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Using Journal Writing to Promote Reflective Practice in the Counseling Practicum: A Multiple-Case, Narrative Study of Counselor Development

Jean Mauriello Germain
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USING JOURNAL WRITING TO PROMOTE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN THE COUNSELING PRACTICUM: A MULTIPLE-CASE, NARRATIVE STUDY OF COUNSELOR DEVELOPMENT

by

Jean Mauriello Germain

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Counseling Psychology

Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, Michigan June 2003
The present study investigates the development of reflective practice for beginning counselors. A review of the literature provides support for the benefits of counselors developing reflective practice, and for the use of tools such as portfolios and written journals in order to assist counselors in the development of reflection. However, because these tools have not been systematically implemented and investigated, little is known about the nature of counselors’ development of reflective practice.

A narrative, multiple-case methodology is used in order to examine the process of development in depth. Methods were employed to achieve trustworthiness of the data. Four participants took part in the three phases of this study, which involved two interviews with the researcher and a semester-long journal writing experience. The researcher provided continued reflection through intensive feedback on the journals.

A narrative analysis of the data generated three collective content themes (the integration of personal/professional aspects of identity; emotional management; and genuineness); four individual content themes (assertiveness, letting go, spirituality,
and confrontation), and three collective process themes (the impact of the researcher, including researcher as audience; feedback on the journals as an impetus for many reactions, including continued reflection; and journals as a record of professional development and a source of continued reflection).

The participants' narratives of their development are constructed in their own words. The researcher maintained a journal throughout the process, which yielded some unexpected findings about the researcher/participant relationship. These unexpected findings are also detailed.

This study provides support for the notion that the cultivation of reflective practice for personal and professional development is valuable for beginning counselor trainees in their work with clients. This research also demonstrates the use of written journals as a useful tool for counselors' development of reflective practice. This study contributes to the counselor development literature in that it is the only known study to investigate in depth the process of reflective practice in counselor trainees as it unfolds. Finally, the discussion explores implications for counselor training (e.g., the need for structured reflective experiences in training programs), and future research (e.g., counselors from diverse groups and various levels of training).
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Jean Mauriello Germain
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Reflective practice is an important part of development in the professional growth of counselors (Hoshmand, 1994; Neufeldt, Korno, & Nelson, 1996; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Hoshmand (1994) proposed that reflexivity be viewed as a central concept in counseling psychology; she called this a “reflective professional psychology.” She noted that psychologists act both as “knowing subjects and objects to be known... Reflexivity, which means referring back to oneself, requires stepping outside the system we are part of to study and reflect on our own involvement in it.” (p.6). According to Hoshmand, the value of counselor reflection is that being engaged in scrutiny about training and practice allows counselors to better integrate what they know personally and professionally. Because a counselor “uses these ongoing personal realities... to improve his or her work” (Skovholt, 2001, p. 32), integration of the personal and professional elements of one’s life is advantageous for counselors. Hoshmand recommended “professional training should provide opportunities for refining the use of self in inquiry” (p. 13).

The professional and personal integration addressed by Hoshmand is often associated with seasoned practitioners, whose development centers around reflective processes that transform their practice (Skovholt, 2001). However, the development
of reflective practice as part of one's repertoire is important throughout one's professional life, whether one is a seasoned practitioner or a rank beginner (Skovholt). In fact, although the counselor development research focuses on the reflective stance of seasoned professionals, the challenges beginning counselors face also point to a need for them to develop themselves as reflective practitioners. These challenges include developing skills (e.g., Borders, 1989; Murdock, 1991), struggling with ambiguity (Pica, 1998), possessing glamorized expectations of being a life-changing force with clients (Skovholt, 2001), and experiencing elevated stress and pervasive anxiety (Rodolfa, Kraft, & Reilley, 1988; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Given that seasoned practitioners are able to transform their counseling through reflection (Skovholt), beginning practitioners may benefit from the cultivation of self-reflection. The present study focuses on self-reflection in beginning counselors. It is anticipated that the journal can serve as a tool for gaining a better understanding of the reflective process.

At this stage, very little is known about the process of beginning counselors reflecting upon the challenges that are associated with their new professional roles in their first practicum experiences. Most of what we do know about the development of reflection in beginning counselors comes from the supervision literature. The process of supervision is one which, in theory, provides an environment for reflection (Skovholt, 2001). This process of fostering reflectivity through supervision was also addressed in an empirical investigation performed by Neufeldt et al. (1996). These authors interviewed five individuals who were highly regarded as experts in the area
of reflective practice due to their research in the area of supervision and reflection. These experts were Donald Schon, Thomas Skovholt, Helge Ronnestad, Willis Copeland, and Elizabeth Holloway. In interviews, the experts were asked “What are the hypothesized characteristics of reflectivity as used by counselors in supervision? How are they thought to be interrelated? What personal and environmental conditions in supervision are theorized to facilitate trainees’ effective use of reflectivity?” (p. 4). The researchers used a grounded theory analysis in order to develop a set of categories that would describe the process of reflective thinking in supervision.

In the Neufeldt et al. study, four arenas were established which describe reflectivity in supervision: the causal condition, the intervening condition, process, and consequences. The causal condition is the trigger or event that initiates the process of reflection. The causal condition could be a counseling session, a supervision session, or the subjective feeling that the counselor has before or after the session. The intervening conditions include such attributes as the training environment, the trainee’s personality and the trainee’s tendency to seek out reflective processes, possibly through peer supervision, personal therapy, or journal writing.

The process of reflection in the Neufeldt et al. (1996) study was viewed as having four qualities. These qualities were locus of attention, stance, sources of understanding, and depth. Locus of attention was described as occurring along two dimensions: the actions, emotions, and thoughts of the therapist, and the interaction between the client and the therapist. Stance included the areas of intention, active inquiry, openness, and capacity for vulnerability. Sources of understanding included
theory, personal and professional experiences, and the experience of self. Depth encompasses the categories of profound, superficial, meaningful, and lacking in meaning.

Finally, the consequences of reflective thinking were conceptualized as having two properties: change in the therapist's understanding and approach with clients as a result of reflection, and growth over time in the therapist's ability to make meaning of their own responses and their interactions with clients. The authors summarized that "the reflective process itself is a search for understanding... with attention to therapist actions, emotions, and thoughts, as well as to the interaction between therapist and client" (Neufeldt et al., 1996, p. 8).

