissertation based on qualitative research. The working title of my dissertation is: "It Takes a Community: A Study of Supervision in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M.S. in Psychology Program."

You are invited to participate in this research in one or more of the following ways.

1. Opening Question: You will receive a sheet of paper with one "opening question" on it: "How would you describe your experience of supervision in our program?" This question is meant to be a reflection starter to which you are welcomed to respond by writing or you may simply choose to reflect on it as a way of preparing for option 2.
2. Group Interviews: You are invited to participate in three one-hour group interviews scheduled for the hour between classes. These interviews define the central fieldwork of the dissertation. The focus of these group dialogues will be supervision, beginning with your reflections on the opening question which asks you to describe your experience of supervision. Other pre-determined research questions include: How did you come to know about supervision? How has your understanding of supervision evolved during the program? What other ways might we understand supervision in addition to the traditional understanding? What suggestions would you make for enhancing the supervisory process in the program? With your permission, these interviews will be video and audio recorded for further analysis by all co-researchers. Interview groups will consist of no more than six students who may rotate with students on a reflecting team, depending on the pleasure of the group. Faculty will be invited to participate on the reflecting team only.
3. Random Reflections: You are invited to reflect further on anything pertaining to the topic of supervision and/or your experience of supervision, including any reflections on the research process itself in any number of creative forms. For example, you may email private or personal reflections to me; you may write group reflections; you may video or audio record any conversations you may have in a group; you may participate in a blog site created for this purpose; you may present me with references to books, articles, etc., or anything else that throws light on the students' experience of supervision. If anyone wants to write a play or a song or a poem about supervision, it would be almost too much to ask for.
4. Anonymous Individual Interviews: You may submit anonymous reflections by mailing them to my office if you want to protect your identity. This is not my preference. I prefer that participants volunteer for group interviews which may, with your permission, be models for such reflection for years to come.

In order to participate, you will need to read over the Informed Consent before you sign it. If you need to discuss any aspect of the dissertation project, please let me know.

02/02/09

Glenn E. Boyd, D.Min, LPC, LMFT  
Faculty, OLLU-Houston  
713-642-3377

## Consent Form

### **Title of this Research Study**

“It Takes a Community: A Study of Supervision in the Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston M.S. in Psychology program”

### **Invitation**

You are invited to participate in this research study. The information in this form will introduce you to the main goals of the study and how you might participate. If you ever have any questions, please ask me directly. My phone number is 713.642.3377.

### **What is the reason for doing this research study?**

The purpose of this study is to understand the students’ experience of supervision including how they came to understand supervision, how their thoughts have evolved through the program, how they have experienced supervision, and what thoughts and concerns they might have about how to improve the experience for themselves and future students.

### **What will be done during this research study?**

The study involves interviews with participants in the OLLU M.S. in Psychology program. These interviews will include individuals and group conversations. Those interviews will be audio-taped and/or video-taped for further reflection. By signing this informed consent, you are giving permission for video recordings to be posted online where they may be viewed by future students or other professionals for years to come.

### **What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

There are no risks involved in this study. Potential risks might include mild personal discomfort about being interviewed and/or recorded.

### **What are the possible benefits to you?**

You will likely benefit in a number of ways. Your understanding of supervision will be enhanced by thinking about and discussing the subject. You will learn from hearing others talk about supervision.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

You will be making a contribution to the current program and to future students who may view the videotapes online or in class. You might also be helping make a contribution to other programs and to the field of psychotherapy training in general.

Boyd, Glenn E., IRB, Informed Consent, page 2

**What will participation in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**How will information about you be protected?**

As noted above, video recordings will be posted online and may be viewed for years to come.

Data collected as part of recorded group interviews will not be anonymous.

You may mail anonymous reflections to my office if you want to protect your identity.

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this study or if you decide to stop participation during the study?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may stop participation at any time without penalty and without losing any benefits that are part of this study.

**Who can you contact if you have questions about your rights as a participant?**

You can speak to the researcher or you can contact the Our Lady of the Lake Institutional Review Board at 210-434-6711, extension 8152 or [gonzcy@lake.ollusa.edu](mailto:gonzcy@lake.ollusa.edu).

**GLENN E. BOYD, D.Min., LPC, LMFT**

10701 Corporate Dr., Suite 220

Stafford, TX 77477-4013

Ph. 832.472.3566

Fax. 281.494.4307

geboyd01@comcast.net

**Experience**

Private Practice (Stafford, TX) May 1997 - Present

Private practice as a psychotherapist specializing in marriage and family therapy. Glenn Boyd Workshops offered continuing education hours to mental health professionals from 1995 to 2001. Faculty positions: Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston and Houston Galveston Institute. Board of Directors: Fort Bend County Mental Health Association (2001-2003), Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (2002-2004).

Supervise foster care clinicians, DePelchin Children's Center, Houston (2001-2004).

Interface-Samaritan Counseling Center (Houston, TX) August 1987 - May 1997.

Staff therapist. Active speaker and presenter. Helped bring organization into the age of managed care.

Kirkwood South Christian Church (Houston, TX) November 1982 - October 1985.

Responsibilities as senior minister of a growing suburban church including all aspects of pastoral leadership. Achieved reputation as speaker and pastoral counselor. Strong commitment to ecumenical cooperation and community service.

Crofton Christian Church (Crofton, KY) August 1980-October 1982.

Responsibilities as senior minister of active small town congregation. Developed reputation for encouragement of youth and young families and for involvement in Bread for the World (an anti-hunger organization). Sponsoring congregation for ordination, May 16, 1981.

