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An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Doctoral Counselor Education Students' Experience of Receiving Cybersupervision

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Abstract

Cybersupervision with counselor education doctoral students is an understudied practice. This phenomenological study explored five doctoral-level counselor education supervisees' lived experiences engaging in cybersupervision, Their experiences, which were embedded in their converging professional roles, included skepticism and anxiety, learning and growth in their relationship with supervisors, and unique context-dependent meaning making. Limitations and implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords

counselor education, supervision, online supervision, cybersupervision, phenomenology

Counselor education doctoral students represent the future of counseling leadership (Sears & Davis, 2003). Doctoral students who become counselor educators will serve as the instructors, advisors, supervisors, and mentors of future counselors who will shape the profession (Bernard, 2006; Goodrich, Shin, & Smith, 2011; Sears & Davis; 2003). The importance of counselor education doctoral students is implied by the recent changes in accreditation requirements that stipulate the nature of doctoral programs from which counselor education faculty can be trained (CACREP, 2016). While the importance of understanding and researching doctoral-level education and training is widely recognized, very little research has focused on counselor education doctoral students to date (Budenzer, & Brooks, 1997; Goodrich, Shin, & Smith, 2011; Henfeld, Owns, & Witherspoon, 2011; Hoskins, & Goldberg, 2005; Hughs & Kleist, 2005; Zimpfer, Cox, West, 1997).

Doctoral preparation within counselor education programs includes developing expertise in clinical practice (CACREP, 2016). As part of developing this expertise, counselor education doctoral students are required to receive clinical supervision during their practicum and internship experiences. The purpose of this process is to ensure client safety, refine clinical skills, improve case conceptualizations, and orient the supervisee to the counseling profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Dollarhide and Granello (2016) described clinical supervision as a capstone activity that connects theory to practice for graduate students.

While clinical supervision remains a cornerstone of doctoral-level counselor education, the field continues to evolve. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education (CACREP; 2016) has accredited a number of fully online and hybrid doctoral counselor education programs. One may assume doctoral students in these programs receive at

least a portion of their clinical supervision in the form of cybersupervision, which is the online provision of clinical supervision. Miller and Miller (2008) even asserted that online clinical supervision (cybersupervision) might become the new standard for counselor education and training. Research that increases understanding of how doctoral students experience this practice is important to creating effective and up-to-date counselor education doctoral programs.

Despite this need for research, much of the cybersupervision literature that has been published to date has been conceptual (Renfro-Michel, Rousmaniere, & Spinella, 2016) and has emphasized the likely benefits and drawbacks of cybersupervision as well as its ethical and practical implications. For example, benefits associated with cybersupervision include: economic savings due to reduced travel expenses, flexibility, convenience, and greater access to a diverse pool of professionals (Miller, Sanders, & Miller, 2009; Nelson, Nichter, & Henriksen, 2010). On the other hand, identified limitations of cybersupervision include: technical issues, a lack of direct human contact, and concerns regarding confidentiality (Miller & Miller, 2008; Miller, Sanders, & Miller, 2009; Nelson, Nichter, & Henriksen, 2010; Vaccaro & Lambie, 2007). While useful, the conceptual literature offers little insight into how counselor education doctoral students may experience cybersupervision as the cybersupervision-related research is similarly limited.

One body of cybersupervision-related research deals with the efficacy of videoconferencing and other web-based trainings with mental health professionals. For example, Rees and Gillam (2001) and Puspitasari and his colleagues (2013) each examined the effectiveness of videoconference training with mental health professionals. Both studies revealed that videoconferencing led to increases in semantic knowledge and high levels of satisfaction with the learning experience, which is in line with other research of this nature (Kobak, Craske,

Rose, & Wolitsky-Taylor, 2013; Weingardt, Cuccaire, Belotti, & Lai, 2009; Xavier, Shepherd, & Goldstein, 2007). However, while useful, these studies do not give a holistic understanding of how counselor education doctoral students experience receiving cybersupervision.