The Neufeldt et al. (1996) study discussed the potential of counselor supervision for fostering the process of reflectivity in counselor trainees. Their research provided important information concerning the conditions, qualities, and properties of reflection. However, the Neufeldt et al. study is limited in two ways. First, it focused exclusively on supervision as a means of improving reflection. Second, the experts who were interviewed for this study reflected on the process of reflectivity, so reflective thinking in supervision was actually not studied directly. The present study will extend understanding through an explicit focus on beginning counselors in the process of a practicum experience. The reflective process will be studied directly because these counselors will be using written journals as a tool to promote their efforts of reflection. This study enhances the understanding of the process of reflective practice in two ways: (1) through its focus on beginning counselors, and (2) by using journals
to look at the development of reflective practice.

The process of reflective thinking has also been written about in the broader counseling literature. A review of this broader literature, including literature on reflective thinking, practice, and tools that promote reflection, provides a framework for an exploration of the development of reflective practice in counselor trainees. The remainder of this chapter is organized in this way: (a) theoretical underpinnings of meaning-making and reflective thinking; (b) self-reflection as an important process for counselors (c) portfolios and journals as tools for personal growth and promotion of reflective practice in counselor trainees; and (d) conclusions and questions for research.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This section provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of meaning making and the development of reflection, using symbolic interactionism as a guiding framework. Symbolic interactionism has its roots in the tradition of Mead and Dewey (Denzin, 1992). Symbolic interactionism assumes fundamentally that each individual has a self, and each individual is reflexive, or self-interacting, and as such can create his or her own experience (Blumer, 1969).

Although symbolic interactionism is generally credited to Mead, his students, particularly Blumer, organized Mead’s writings and fashioned the theory from Mead’s conceptualizations. According to Blumer (1969), the perspective of symbolic interactionism is that reality is intersubjective. As such, according to this theory,
individuals strive to create a reality that is personally meaningful. We act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for us. These meanings are a product of our interactions with self and with others, and these meanings are modified as we interpret and reflect upon them. We learn to take on different roles, and we adapt these roles to a given context. We can examine our actions as an object separate from ourselves through a self-reflective process. These self-reflections shape interactions with others, which in turn shape further self-reflections.

Mead’s conceptualizations that led to articulation of the theory of symbolic interactionism were influenced by Dewey’s notions of individuals as both personal and social, and as active, reflective perceivers of their environments (Denzin, 1992). As such, Dewey (1933) had a pivotal role in formally defining the concept of reflective thinking. According to Dewey, “Reflective thinking involves (1) a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and (2) an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle, and dispose of the perplexity” (1933, p.12).

For Dewey, the process of reflective thinking requires active searching in order to move toward resolution of uncertainty. The process calls for a willingness to be in a prolonged state of doubt until one has found reasons to arrive at a temporary or lasting judgment. Even then, the process of reflective thinking continues because a resolution may not be permanent, and may require further consideration.

Dewey (1933) further identified two methods for practical learning: the apprenticeship method (skill development) and the laboratory method (reflective
reasoning development). These two methods fit nicely with the objectives of a fieldwork experience for counselors in training. In structuring a fieldwork experience, such as a counseling practicum, it is critical to foster the development of both technical skills and of reflective practice (Tuescher, 1997). A counseling practicum needs to provide a framework for the development of skills and reflection. If this framework is provided, trainees will complete the counseling practicum with the tools to engage in reflective thinking on their own.

In actuality, it is not known whether beginning counselors typically complete a counseling practicum experience with the tools to engage in reflective practice on their own because the process of development of reflective practice over the course of a beginning practicum experience has not been studied in depth until now. However, the development of self-reflection has been studied in experienced counselors and advanced trainees, and that will be the focus of the next section.

Self-reflection

The development of self-reflection has been written about in the counseling literature from a variety of perspectives. In this section, four central areas that pertain to self-reflection will be reviewed: (a) the process of reflection in experienced counselors and advanced trainees; (b) a model for counselor development outlining several stages across the life span of the counselor; (c) personal narratives of two advanced counseling trainees that elucidate the development of reflective practice; and (d) emotional responsiveness as a central element in the self-reflections of
counselors.

Process of Reflection

Holmes (1999) wanted to find out more about how reflection takes place for counselors in their work. He investigated the act of self-reflection in counselors by interviewing counselors and non-counselors in order to learn how they find out about themselves through their work. He decided that the way to understand counselors' reflective thinking would be to investigate how they reflect upon themselves. However, he also acknowledged that it is difficult to study reflection because a researcher:

- can never know how well what is related in an interview corresponds to the counselors' process of self-reflection in action. The best a researcher can do is to let counselors reflect upon their self-reflection, to let them talk to him or her about how they come to understand themselves, and from the experience of this process construct a plausible story of counselor self-reflection. (p. 3)

Holmes used an interpretivist approach to research based on grounded theory so that he could focus on the way individuals make meaning and could minimize the influence of the researcher. He selected four counselors whom he knew personally and interviewed them in order to try to obtain a working theory of counselor self-reflection. These four counselors were either in training or had recently completed their training. Holmes asked:

- Some counselors/psychotherapists have told me that they learn about themselves through their work. Is this true for you? If so, I would like you to talk about how you have learned about yourself or come to understand yourself through working and training as a counselor/psychotherapist. (1999, p. 63)

Core ideas that emerged included the process of working through self-doubt, developing an identity, wanting to be a competent therapist, and development through
relationships with mentors and supervisors.

Holmes then interviewed three experienced psychologists and opened the interview with the same question in order to build upon this preliminary understanding of how counselors learn about themselves through their work. As a result, he developed a theory of counselor self-reflection based on the concept of using oneself as a tool. This concept led to his interest in the use of self, the use of self as a tool with clients, and how the tool is honed. The experienced counselors and advanced trainees both felt they used themselves as tools to facilitate client change, paid attention to their own reactions to clients, and learned about themselves. Learning about themselves and working with clients seemed to be linked. Counselors reported that their established self-awareness and their self-reflection facilitated understanding and learning about their clients (Holmes, 1999).

Holmes went on to interview some non-counselors so that he could investigate how his developed theory might be unique to counselors. As he tried to decide which non-counselors to interview, he looked at the data from his interviews with counselors and noted that the counselors often referred to the differences between psychology and pure science. Therefore, he decided to interview scientists, and chose a horticulturist and a forensic scientist (Holmes, 1999). He adapted the opening question slightly for them to read:

I have been interviewing people to try to understand how they learn about themselves through their work. Do you feel that you learn about yourself through your work? If so, I would like you to talk about how you have learned about yourself or come to understand yourself through your work as a ___.