**Education**

B.A. (Religion) Oklahoma Christian University (Oklahoma City, OK) April 1975

Hours transferred. (Biblical Studies) Harding Graduate School of Religion (Memphis, TN) 1975-1977

M.Div. (Ministry) Vanderbilt University Divinity School (Nashville, TN) May 1981

M.A. (Behavioral Sciences-Marriage and Family Therapy) University of Houston-Clear Lake (Houston, TX) August 1987

D.Min. Houston Graduate School of Theology (Houston, TX) May 2001

Ph.D. candidate, Taos Institute/Tilburg University (September 2008 to present).

### **Teaching Positions**

- \*Glenn Boyd Workshops (1995-2001), offering continuing education's hours to licensed mental health professionals in the state of Texas.
- \*Houston Galveston Institute (1997-present), education and supervision of students in family therapy programs.
- \*Our Lady of the Lake University-Houston Campus (1998-present):
  - 1999 to Present: Practicum Supervisor, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Students, One night per week for four hours for eleven months (Sept.-July).
  - 2010 to Present: Practicum Supervisor, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students, One night every other week
  - 1999 to Present: Foundations of Family Therapy
  - 2003, 2004: Systemic Approaches to Counseling I
  - 1999 to Present: Systemic Approaches to Counseling II
  - 2006: Group and Family Process
  - 2007 to Present: Professional Practice (Ethics)
  - 2003, 2006: Psychotherapy and Spirituality (Part of an elective course)
  - 2010: Counseling Theories

### **Recent Presentations**

- "Postmodern Psychotherapy and Spirituality," Summer Theoretical Seminar, Houston Galveston Institute (Houston).
- "Spirituality and Psychotherapy," Brown Bag Seminar (April 13, 2001), Houston Galveston Institute (Houston).
- "Service and Survival: Ethics in a Non-Profit Setting" (March 1, 2002), DePelchin Children's Center (Houston)
- "Blending Families" (June 24, 2001), First Presbyterian Church (Sugar Land).
- "Is Everything Sacred?: Psychotherapy and Spirituality" (April 13, 2001), Houston Galveston Institute (Houston).
- "Talk Differently, Live Differently" (February 8, 2001), Mission Possible, Rangers Against Destructive Decisions (Clements High School, Fort Bend ISD), Williams Trace Baptist Church (Sugar Land).
- "High End Ethics" (December 8, 2000), DePelchin Children's Center (Houston).
- "Masculinity Isn't What It Used To Be" (Theme of Glenn Boyd Workshops for 2000-2001) (Numerous sites around Texas).
- "Listening With The Heart" (August 8, 2000), Atascocita United Methodist Church (The Woodlands).
- "The Social Construction of Masculinity" (Summer 2000), Summer Seminar, Houston Galveston Institute (Houston).
- "Conversational Ministry" (April 15, 2000), Good Shepherd Episcopal Church (Kingwood).
- "Do Counselors Have Souls?" (Theme of Glenn Boyd Workshops for 1999-2000).
- "Marriage Enrichment Seminar" (February 13, 1999), Doctor of Ministry Project, Memorial Drive Christian Church (Houston).
- "Talk Differently, Live Differently" (January 28, 1999), Annual Conference of the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (San Antonio).

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“Agape-Listening: Conversation as Ministry” (October 9, 2004), Stephens Ministry Training, Northway Christian Church (Dallas, Texas).

“Clients As Heroes and Experts” (March 15, 2004), Couple Counselling Scotland, (Edinburgh, Scotland).

“Making Meaning Together: Collaborative Couple Counselling” (March 12, 2005), Couple Counselling Scotland (Edinburgh, Scotland).

“The Velveteen Rabbit’s Dilemma: A Dialogue About Supervision” (March 20, 2008), University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, Scotland).

“A Collaborative Learning Community in Action: Early Research Findings” (November 7, 2009), Texas Psychological Association Annual Conference (Houston, Texas)

### **Publications**

(1983). "A Brief Background to Recent Christology," Restoration Quarterly, 26, 3rd quarter (129-143).

(1996). "Pastoral Conversation: A Social Construction View," Pastoral Psychology, 44, Summer (215-226).

(1996). "Kerygma and Conversation," Journal of Pastoral Care, 50, Summer (161-169).

(1996). The ART of Agape-Listening: The Miracle of Mutuality. Sugar Land, TX: Agape House Press.

(1998). "Pastoral Conversation: A Postmodern View of Expertise," Pastoral Psychology, 46, No. 5 (307-321).

(2002). “Agape-Listening: Caring as Conversation,” Leaven, 10, No. 3 (143-147).

(2002). “Is Everything Sacred?: Spiritual Practices in Post-Secular Marriage and Family Therapy,” Journal of the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, 7, No. 1 (4-12).

(2003). “Pastoral Conversation: Relational Listening and Open-Ended Questions,” Pastoral Psychology, 51, No. 5 (345-360).

(2003, June). “The Changing Role of Models in Marriage and Family Therapy,” Contact, 31, No. 2 (4).

### **Professional Licensure**

Licensed Professional Counselor, State of Texas (approved supervisor)

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, State of Texas (approved supervisor)

### **Professional Memberships**

Clinical Member, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy

Clinical Member, Texas Counseling Association

Clinical Member, Texas Psychological Association

### **Board of Directors**

Fort Bend County Mental Health Association (2001-2003)

Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (2002-2004)

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**Personal**

Born: Bryan, TX (7/30/52)

Married to Crystal Ellen Hooten (8/7/76)

Three children: Reagan (1/3/78), Cory (5/23/83), Andrew (10/3/85)

Resident of Sugar Land, TX since 6/88