Other studies deal with the efficacy and appropriateness of cybersupervision in master's level counselor training. These studies indicated that counselor education students reported satisfaction within their supervisory alliances, experienced an increase in clinical skills, and felt an increased sense of self-efficacy secondary to their participation in cybersupervision, which mirrored the experiences of their peers receiving similar supervision in a face-to-face environment (Butler & Constantine, 2006; Chapman, Baker, Nassar-McMillan, & Gerier, 2011; Coker, Jones, Staples, & Harbach, 2002; Renfro-Michel, O'Halloran, & Delaney, 2010). Collectively, these results suggested that cybersupervision may be a viable training option within counselor education but do little to describe supervisees' experiences while receiving cybersupervision beyond providing final impressions. Further, none of these studies addressed doctoral-level students' experiences.

A limited number of qualitative studies have attempted to more holistically describe the experience of online supervision within counselor education (Luke & Gordon, 2011; Perry, 2012). For instance, Luke and Gordon (2011) conducted a discourse analysis of supervisee and supervisor e-mail to better understand school counseling interns' experiences of email supervision. They uncovered three discursive strategies: repetition, labeling, and use of pronouns, which seemed linked to professional identity development in email supervision. Likewise, Perry (2012) explored master's-level counseling students' and supervisors' perspectives on professional development and online supervision using phenomenological analysis. This study revealed student themes regarding professional development in an online

environment related to background, previous clinical exposure, mentoring by on-site supervisor, learning in the clinical training class and the importance of clinical skills. Supervisor themes included: the role a good didactic background, the necessity of clinical skills, the importance of using standardized tests, the impact of interpersonal relationships, and the significance of "self-as-therapist" work. Together these studies offered insight into supervisors' and supervisees' experiences of online or cybersupervision at the master's level, but did not examine the experience of counselor education doctoral students receiving cybersupervision.

Despite the importance of supervision in doctoral-level counselor education and the potential use of online supervision within hybrid and online programs, no studies have explored counselor education doctoral students' experiences of receiving cybersupervision. Understanding of counselor education doctoral supervisees' lived experiences of receiving cybersupervision may inform counselor preparation programs and the practice of cybersupervision. The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of counselor education doctoral student supervisees receiving cybersupervision. The central interview question was, "What are the lived experiences of counselor education doctoral students receiving cybersupervision?"

Method

The authors wanted to understand counselor education doctoral students' experience of receiving cybersupervision in a holistic manner that honored the complexity of multilayered social interactions. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2012) with an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an approach that enabled a focus on participants' lived experience and meaning-making within a social context (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA is applied flexibly but aims to: a.) understand the participant's world and

b.) develop an interpretation that "…positions the initial 'description' in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical context" (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p.104).

Researchers as Instruments

The authors took a constructivist approach to IPA, which emphasized the interdependence of the researcher and the researched (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As such, their experiences and biases related to cybersupervision were carefully addressed (Creswell, 2012). At the time, the first author was a doctoral student in counselor education who had experiences teaching and receiving supervision online. The second and third authors were tenured faculty members within a hybrid counselor education program. Each author received traditional supervision methods early in their training and had provided in-person and online supervision. The first author was the primary data collector and analyst. The second author served as a consultant and collaborator during data analysis. The third author supervised the study proposal and IRB processes.

Prior to data collection, each author wrote a statement of positionality to explore personal bias. These were examined as a group for commonalities, which included: (a.) cybersupervision can be effective, (b.) supervisor/supervisee mismatches may be more challenging in cybersupervision than in traditional formats, and (c.) supervisor ambivalence towards cybersupervision can impact the supervisee. These assumptions were examined reflexively throughout data collection and analysis.

Participants and Setting

Purposeful sampling was leveraged to obtain counselor education doctoral student participants who had received cybersupervision and had finished their coursework (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). The authors recruited from a doctoral-level

counselor education program in the Pacific Northwest through a general electronic invitation. They opted to enlist participants from this particular counselor education program due to its innovative use of technology to provide doctoral supervision. Five people volunteered, met recruitment criteria, and were enrolled in the study. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest a fairly homogeneous sample of between three and six participants for initial attempts at IPA, indicating that depth of data collection and analysis is preferable to larger samples and less intense data collection and analysis. Further, this small purposeful sample size was warranted given the unique case under study (Orcher, 2015). While localized and context-specific, the infusion of technology within this particular doctoral program was, in some ways, representative of more global trends occurring within the counseling profession at large as well as the increasing popularity of hybrid education within counselor education.