(p. 63-64)
In considering the interviews by looking at the interview material concurrently, Holmes learned that counselors and non-counselors differed in terms of their primary focus, their ways of knowing, reality testing, perspective on self, and use of self. Counselors focused on their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (self-referent) that emerged in personal and professional relationships, while non-counselors were more likely to focus on comparisons with others (other-referent) as clues to understanding themselves. Counselors were comfortable with introspection and self-reflection as a way of knowing reality, while non-counselors used trial and error learning and did not reflect on themselves as much. Counselors valued self-knowledge and their identity development, while non-counselors reported a belief that they could not understand themselves. The non-counselors did not find their work to be a source of learning about themselves and therefore the concept of using the self as a tool did not pertain to them as it did to the counselors. Rather, the non-counselors appeared to be trying to fit a mold.

Two main findings from the Holmes (1999) study may have particular relevance for this study: (1) the use of self as a tool to promote self-awareness; and (2) the process of self-learning being an emotional experience. The counselors reported using themselves as tools in their work, paying attention to behaviors, thoughts, and feelings inside and outside of the counseling session, and developing self-awareness so that they could grow as professionals and learn about themselves. Prominence was also given to emotions in the learning process. The counselors described experiencing feelings of fear, anger, loneliness, anxiety, and self-doubt. These emotions were
central to their learning and self-reflection. The participants in the Holmes (1999) study seemed to view reflecting on emotional reactions as an important task for them professionally.

Overall, Holmes (1999) viewed his study as “a starting point in a process of inquiry that seems almost limitless” (p. 161). In his opinion, it could lead to the telling of many more stories. He recommended that several questions could be addressed to counselors in future research, including the exploration of how other counselors use themselves as a tool, what working as a counselor has taught them about themselves, how they come to know things, and how they understand emotions. An important implication of his study was that if the individual is truly a tool, there should be a focus on personal growth work in training.

Counselor Development Model

The work of Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) also revealed the importance of personal growth and reflection. These authors were interested in development across the life span of the counselor and they developed a model for counselor development. They qualitatively studied development through interviews with 100 counselors and therapists, who ranged from first-year trainees to a professional counselor with forty years’ experience. The interviews were 1-1.5 hours in duration and distributed among a research team of five, who discussed the interviews afterwards, and held debriefing meetings in order to capture important concepts and categories. Interviews were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire made up of 23 items based on the authors'
understanding of supervision, therapy, development, and occupational burnout.

In order to understand the data generated by the interviews, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) often met to listen to tapes, discuss the content, and to ask questions throughout the process. The authors constructed a stage model, identifying eight stages of development: conventional (a counselor not yet trained), transition to professional training (first year of graduate school), imitation of experts (middle graduate school training), conditional autonomy (internship, ranging from 6-24 months), exploration (new graduate, 2-5 years), integration (2-5 years), individuation (10-30 years), and integrity (preparing for retirement, 1-10 years).

Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) uncovered twenty themes that were important throughout a counselor’s development; these themes require investigation in future studies. Many themes seem relevant to the concept of the development of reflective practice. These include professional development as growth toward professional individuation (Theme 1), the reliance on internal expertise as one develops (Theme 4), and the strong influence on professional functioning of insights that have been gained from personal life (Theme 12). Theme 3 specifically holds that professional reflection is central to professional development and professional individuation as one matures. According to this theme, continuous reflection brings about professional individuation. Clearly, the development of a reflective stance, which involves having a searching, exploratory attitude, and devoting effort to processing significant experiences alone and with others, is important. Part of developing a reflective stance involves utilizing feedback from others while not defining one's own self only
through others’ views. The development of professional reflection can be an intense experience personally and professionally, and it begins during training with interpersonal experiences with clients, supervisors, peers, and professors (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

Personal Narratives of Counselors in Training

The importance of self-reflection and personal growth work during professional training (Holmes, 1999) and across the lifespan of the counselor (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) was addressed in the previous sections. A specific example of self-reflection in counselor trainees, reflective writing, will now be examined. Herman (1998) and Lillich (1998) prioritized self-reflection and growth work as part of their process of personal and professional growth in their developmental journeys. They wrote personal narratives about their training experiences from the vantage point as experienced trainees reflecting upon their process of development. The following is a discussion of their narrative constructions.

Herman (1998) used a narrative approach to reflect, promote, and track the process of his development as a counselor. He reported spending years feeling stiff, anxious, and self-critical of himself as a therapist. His supervisors encouraged him to take risks, but he ruminated on every action he took and was unable to do so. In contrast, curiosity, intuition, and following his hunches became characteristic as he learned to allow himself permission to make mistakes and to be reflective. He became better able to accept ambiguity, and he also became less fearful of making
mistakes. To the extent that he was able to attend to his personal narrative, he reported becoming successful in assisting clients with making sense of their own narratives. In developing reflexivity, he became more able to use humor and metaphors. His narrative was written as a predoctoral intern, at which time he described himself as a “curious, intuitive and reflective counselor who enjoys the work” (p. 105).

Lillich (1998) also experienced frustration and doubts about her effectiveness as a counselor. She pointed out that although much has been published about how, when, where, and why to learn to be a therapist, little has been written on “young therapists’ early experiences on the expedition: what maps guide us, and how do we learn to read them?” (p. 28). Later, she relayed that she had “learned the importance of trying to meet them [clients] where they are, though that has often meant heading into territory which I cannot locate on my map” (p. 33). For example, she related her experiences of loss and countertransference related to loss: her tears for her dead mother after witnessing a bitter mother-daughter argument in session, her sense of not being understood by her clients and of her clients not being understood by her. For Lillich, keeping a journal was useful in making connections between her own experiences and those of her clients, and tracking her development. She wrote, “Personally, I have begun to adjust to my shifting identity. I think of myself less often now as someone’s daughter…and this alteration has created space for further development of other aspects of myself” (p. 33). Though she does not classify her process directly as a reflective one, Lillich’s story demonstrates the process of self-reflection through
journal writing, and the process of integration of the personal and professional aspects of self.

Emotional Responsiveness

In the previous section, Herman (1998) and Lillich (1998) acknowledged emotional reactions, such as anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt, which emerged as they reflected on their professional development. The use of reflection in order to deeply explore one’s own emotional reactions is valuable for counselors (Griffith & Frieden, 2000). Therefore, this section will explore the importance of responding accurately to emotions as part of the development of reflective practice.

In discussing the importance of emotional responsiveness, it may be useful to consider that therapist self-understanding has been linked with the ability to be responsive to the emotional expression of the client (Guy, Stark, Poelstra, & Souder, 1987). Therapists of all levels have reported finding their work to be emotionally evocative, and the management of negative feelings to be difficult, to be insufficiently addressed in training, and to have a direct impact on the therapy they conduct and on their personal lives (Harris, 1999). Emotional responsiveness may be of particular salience for beginning counselors.

Counselor management of negative emotions during training is particularly crucial because beginning counselors’ lack of experience makes them more susceptible to feelings of guilt, anger, confusion, and perfectionism (Friedberg & Taylor, 1994). Mahoney (1995) underscored the importance of trainees managing negative
emotions while in training so that as counselors they can be emotionally present and
caring toward the client, who may be presenting with intense affect, which may be
difficult for the counselor to manage. Some of the most common problems that cli­
ients present include chronic negative affect, fear of feeling, emotional numbing,
perplexing emotional reactions, emotional ambivalence, and experiences associated
with unfinished affect. These emotional concerns manifest in anxiety, depression,
anger, shame, and other emotions that the counselor may also find difficult. Accord­
ing to Mahoney (1995), when counselors focus on cultivating awareness of their own
emotional processes and enhancing their own personal growth, they are better able to
help their clients. The emotional health of counselors, then, is important. One mean­
ing that could be taken from this is that professional growth in counselors is an out­
come of personal growth.

Personal and professional growth in counselors is further linked to psychologi­
cal mindedness, which in turn has been linked to reflective thinking. Farber (1985)
defined psychological mindedness as “the disposition to reflect upon the meaning and
motivation of behavior, thoughts, and feelings in oneself and others” (p.170). He
reviewed the literature on psychological mindedness, including its evolution in ther­
pists and the impact it has on them. If “the nature of the psychotherapeutic role and
psychotherapeutic training demands that therapists think about the motives, distor­
tions, and inner experiences of others” (p. 171), then we might infer that therapists
would find it useful to have as clear an understanding of their own motives and inner
experiences as possible. Farber asserted that thinking about oneself and others in
deep, psychological ways reactivates therapists’ emotions and early experiences and may be unsettling. To cope with this, therapists may take a detached, intellectual stance and focus on the development of techniques instead of increasing the development of psychological mindedness. Farber recommended that the reflective and the intellectual sides both be cultivated and a balance kept between the two components. This suggests that the struggle for balance between the reflective and the intellectual remains a crucial task throughout the life span of the counselor.

Tools for Development of Reflective Practice

The literature suggests that the development of a practice of reflective thinking is desirable for the personal and professional growth of counselors at all levels of development (e.g., Hoshmand, 1994; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). The question now becomes how to promote the development of self-reflection.

Several authors recommend the use of portfolios as a learning tool for counselor trainees. The literature (e.g., Atkinson & Zimmer, 1977; Tuescher, 1997) refers to the usefulness of the process of keeping a portfolio or learning journal to stimulate reflection on practice and reasoning, and to foster self-assessment. However, virtually all of the scholarship on portfolios is anecdotal in nature.

Atkinson and Zimmer (1977) introduced the concept of using portfolios in counselor education. They postulated that portfolios could be a place where skill development and personal development are demonstrated simultaneously. The stated purpose of a counseling portfolio is to “provide continuous data on an individual
student's progress in a counselor training program and to serve an integrative function between academic coursework and fieldwork,” (p. 258). The authors recommended that the portfolios have several components, including: experiences that occur outside of class, theoretical knowledge, verification of skills, integration of theory and experience, and the students' contribution to the program and to the development of other students. The authors also pointed out that the portfolio would document the potential for future growth by showing the students' growth that they had achieved thus far.

Carney, Cobia, and Shannon (1996) also developed a model for counseling portfolios. They recommended that portfolios comprise three domains: artifacts, reproductions, and reflections. The artifact might be a case assessment or research paper. The reproduction might include an audiotape, videotape, proof of conference attendance, or group presentation experience. The reflection domain might include a self-evaluation of counseling skills, a critique of a research article, or clinical assessment. The authors further recommended that data be collected in each domain, across nine components. The components include human growth and development, social and cultural foundations, helping relationships, group work, career and lifestyle development, appraisal, research and program evaluation, professional orientation, and clinical practice.

Counselor educators and researchers have had various responses to the evaluative aspects of portfolios. Alschuler (1996) criticized portfolios as being ethically problematic with regard to assessment criteria used. However, he acknowledged that they do encourage “extensive and continual self-reflection” (p. 134). Wolf (1991)
also valued portfolios as a tool for self-assessment and as a tool for introspection. He further suggested that the student provide commentaries and explanations in which they describe and reflect on the content, so that the portfolio is “selective, reflective, and collaborative” (p. 2). Coleman (1996) reviewed the literature on portfolio use and reflected on his own experience teaching multicultural counseling classes. He hypothesized that use of a portfolio in multicultural classes might be a way to encourage reflection among students with varying levels of enthusiasm, perspectives, and overall developmental stages with regard to multicultural issues. Coleman concluded that the measurement of multicultural competencies with a portfolio in addition to or instead of other instruments “appears to offer exciting possibilities” (p. 219).

In contrast to the anecdotal literature, Tuescher (1997) conducted an empirical study focusing on the use of portfolios (journals were one portion of the portfolio) in the counseling practicum to promote self-reflection. School counseling students maintained journals during a semester-long practicum experience. Twenty-four students took part in this study. They were assigned to either a control or an experimental condition. All students completed the Counselor Self-Reflection Scale (CSRS), the Counselor Effectiveness Rating Scale (CERS), and the Clinical Assessment Questionnaire in order to evaluate their level of reflection, their effectiveness, and their cognitive complexity. Those in the experimental group kept portfolios, while those in the control group collected assignments discretely but did not integrate them. The portfolios included the following:

(a) written student goals, (b) self-awareness inventory, (c) log of hours and type of counseling task, (d) site supervisor evaluations, (e) university
Tuescher also trained instructors so that they would provide students with direction in the use of the case presentation, which was a required component for both the experimental and control groups.