Participants ranged in age from 32 to 59 years. Four identified as female and one as male. Four were White, Euro-American, and one was Pacific Islander. The participants included two licensed school counselors, one licensed mental health counselor, one licensed clinical social worker, and one dual licensed mental health counselor and family and marriage therapist. Although participants were enrolled in the same program, they experienced cybersupervision at varying times and with a variety of supervisors during practicum and internship. Their cybersupervision occurred via Adobe Connect, which has audio, webcam, video playback, instant messenger, file sharing, and whiteboard capabilities. All sessions included at least audio communication and video playback of clinical work.

This study was approved by the IRB of the sponsoring university and researchers adhered to the ACA Ethical codes throughout the research process. Because participants were enrolled in the same program as the first author, and the second and third authors could potentially evaluate

participants, they instituted several precautions. The second and third authors did not participate in recruitment and data collection and did not have access to identifying information. The first author removed identifying information from all data. All participants had finished coursework so their evaluation in courses could not be affected by their responses.

Data Collection

The first author conducted semi-structured interviews via Adobe Connect, which were recorded and transcribed. Participants were asked three initial questions: (a.) "What has your experience been of cybersupervision?" (b.) "What factors affected your experience of cybersupervision?" and (c.) "What meaning, if any, has cybersupervision had on your clinical work?" The author used open-ended questions to encourage elaboration. After initial analysis, auhtors developed two additional research questions and the first author scheduled additional interviews to clarify emerging themes. The questions included: (a.) "Why is authenticity important to cybersupervision?" (b.) "What would it mean for you, as the supervisee, if authenticity was absent from a supervisory relationship?" These interviews were also recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

The first author conducted early data analysis following Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) six-step process. Each transcript was read and reread separately, notes were taken and questions were posed about the data. Next, observations were recorded about the explicit content of the data and ideas about their meaning. Then, emerging themes were summarized and reviewed for each transcript to ensure all data were represented in the summary.

Next, the first author compared themes across transcripts, clustered similar themes, reviewed them against all data, and revised them several times. Additionally, cross-case themes were explored related to one another using contextualization, abstraction, and polarization

(Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The resulting themes represented the first and second levels of IPA analysis where the explicit content of the data is interpreted (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In this case, analysis focused on producing a material description of cybersupervision. At this point, the second author reviewed the data and themes. She took on the role of supervisor, "…to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 80) and offered alternative interpretations, asked for clarification, and pointed out inconsistencies. Then, the first and second authors devised two questions to explore emerging themes that were not thickly described. The first author re-interviewed participants and this data was incorporated into the ongoing recursive process of analysis.

The first and second authors continued to revise themes as analysis moved to the third level of IPA, which is marked by micro-examination of word usage to uncover deeper meanings in the data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Here, analysis focused on how participants identified as both supervisees and counselor education doctoral students within their experience of receiving cybersupervision. Analysis continued until stable themes evolved that were consistent with the data and were richly supported by participant data.

Measures to Promote Trustworthiness

Morrow's (2005) suggestions to promote trustworthiness by managing subjectivity and attending to data and interpretive adequacy were followed. The researchers sought to manage their subjectivity, rather than eliminating it, by examining the impact of their experiences with and assumptions about cybersupervision throughout the research process (Morrow, 2005). Additionally, the first author presented interpretations to participants after each round of analysis to check the fit between their experience and the themes (Morrow, 2005). Each participant

confirmed that his or her experience receiving cybersupervision as a doctoral student was accurately and thoroughly represented.

Data adequacy involves attending to the correspondence of the data with participant reality and relies upon the researchers' engagement in the setting, rapport with participants, and interviewing skills (Morrow, 2005). During interviews, the first author followed recommendations by Whiting (2008) to use general questions, build rapport, and maintain an exploratory stance. Multiple sets of interviews allowed development of rapport and avoided the common trap of relying on one set of interviews (Morrow, 2005). These strategies produced quantities of rich data that over time became redundant in describing the phenomenon of interest.