This study (Tuescher, 1997) was analyzed through a random effects analysis of variance of the Counselor Self-Reflection Rating Scale (CSRS) scores on the portfolio treatment, instructor, and interaction of treatment and instructor. The means and standard deviations of CSRS scores of participants by instructor were also analyzed for each group. Results demonstrated a clear instructor effect, meaning that the instructors were differentially influential in the development of counselor self-reflection. Tuescher recommended that the portfolio be used as a tool to stimulate counselor development, possibly with stricter monitoring to control for instructor effects. In addition, her findings (significant at .09) suggested that those in the portfolio group developed a higher self-reflection level than those in the control group, providing preliminary empirical support for the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between levels of self-reflection and portfolio development.

In addition to formally structured portfolios, journals are a potential means for the development of reflective practice. Anecdotal, theoretical, and empirical support exists in the writing and psychological literature for journal writing as a tool for
stimulating and tracking reflection (e.g., DeSalvo, 1999; Yinger, 1985). Journal writing has been defined as writing that is focused on personal thoughts, feelings, and reflections. Journal writing puts writers in a position to learn “(1) what they know, (2) what they feel, (3) what they do (and how they do it), and (4) why they do it” (Yinger & Clark, 1981, p. 10). This conceptualization of journal writing fits well with the goal of enhancing the self-awareness of thoughts and emotions and facilitating reflective practice in counselors. Two studies (Kanitz, 1996; Lopez et al., 1989) in the counselor training literature have used journals to address the personal development needs of counselor trainees. It is important to note that neither of these studies was conducted as part of practicum training; neither had a practitioner focus.

Lopez et al. (1989) involved clinical and counseling psychology students in seminar discussions and journal writing in order to develop a cultural sensitivity model. In the written journal, participants recorded their own consideration of cultural issues in their clinical work. The authors noted that the journal entries, which were intended as a minor part of the study, were actually a powerful means of stimulating reflection in “addressing many of the complexities inherent in considering cultural factors” (p. 370). The authors’ brief article provided no information about the methods used in their study. However, the authors used the journals as a preliminary guide for deriving stages of development of cultural sensitivity in therapists, ranging from a lack of awareness to a movement toward integration.

Kanitz (1996) also used journals, along with interviews, as methods for investigating White counselor trainees’ thoughts and feelings about racial, ethnic, and
cultural phenomena, and promoting insight and self-awareness into these thoughts and feelings. Kanitz' investigation was guided by several research questions, including:

- What is it like to explore/examine racially relevant cognitions and affect?
- What is it like to do such exploration via writing?
- How does writing "fare" as a medium for such exploration?
- What facilitates exploration?
- What inhibits or hinders exploration?
- What topics or issues come up via the exploration process?
- What are some of the "hot" (emotionally provocative/challenging) issues?
- What are the mechanisms of exploration or introspection? (p. 51)

In this study, writing sessions were preceded by video clips that showed interactions between racially diverse individuals. The instructions for writing were to delve into thoughts, feelings, and opinions about what was seen, to write continuously for twenty minutes, and to explore deeply in the writing. The interviews that followed the writing sessions inquired about the writing completed, the feelings the participants had as they wrote, the feelings not written about, topics they might have written more about, perceptions of the value of the experience, new discoveries obtained during the writing, and perception of time during the writing.

Six masters-level counseling trainees participated in this study. The subjects took part in three twenty-minute writing sessions on different days, which were each followed consecutively by an interview. The final two interviews focused on the exploratory writing experience as a whole, including the process and experience of introspection, outcomes of the experience, perceived connection between writing about thoughts and feelings and organizing them, inhibitors to self-expression, and the experience of defensiveness. According to Kanitz (1996), the questions were individualized based on the content of the journal writing, and included topics such as

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ambivalence, fear of being racist, and personal beliefs validated by the writing.

In Kanitz's (1996) study, participants expressed a range of reactions regarding the writing experience. Positive reactions expressed by the participants included: the value of taking the time to evaluate their own perspectives, the value of expressing their own viewpoints in writing, and the opportunity to honestly address their own racist attitudes. The majority of participants experienced some difficulties while engaged in this writing. These difficulties were "linked to fears of being negatively perceived or misunderstood, feeling defensive, feeling pressured to explain oneself fully and accurately, and struggling with ambiguities," (Kanitz, 1996, p. 98). Other participants reported a mixture of positive and negative responses to the process of writing. For example, one participant reported, "it always is a valuable thing to think about—it's just sort of uncomfortable at times," and another participant stated, "I felt pretty comfortable writing, but it seems kind of weird not to have any kind of feedback." However, some participants expressed the lack of feedback as being an enhancer of the writing process, that the lack of evaluation was perceived as freeing to them. Other enhancers included familiarity and exposure to the writing assignment, being stimulated by the video clips, and the participants' own resultant affect as a result of watching the video clips.

The results of the Kanitz (1996) study provided preliminary support for the utility of writing as a means for promoting self-awareness into racial issues in master's-level trainees. Kanitz discussed many promising outcomes of this writing process for the participants. Writing "served to enhance memory and recall, foster
cognitive organization, clarity, and coherency, increase self understanding/self discoveries, facilitate future articulation of racial perspectives, illuminate and release affect and emotions, stimulate thinking,” (Kanitz, 1996, p. 106). Kanitz' overall conclusions supported the notion that expressive journal writing may create a safe and facilitating place for cognitive and affective development, and may foster insight and reflectiveness into confusing or emotionally intense material. The next step is research that will more extensively utilize journal writing as a tool for self-reflection in beginning counselor trainees.

Kanitz acknowledged several limitations and recommendations for future research, which have been given careful consideration and implementation in the present study. Kanitz acknowledged that the brevity of the journal writing experience was a limitation. Another limitation that she reported included her own lack of probing for deeper responses in the interviews. From this limitation, it can be inferred that it would be beneficial for researchers in future studies to assertively probe their participants for information that participants may be reluctant to volunteer independently. Kanitz had the following recommendations for future studies: implement a journal writing condition that is more extensive in length and duration, and develop a stronger rapport with the participants in order to reduce their fear of negative evaluation. These recommendations were implemented in the present study.

Conclusion

Review of the literature provides support for the benefits of counselors
developing reflective practice at all stages of development. Reflective practice is important for the personal and professional growth of counselors. Emotional responsiveness is a component of reflective practice, and tools such as portfolios and journals have the potential to assist counselors in the development of reflection. However, these tools have not been systematically implemented and investigated in the counselor development literature. Consequently, little is known about how counselor trainees, especially beginning counselors, develop reflective practice. The purpose of the present study is to examine the nature of the reflective process over the course of the first practicum through the use of written journals and multiple interviews. Journals were used in this study rather than portfolios because journal writing is more clearly focused on the development of reflection, while portfolios also give weight to goals, evaluations, and didactic assignments that are not directly related to reflective practice. A narrative, case study methodology was used in the present study so that the process of development of reflective practice could be studied in depth. Interviews were added in order to discuss the journal writing process and to facilitate relationship building between the researcher and the participants. The design is consistent with recommendations that qualitative study be designed so that the researcher could have the flexibility and freedom to change the course of the research if needed and to explore in depth (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The following research questions governed this study:

1. What can we learn about the development and significance of reflective practice from the participants’ narrative representations of their practicum
experience?

2. What is the process like for participants to do such exploration through written journals, and as part of a research project?

3. How will the participants in this study construct and re-construct their stories about themselves as therapists throughout the course of the semester-long practicum?
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The review of the literature demonstrated the importance of reflective practice for experienced counselors. However, the focus of the scholarship on beginning counselors has been on the challenges they face, rather than on their development of reflective practice. It seems likely that counselor trainees would experience benefits if they used tools such as personal journals in order to cultivate the practice of reflection. The main objective of this research, then, is to gain an increased understanding of what reflective practice looks like in beginning counselors, whether journal writing assists in development, and what each counselor’s narrative of development looks like and how it changes.

In this chapter, a description of the narrative, case study methodology that was used is provided, along with the social constructivist paradigm and symbolic interactionist theory that underlie this study. Next, a discussion of the researcher as instrument and of research roles takes place, followed by data collection procedures and data analysis procedures. This chapter is organized in this way: (a) overview of methodology, (b) data collection procedures, and (c) data analysis procedures.
Overview of Methodology

The research methodology for this study was narrative, multiple-case, and discovery-oriented (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mishler, 1986; Rosenwald, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A narrative's goal is to tell a story (Zeller, 1995). A case study involves exploration of “a case (or multiple cases), over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context,” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). A case study has a narrative form, and its story line is what connects the various people and processes involved in the case (McCormick, 1984). The discovery-oriented methodology permits “emergence of non-theoretically based and unexpected material, thus creating a conceptual space for categories of meaning that are difficult to understand, explain, and/or easily integrate” into our existing knowledge base (Stevens, 1999, p. 43).

Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) discussed several features of narrative research that distinguish it from other qualitative research traditions. Narrative is more personal than other forms of qualitative research, and the relationship between the researcher and participant tends to be closer. In this study, the use of interviews, personal journals, and the use of feedback on those journals fostered a closer relationship between the researcher and the participants than would have occurred with interviews alone. Narrative research is also distinguished from the other traditions by its tendency to be more inclusive. There is both an individual focus and a sense of the individual’s interactions with society. Again, narrative was appropriate for this study because in the participants’ telling of their stories, there was a sense of the development
as individual counselors and a sense of the interactions these individuals had with their colleagues and in their social context.

For Polkinghorne (1988), narrative is what gives individual events a relational significance. A narrative structure becomes explicit through reflection (Kerby, 1991). Emihovich (1995) stated that “better knowledge of how people use stories and metaphors to understand their lives and handle stress would enable social scientists to create meanings that reach people on a more personal level” (p. 40). In this study, the reflections of the counselor trainees through interviews and journals revealed a narrative structure in each case study, and shed light on how beginning counselor used her story to understand her own experiences and development.

Yin (1994) discussed several features of case studies that distinguish them from other research methods. Case studies are significant to the public interest, they are complete in terms of the phenomenon and context measured, and they are an exhaustive collection of evidence that leaves little evidence untouched. The case study’s significance to the public interest applies to this research because of this study’s significance in terms of counselor training. This study is complete in terms of phenomenon, in that it takes place over the course of a semester, which is the time frame for a typical counseling practicum. Finally, the data in this study meet the criteria for exhaustive collection of evidence through interviews, personal journals, and the use of feedback on those journals. Little evidence in this study was left untouched. In this discussion of case study and narrative, it is useful to remember that because case studies have a narrative form connecting the various processes involved
The remainder of this section continues this overview of methodology and is organized in this way: (a) theoretical base; (b) researcher as instrument; (c) definition of research roles; and (d) selection of participants.

**Theoretical Base**

This study was informed by the theory of symbolic interactionism and the social constructivist paradigm. According to symbolic interactionist perspectives (e.g., Blumer, 1969), we have a self that has the capacity to act, to make meaning, and to reflect on that meaning-making. At the same time, what we experience as a sense of self is always interacting in a social context, and this self therefore can take on the role or perspective of another person. The meaning-making activities of individuals, and the roles we take, are affected by the social context we are participating in.

Symbolic interactionism is one of the traditions at the root of social constructivism (Heinonen, 1993). Social constructivism is one of the worldviews from which the qualitative inquiry that makes up the framework for this study was derived (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

According to Heppner et al. (1999), social constructivists hold that ideas of the social world are constructed by individuals in their minds, and therefore multiple constructions are possible. In applying the social constructivist paradigm to research, these authors made the following observations:
The investigator and the person investigated are linked, and through the investi-
gation process the constructions of the participants become accessible to the
investigator. Because the construction of a participant is internal, it is only
through the interaction of the investigator and the participant, or the inter-
action of the investigator and the world of the participant, that the construc-
tions of an individual can be understood. Moreover, the constructions of the
investigator cannot be separated from his or her understanding of the partici-
pant's constructions. (p. 239)

The symbolic interactionist perspective is embedded in this description. From this
description, we can envision how the researcher and the participant are involved in a
collaborative meaning-making venture in which each is influenced by the other. By
participating in the research, the researcher and participant enter a social context
together in which each is affected by the other.

The Researcher as Instrument

Qualitative research has traditionally called for “the inclusion of the subjective
experience of the researcher” (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000). Therefore, the
researcher is an important instrument in data collection, research construction, and
data analysis. As such, it is important for the researcher to clarify theoretical views,
bases, and approach to the study as they relate to data gathering and analysis.
Because researchers are not value-free, it is important to acknowledge subjectivity
openly as part of the research process (Hoshmand, 1989). Subjectivity implies that
interpretation is “constantly in flux and constructed through a continuous process of
interactions,” (Bloom & Munro, 1995, p. 110).