Interpretive adequacy involves immersion in the data, purposeful use of an analytic framework, and co-construction of meaning with participants to deeply understand their experiences and personal contexts (Morrow, 2005). Co-construction of meaning occurred during the multiple interviews and participant checks. Throughout the analysis process, the first and second authors immersed themselves in the data repeatedly and applied Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009) analytic framework, often referring to other resources on IPA and phenomenology (e.g. Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Smith & Osborne, 2003) to ensure purposeful application. They engaged in processes of abstraction and polarization to examine the connections between emerging themes. This collaboration allowed the researchers to confirm that a saturation of the data was achieved and facilitated a consensus regarding the final themes that fully expressed participants' experiences.

Results

Data analysis produced a description of doctoral-level CE supervisees' lived experiences of receiving cybersupervision. Consistent with IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), these

lived experiences were set in shared aspects of participants' contexts represented by two themes: (1) status as counselor education doctoral students, and (2) past experiences with traditional supervision. Within these contexts, participants' lived experiences were represented by three main themes including: (a) skepticism and anxiety in the face of preconceived notions and initial challenges, (b) learning as a relational journey through a new landscape, and (c) making sense of the personal and professional potential of cybersupervision. The following sections will describe the contextual and main themes.

Contextual Theme: Status as CE Doctoral Students

Participants' status as counselor education doctoral student supervisees and emerging supervisors served as a context for their lived experience of cybersupervision. This context included the participants' unique position as students receiving supervision and supervision training whom had already begun to supervise other clinicians and counselors-in-training. As students in a hybrid CE doctoral program, participants engaged in online coursework, which created expectations about further online work. Participant 4 described how her cybersupervision experiences occurred in the aftermath of some frustrating online coursework:

> … it came from the very beginning of our program when everybody was trying to get set up [online], and everybody was trying to get the right video camera and get them synced up properly…it was just taking forever to really get that to come together…I saw cybersupervision as…one more format where things are going to be a lot more difficult...

> Supervision training as part of doctoral training also seemed to provide participants with language to describe their experiences of receiving cybersupervision. Here, Participant 1 talked about her supervision training as she attempted to make sense of her cybersupervision experience: "…It's [the] SAS, the systems approach, the one that I did the paper on in the class.

And it's a very relationally oriented supervision model…" Similarly, Participant 4 related part of

her cybersupervision experience through a theoretical lens learned during coursework, "I do

believe in the three… roles of…having some teaching and some consulting and counseling all

going on at the same time." Participants also reflected upon their emerging role as supervisors as

they communicated their lived experience of receiving cybersupervision. For example,

Participant 2 described his needs in cybersupervision by reflecting on face-to-face and

cybersupervision he had provided as a doctoral student:

> …for me I really need that…one-on-one with somebody. You know, having
>
> …supervised some counseling students at a Master's program at (program name)…I did
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> both face to face and some (cybersupervision) with them. You know, I just felt more
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> comfortable seeing eye- to- eye, talking to them and getting a feel for the person.

Participants' experiences of cybersupervision seemed influenced by their statuses as counselor

educator doctoral students, in particular. In this capacity, participants were either actively or

recently engaged in the formal study of counseling and supervision theories and best practices. In

addition to their classroom experiences in which they explored semantic knowledge,

participants' experiences with cybersupervision occurred concurrent to their experience as

engaging as both a supervisee and emerging supervisor. As such, participants' lived experiences

engaging in cybersupervision were embedded within these competing roles.

Contextual Theme: Past Experiences with Face-to-Face Supervision

All participants had developed expectations of what constitutes 'good' clinical

supervision from their past face-to-face supervision experiences. These expectations served as

another context for their lived experience of receiving cybersupervision and included that

supervision 1) is a potentially powerful way to grow, 2) elicits vulnerability around competence and relational needs, and 3) is affected by ability to connect with the supervisor.

From past experiences with face-to-face supervision, participants learned that supervision is a potentially powerful way to grow. They had, at some point, experienced growth from supervision and brought to cybersupervision that hope. Here, Participant 1 explained how she experienced growth during clinical supervision in the past:

…the richness and the variety of the clinical perspectives on how to approach specific situations was just very informative. It was helpful for me to be able to take in what others put forth and then filter it through my theoretical orientations and philosophical orientations and still gain some real insight in fresh approaches to situations.

Participants' prior experiences also created awareness that being a supervisee can elicit vulnerability. As they talked about experiencing cybersupervision, participants related expectations of feeling vulnerable and looking for disapproval, validation, or support from their supervisors. Participant 4 described experiencing an expectation of relational vulnerability as, "…the getting to know you, kind of nervous. Oh, what are they going to think of my work? Are we able to see eye-to-eye?"

Along with expectations of vulnerability, came beliefs about how the supervision relationship might affect their learning. Their cybersupervision experiences occurred in the context of believing that an authentic connection with their supervisors was critical to learning. Participant 1 described her beliefs as follows:

Authenticity is important in any relationship, but as supervisors are able to show up authentically, the supervisory alliance is deepened . . . they create the safety and space for the supervisee.

Participants' past supervision experiences served as the foundation for their understanding of what constitutes as quality supervision. This fundamental perception of traditional face-to-face supervisory interactions informed participants' expectations for and lived experience within the process of cybersupervision.

Theme: Skepticism and Anxiety in the Face of Preconceived Notions and Early Challenges

Participants' came into their cybersupervision experiences with expectations about potential growth, vulnerability, and the importance of connecting with their supervisor. In the face of these expectations, preconceived notions about cybersupervision, and initial challenges they faced during cybersupervision, participants described skepticism and anxiety as part of their lived experience. For example, Participant 1 described how her beliefs about "good" supervision and doubts about the online format fueled her worry that it might not work for her:

> The biggest factor going into supervision online, for me, was some resistance in thinking that it would be effective…I had some doubts that I had to overcome because, being relationally-oriented, I wasn't really thinking that it would work that well. I was skeptical at first as far as it being a very effective way to… connect with people…

This mixture of skepticism and anxiety was common to all participants. For some, it was colored by difficult experiences in other classes with online components and for others it was fueled by thoughts that their learning style might not be compatible with the online environment. For instance, Participant 3 described how skepticism and anxiety moved into her cybersupervision experiences, "It felt a little bit awkward to me. I wasn't quite sure how it was going to work, and it seemed . . . how does this work if you're not face- to- face?"

Participants' skepticism and anxiety did not immediately abate, but continued as they faced challenges in the online environment. They all experienced frustration with technology. Participant 5 described experiencing frustrations that fueled further worry:

> Towards the beginning of my experience with this, there was a pretty steep technological learning curve. And that impacted the experience…both in terms of when things weren't working, it was immensely frustrating, and when things were working, that felt good. It was like, 'OK, I'm slowly getting this'. But when things weren't going well it kind of added this extra layer of worry.

Likewise, Participant 1 voiced similar experiences, using the word "dread" to describe the anxiety of anticipating a frustrating experience:

> The frustrations, of course, were always…when the technology wouldn't work. Dreading that something would go wrong in the middle of a session, which was incredibly frustrating…so, when the technology didn't work that was always really disappointing, especially if we were having a rich conversation.

Yet, in participants' descriptions of skepticism and anxiety during cybersupervision, evidence existed of moving through and beyond the internal and external struggles with technology.

Theme: Learning and Growth as a Relational Journey

Despite skepticism and anxiety, participants' lived experience of receiving cybersupervision also included, to varying degrees, transcending technology to connect, learn, and grow. This aspect of the experience was a journey that they underwent in relationship with their supervisors, even as those relationships varied in nature and quality. Participant 1 spoke to her overall experience of quickly finding connection and value during that journey:

… being relationally oriented I wasn't really thinking that it would work that well. And again, I was very quickly, very pleasantly surprised that it was possible to form alliances either as a supervisor or a supervisee and do some really effective work...

In contrast Participant 2 described finding connection and value but more slowly, with some skepticism and anxiety still present:

I missed that human-to-human contact. So, I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but it was a new experience for me…it took a couple of sessions to kind of acclimate myself to talking to a computer screen…I would say I've had some very good feedback in regard to … what I do as a clinician…and that in most cases my supervisor was pretty much right on target…However, I've also been able to talk to them in regard to my work…and maybe they didn't see what they thought they saw.

The sense of connection and value was described in association with a variety of relational qualities and experiences that ranged from common interests, to confidence and competence, to perceiving that their supervisor was willing to extend themselves in making the session useful to the supervisee. Here, Participant 4 described her perception that sharing an interest in mindfulness and Eastern philosophy with her cybersupervisor helped them transcend technology and lack of shared space.