The researcher in the narrative tradition is necessarily subjective as well.
Therefore, in this section I situate myself with regard to the perspectives I hold and
how they might be expected to potentially interact with the research. Because of the personal nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participant and the investment of the researcher, in this study I will use the first-person "I" when speaking about my role in this study.

My educational background is in psychology and creative writing. I earned bachelor's degrees in English and psychology, followed by a master's degree in creative writing and a master's degree in clinical psychology. I am currently in a doctoral program in counseling psychology.

During doctoral training, I had the opportunity to teach CECP 612, a beginning-level master’s practicum, for one semester. I provided didactic training, observed individual counseling sessions, and conducted individual and group supervision. This experience offered me a great deal of insight into the ways in which the first counseling practicum functions, and demonstrated to me that the counseling trainees in the master’s program have a wide range of backgrounds, skills, and expectations. In individual supervision, it became clear to me that they had diverse training needs. For example, some students required a great deal of structure, while others felt more comfortable with the ambiguity of the counseling situation. Some were informed by related experiences doing social service work or teaching, while others were inexperienced and most informed by their didactic training. Thus, I expected to see similar differences as a researcher, and prepared to customize journal writing guidelines and feedback to accommodate various developmental levels.

As a doctoral student, I am not so far removed from recollections of my own
early experiences in counseling practicum with clients, supervisors, and peers. I can recollect aspects of my own struggle to make sense of client narratives, and to co-create a narrative in which both of us were influenced by our interactions. I can also recall trying to relay my clients' narratives and my own narrative of being a beginning counselor in individual and group supervision.

Prior to my experiences as a counselor and researcher, I was already passionate about the stories that people construct about their lives. This interest had shown itself in my experience of reading and writing fiction, memoir, and journals. This interest has also been clearly evident in my current work as a therapist as I seek to understand the meaning-making processes in which clients are engaged as they construct and reconstruct their personal narratives. My interest in narrative research is a natural outgrowth of my own work as a writer and as a therapist.

I have experience with the reading and writing of personal diaries and journals over a period of time. I have read the diaries of Anne Frank, Virginia Woolf, and Anais Nin, and given much consideration to the issue of audience in their works. Were they just writing for themselves, and if so, does that make their work a more accurate construction of their lives? There are suggestions, for example, in literary discussions of Anne Frank’s diary, that she believed her diary would be published (Muller, 1999) and that vision of an audience likely affected her writing process and outcome. In this study, the issue of audience was important due to my role as an audience for the participants’ journals. Participants’ experiences of the researcher as audience are discussed further in Chapter IV.
My own experiences in keeping a journal are also important to note here. During the pre-practicum course in my master's program, my classmates and I were instructed to write about our professional development in a journal that was to be evaluated, but not until the end of the course. There was a weekly page requirement, but there were no other guidelines. The class turned the completed journals in during the second to last class period, and the teacher gave the journals back the last week. The journals didn't have any comments or indications that the journal had been read by the professor. I felt ambivalent about this project because I already maintained a journal and was unsure of what was or was not appropriate to show to a professor who had made the evaluation methods unclear. For me, ambivalence interfered in the process of journal writing. I often missed entries, catching up on several at once based on my recollection of experience, not on the process. I think my own frustration and ambivalence with this assignment helped me be aware of the importance of providing clarity for the participants in this study, as well as providing feedback that they would find useful.

Aside from that course, my experiences with journal writing have been very positive. In the past, I used it as a place to develop fiction or poetry, and sporadically used it to keep a record of my life. I have used both structured and unstructured methods of journal writing recommended by various authors. I have learned and used many techniques for journaling effectively. These include exercises designed to evoke memories (e.g., Rico, 1983, 1991), and exercises designed to keep the writer in the here and now of the moment (e.g., Cameron, 1992; Rainer, 1979). For the past
five years, I have kept a focused and serious journal about my perspectives of internal and external life experiences. Though the journal writing process has felt random or unclear at certain points, over time I have found it invaluable for tracking patterns in events, emotions, and thoughts. In my own experience of reflecting upon certain entries later, sometimes the writing has had a different significance or meaning than it did while I was experiencing the event in the moment. That is, the process of reflecting and interacting with the text has given me opportunities to construct and reconstruct meanings.

Riessman (1993) emphasizes that the researcher’s personal narrative and point of view is implicit throughout narrative research. My narrative is evident in this work. My experience of reflection and interaction through journal writing has influenced my thinking with regard to the use of journal writing and interviews as modes of interaction and as ways to construct and reconstruct meanings.

**Definition of Research Roles**

The researcher and participant are engaged in a powerful collaborative process. We make sense of our lives in narrative. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to consider the role that she plays in the life of the participant because the researcher not only co-constructs the participant’s narrative, but the researcher also becomes a part of the narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

In the process of doing qualitative research, the issue of the relationship between the researcher and the participant is fundamental. Polkinghorne (1989)
observed that some researchers have begun to use terms such as co-researcher, co-author, or research partner instead of the term subject. This terminology reflects the collaborative nature of qualitative research. Polkinghorne goes on to say, “Participants open their subjective experience to the researcher, but they are not ‘subjects’ of the researcher” (p. 47). With respect to narrative methods of qualitative research, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is crucial because “when we become characters in their stories, we change their stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 422). Subjective experiences of the participants are revealed in the narrative. An issue for researchers, according to Hatch and Wisniewski (1995), concerns the ownership of the narrative. To whom does the story belong? Because narratives are actually co-constructed by the researcher and the participant, the participant may truly be viewed as a co-author (Bruner, 1990). Therefore, throughout the remainder of this writing, the participants will be referred to as co-authors. In this study, the co-authors shared their stories in interviews and in journals. My role was to give them feedback, to invite them to reflect and develop, and to be a collaborator with them in making sense of their experiences, while also occupying the power position of one who analyzed the data throughout the study.

Selection of Participants (Co-authors)

Stake (1995) outlines a practical perspective for the selection of cases in case study research. In his view, the most important aspect of selection is the choice of a case that can maximize our learning about a given context or process. He emphasizes
that sometimes a typical case can do this best. However, “often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases” (p. 4). In applying Stake’s ideas about selection of cases, I sought cases that would maximize our learning about reflective practice in beginning counselors. I wanted these cases to be prototypical of counseling students in the sense that we could learn more about some experiences of reflective practice that are likely to be common across beginning counselors. I also wanted these beginning counselors to have an interest in self-reflection, be willing to commit to the process of the study, and able to talk about their past development. However, as mentioned in the literature review, the degree to which beginning counselors engage or are even capable of engaging in reflective practice is unknown. To sum up, I aimed to select information-rich cases: beginning counselors who were typical counseling students in the global sense, but also possessing a special interest in exploring their own development. This was accomplished.