…we ended up having a lot of discussions in our supervision sessions about that, where I felt like, "OK, even though I've never physically shaken his hand and met him in person …I feel like we have a lot of things in common"…So, it felt like we could form a pretty fast understanding of each other's outlook and counseling perspectives and goals.

Further, participants indicated that when their supervisors demonstrated confidence and clinical competence, technology barriers and skepticism were minimized. For example, Participant 1

indicated that despite some technology issues in cybersupervision sessions with one supervisor, she remained engaged and challenged. Of her supervisor, she said,

> …with what she was putting out on the table, but I certainly respected her and her perspective… And so probably a lot of it was self-confidence and just feeling that she was very knowledgeable.

Participant 5 also explained that while navigating technology was sometimes challenging, she welcomed her supervisors' efforts, even when the efforts weren't successful:

> Well, I would say the supervisor did his and her best in those circumstances to kind of be helpful. One of the supervisors was also learning the system, so she was very sympathetic but there wasn't much she could do. The other was a little more experienced with it and was able to help a little more with troubleshooting.

Additionally, Participant 5 bonded with her supervisor, over shared frustration with technology, and valued the supervisor's commitment to making supervision work:

> 'Yeah, darn Adobe," and, "Let's just pick up the phone and talk to each other if that's what it's going to take to make this happen'…That it was more important to have the time together, and not just because we had to, but because we genuinely enjoyed the experience. And so an effort to make that happen in spite of the technology.

Collectively, participants' expressed experiences with cybersupervision emphasizes the importance of the supervisory alliance in an online supervisory environment. While varied in their expectations of online supervision as well as their journey engaged in this process, all participants identified the significant impact their relationship with their online clinical supervisor had on their experiences of cybersupervision, as a whole.

Theme: Making Sense of the Personal and Professional Potential of Cybersupervision

Part of all of the participants' experience of receiving cybersupervision was making sense of cybersupervision's potential to contribute to their growth as counselors and their future work as supervisors and counselor educators. Their meaning making seemed to answer the implicit questions: "Does cybersupervision work for me as a supervisee?" and "How will cybersupervision work for me as a supervisor and counselor educator?" This meaning making was often expressed in terms of valuing different aspects of cybersupervision, identifying preferences, and describing emerging ideas for practice.

All participants found some value in their experience of receiving cybersupervision, but they expressed different degrees of affinity for cybersupervision and valued different aspects of their experience. Participant 4 described initially being skeptical, wondering if cybersupervision would suit her relational and kinesthetic style. However, as she experienced cybersupervision and made sense of its potential, she expressed developing a preference for cybersupervision over face-to-face as both supervisee and emerging supervisor:

.... my expectation was that it wouldn't be as effective. But after having had it, I felt like it was more effective in both roles. The only thing missing, I think, would be still wanting to meet that person at some point. [Chuckles]

For her, the lack of physical presence was not too great of a barrier to overcome, but for others, such as Participant 2, this was more problematic. His personal preference for contact was central to his meaning making about the experience.

… being an older student…I really missed that person-to-person contact with someone that I'm actually being supervised by…Emotion is something that… touches me more personally if I am in a room with somebody.

Participants also made sense of the experience in terms of preferences for certain elements of cybersupervision. In particular, participants seemed to associate use of webcams with connection to their supervisors and a 'real enough' experience. Participant 5 described the sense she made of the experience:

>...my experience was much more positive when the cameras were used. That felt much more like a face-to-face meeting kind of interaction. I felt very confident that I had my supervisor's full attention.

Participant 1 had a similar experience and elaborated further on the use of webcams:

>...with the visual connection you got some of the cues and reading body language. And you could see ... their environment and their pets. And they could talk a little bit about their real life. So that brought us back into that very humanistic place really quickly.

Participants also made sense of their lived experiences of receiving cybersupervision in terms of their eventual practice as supervisors. They all had experience as supervisors and they regularly reflected on the meaning of their experiences as cybersupervisees by imagining themselves as future supervisees or by trying on opinions about best practice.

One aspect of participants' meaning making about cybersupervision and their future practice as supervisors was considering the future of cybersupervision. Participant 2, who was the most ambivalent of all the participants, expressed a sense that even if it was not comfortable for him, use of cybersupervision was inevitable and the practice would eventually become more uniformly effective:

>...this is a tool that's going to be...that will get better and better. And I think that the profession will look towards this type of supervision down the road. And so, for students that are just getting into the program, this type of technology is not going to go away.

Similarly, as part of her meaning making, Participant 3 wondered if cybersupervision was an appropriate form of supervision for all counselors. Although her experiences were largely positive, she said,

> … for some people, they probably couldn't get past the fact that it's so different and would maybe not respond in a positive way . . . I do think there's a group that would be so flustered by it, that it would be really difficult to get to a place that is meaningful.

Participants also made sense of their experience of receiving cybersupervision by pondering the additional skills they or others might need as supervisors. Participant 5 described her meaning making in this area clearly:

> … my conceptualization of it at this point is the cyber is like an extra layer on top of all of the skills and understandings that a person would need to do face to face supervision. So you need all of that foundational stuff; the clinical expertise, the understanding of counselor development, the kind of keeping in mind how the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee…and then it's like this extra layer of... how else do we need to tweak this to make it work in this particular format?

She continued to describe her perceptions and understanding of what some of this extra layer might be:

> …if someone were to focus on doing supervision in an online environment, that making it a responsibility to have training in how to address some of the technology issues and help guide supervisees through that so that they don't get discouraged. I mean, I know especially the newbies were pretty nervous going into the process.

Participants also made sense of their experiences in terms of the need to address the unique nuisances associated with cybersupervision with new supervisees. Specifically, participants recommended that supervisors explicitly acclimate supervisees to the process of cybersupervision. Participant 3 explained,

> I really believe that it would require more conversation up front about the process...I think that it would be one of the pieces that would be part of any kind of initial orientation, maybe going over an informed consent… and just kind of walking through the fact that you're willing to help them with it.

Participants entered their cybersupervision experiences with skepticism, anxiety and the desire to grow as clinicians. During these experiences they struggled, grew and formed impressions of what they could gain from cybersupervision as clinicians and how it might shape their eventual practice as counselor educators and supervisors. They shared a sense that they were part of a greater trend affecting the counseling profession. Here, Participant 5 spoke to this sense and the curiosity it sparked in her:

> Both [traditional supervision and cybersupervision] may effectively convey emotion, content, meaning. However, the experience is quite different. Does that make any sense?...And then it's like this extra layer of, "…and now...what else do we need to consider?"...And maybe that conceptualization is going to shift over time. Kind of like...I don't know if this is a good analogy...when I went through my Master's program, which was back in the early nineties, we were just seeing this shift from multiculturalism…it was almost like culture was put on top as a separate layer. It was like, "Okay, here's how you counsel someone."...And in the nineties there was this period of realizing that it can't be the frosting layer...The roots go down much farther than that…that you can't just learn

to be a counselor and then put multiculturalism on top. And I'm curious to see if we will find that cyber counseling, cyber supervision, etcetera, is the same…That maybe it isn't just this extra consideration that goes on top of what we think we already know. Maybe it's something we really have to conceptualize in a whole different way from the beginning. I'm not sure….

Despite their contrasting perceptions regarding how cybersupervision might present in their own clinical work, all of the participants actively sought to conceptualize how the process may be leveraged within the field of counseling as a whole. All participants acknowledged that the emergence of cybersupervision aligns with recent developments in telemental health and similar practices. Further, each participant seemed to recognize that cybersupervision is likely to be an increasingly common practice within the field of counseling. As such, participants seemed motivated to fully consider the potential role of technology within supervision as one effort to become competent and ethical emerging counselor educators.

Discussion

Three limitations should be noted concerning this study. First, the study focused on the unique experience of five supervisees who received cybersupervision within the context of one Ph.D. counselor education program. As such, the study is ideographic and potentially transferable, but not generalizable. Second, while multiple efforts were employed to manage subjectivity, each of the researchers entered the research process with assumptions about cybersupervision that could have affected the results. Similarly, because the participants and researchers all worked or studied within the same program, research relationships may have

introduced bias to the data collection process. This was mitigated by efforts to build rapport and protect participants from the perception and reality of being evaluated based on their responses.

For these doctoral counselor education supervisees, receiving cybersupervision was a multi-faceted experience set in the context of their past supervision experiences and future professional considerations. Understanding these lived experiences accomplished two objectives. First, this study adds to the scant body of research exploring doctoral level counselor education. Second, this study provides a rich description of the experience of cybersupervision, an increasingly utilized modality, in this context. The study results describe not only participants' immediate experience of cybersupervision, but how they made sense of cybersupervision in terms of their preferences and future practice as supervisors and counselor educators.

These themes were supported by and extended past literature and research (Chapman et al., 2011; Miller & Miller, 2008; Nelson et.al, 2010). Participants described being anxious at the beginning of their experience when they were unfamiliar with what might happen, how to navigate technology, how it might meet or not meet their needs, or how the experience might compare with past supervisory encounters. This anxiety parallels to some degree the work of Chapman et al. (2011) who contended that anxiety is most common with novice users of cybersupervision. These concerns are also reflected throughout the cybersupervision literature, which suggests that technological deficits may serve as a challenge within the provision of online clinical supervision (Miller & Miller, 2008; Miller et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2010.).

Participants seemed to associate connection with their supervisors in the online environment with increased willingness to be vulnerable and good learning experiences, while poor connection seemed associated with less positive experiences. This is consistent with much supervision literature (Falendar, Shafranske, & Ofek, 2014; ; Riggs & Bretz, 2006; Watkins,

2017), although participants' association between strong connections with supervisors with less anxiety about technology seems novel. Some participants bonded with their online supervisors over personal similarities while others built trusting connections based on perceptions of supervisor competence or investment in creating a good supervision experience despite struggles with technology. This is in line with conceptualizations of the supervision working alliance (Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999) although the overcoming challenges of technology can be seen as a novel presentation of supervision task and goal.

While their experiences of cybersupervision varied, each of the participants compared their experiences of cybersupervision to their previous experiences of clinical supervision and their current and future work as supervisors. Self-reflection, self-motivation, and evaluation of how one fits into the larger professional community are hallmarks of clinical supervision at the doctoral level (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010). By considering what did and did not work for them as cybersupervisees, participants constructed their own ideas about 'good cybersupervision' and began to form a picture of themselves as supervisors and counselor educators in the online environment. Their meaning making around their future work as supervisors and counselor educators paralleled research on the professional identity development of counselor education doctoral students (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010; Wagner & Hill, 2015).

The results of this study have several implications for the practice of cybersupervision within counselor education and for future research. Supervisors of counselor education doctoral students should consider that supervisees may enter cybersupervision with some anxiety and skepticism about technology. With that, supervisors may want to formally orient supervisees to the online platform and be well-versed with the online platform themselves so they can support

the supervisee through technology challenges. Viewing technology challenges as a way to build connections in addition rather than impede connections may also be useful to supervisors in addition to more traditional modes of alliance building. Additionally, supervisors should consider assisting supervisees as they reconcile their previous understandings of clinical supervision with new cybersupervision experiences. This may apply also to master's level counselors in training and other post master's supervisees.

Counselor educators who work within counselor education doctoral programs should also consider the potential impact receiving cybersupervision may have upon doctoral-level supervisees. As online and hybrid programs become increasingly common at both the master's and doctoral levels, counselor educators and supervisors need to become comfortable and competent with online supervision. The results of this study indicate that doctoral students who may work in online or hybrid programs in the future may benefit from being exposed to cybersupervision not only as supervisors but also as supervisees. Such exposure, though not a replacement for specific training, may allow them envision more concretely how they wish to engage as a supervisor online. How these doctoral supervisees are exposed may impact their sense of cybersupervision's potential, so it may be important for them to receive a variety of high quality experiences.

In terms of future research, this study focused on counselor education doctoral supervisees from one program using Adobe Connect. Future qualitative studies could explore cybersupervision experiences in different masters' and doctoral programs, different cybersupervision formats, or the supervisor perspective. This would aid in providing a broader perspective of cybersupervision and also allow for more distance between the research team and supervisor, which may help reduce any potential bias. Future quantitative research could

examine if receiving cybersupervision or the quality of cybersupervision has an impact on supervisors' subsequent cybersupervision attitudes, skills, and abilities. Researchers could also employ a mixed methods approach to further explore participants' experiences with and perceptions of cybersupervision. Given current counselor education trends, usage of cybersupervision is likely to increase. With that, it is important to continue research on all aspects of cybersupervision.

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