Patton (1990) outlined a variety of different sampling strategies for qualitative researchers. The method of sampling for this study was intensity sampling, which aims for cases that are information-rich, but are not extreme or deviant. Patton defines information-rich cases as those allowing the researcher to learn a great deal in depth about the central issues of the study. Patton also emphasized that the richness of a case has priority over the size of the sample used.

Yet, the issue of the number of cases to be used is an important concern in qualitative research. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the number of cases studied is less important than the “potential of each ‘case’ to aid the researcher in...
developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied” (p. 83).

Although the use of more than one case may dilute the analysis (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), different cases may also provide different perspectives on the experience (Creswell, 1998).

The design of this study calls for multiple data collection methods, including several hours of interviews and several weeks of written journals. Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) reported that for every five to ten pages of written personal documents, in their experience, one hundred questions involving five hours of interviewing could be generated. It was anticipated that this study would generate sufficient data of a depth and richness to gain an understanding of the area of study to justify using a very small sample size, three to six co-authors. This is in accordance with Glesne and Peshkin (1992), who recommend using no more than four cases.

Co-authors in this research were purposefully chosen from the Western Michigan University Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology (CECP) Master’s practicum course, CECP 612, and from the field practicum, CECP 613. These co-authors were information-rich because I evaluated them as being capable and interested in engaging deeply in this study and in reflecting on their experiences. Prior to taking CECP 612, all students must successfully complete a pre-practicum course: CECP 604, Counseling Techniques. As the numbering suggests, CECP 612 is the first practicum. This practicum takes place in the department’s training clinic and provides a closely supervised and observed experience. Students enroll in CECP 613, a 600-hour field experience, after successful completion of CECP 612.
Criteria for co-author selection were that the potential co-authors express interest in being in this study, participate in an entrance interview, and be judged as both having the interest and the ability to consider their narratives of development as counselors. In this respect, the purposeful aspect is apparent: an accumulation of information-rich narrative data might be anticipated from such co-authors who volunteer to co-construct a reflective, interactive narrative with a researcher.

Following doctoral committee and Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approvals, the selection of co-authors proceeded as follows. My advisor, the HSIRB-identified Principal Researcher, obtained a list of all students who registered for CECP 612 in the fall semester of 2001, and mailed letters of invitation for them to participate (see Appendix A). In the fall semester, 10 sections of CECP 612 were offered, with each section enrolling five students. Therefore, 50 CECP 612 students were invited to participate. Two weeks later, only four potential co-authors from CECP 612 had expressed interest in this study. Therefore, all the students enrolled in CECP 613 in Fall 2001 (seventy students) were also invited to participate in this study. This invitation yielded one additional participant.

The invitation to participate provided a general description of the research, a brief reference to its potential benefits, and an invitation to contact me by phone or email. The invitation also indicated that co-authors would be paid $10 for the entrance interview. (The rationale for reimbursement is discussed in the next section). I replied to the potential co-authors by phone in order to schedule a time during which I could call the co-authors to discuss the research. During the scheduled phone
appointment, I explained the research in greater detail, as well as the details of the potential co-authors’ involvement with the research, specifically the process of the entrance interview (for the phone script, see Appendix B). Because of the importance of protecting privacy and promoting fuller disclosure of narratives, I placed a particular emphasis on the assurance of the co-authors’ confidentiality. Furthermore, potential co-authors were informed that they would be identified both on their journals and on the interview tapes by a pseudonym. The initial phone contact also served to provide me with a preliminary impression of the potential co-author’s availability and level of interest in writing and telling their narrative through the process of interviewing and journal writing.

During the initial telephone contact, I discussed the issue of reimbursement of the entrance interview with the co-authors. Potential co-authors were reimbursed $10.00 in cash for the entrance interview. The rationale for this payment was that it might not have been possible for each co-author who was potentially interested to continue in the research after the entrance interview. Therefore, if there had been some individuals who could not take part in the next phase of the research, they would have been compensated in a small way for their inconvenience. Continued participation was collaboratively decided by the potential co-author and me at the end of the entrance interview based on the co-author’s expressed interest in sharing the narrative with me, as well as the co-author’s self-appraisal of whether the time commitment of the study would be manageable.

Decisions about continued participation were also based on the sampling and
relational requirements of this study. In keeping with the tradition of intensity sam-
pling (Patton, 1990), I sought information-rich cases. My belief was that co-authors
who were interested in sharing their narratives and who volunteered to be in this study
would ultimately be co-authors of information-rich stories. I also knew that my
experience as a supervisor and practicum instructor qualified me to identify indi-
viduals who would author information-rich stories. The remaining question, then,
was whether I would be able to establish a collaborative relationship and to build a
rapport with the potential co-authors that would create an environment in which they
would be willing to share their stories. In keeping with the narrative tradition, this
rapport was very important because throughout the course of a narrative study, the
researcher and the co-author continually negotiate their relationship (Clandinin &
Connelly, 2000). In the entrance interview, I discussed this collaboration and com-
municated to the co-authors that they were experts with regard to their own experi-
ences and that I would be learning from them. This facilitated the building of rapport
and set the stage for our negotiation of the relationship. Ways in which each co-
author in this study negotiated her relationship with me are elaborated in Chapter IV,
Discussion.

Five women took part in the entrance interview and all decided to continue
with the study and signed a consent document (see Appendix C). Four were enrolled
in CECP 612, Master’s Practicum, and one was enrolled in CECP 613, Field Practi-
cum. One co-author dropped the CECP 612 course for medical reasons and conse-
quently did not complete this study. Thus, the final sample was made up of four
women, three of whom were in CECP 612 and one of whom was in CECP 613.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for this study consisted of three phases. Phase 1, an entrance interview, was a semi-structured interview that took place in September, shortly after the semester and the practicum experiences had begun. Phase 2 was a 10-12 week journal writing activity that took place after the entrance interview and ended at the end of the semester. Phase 3 was an exit interview that took place in early January, after the fall semester was completed. Before the study progressed, a pilot study was conducted. The remainder of this section is organized in this way: (a) Phase 1: Entrance Interview; (b) Phase 2: Journal Writing; (c) Phase 3: Exit Interview; and (d) Pilot Study.

Both the entrance and exit interviews followed a semi-structured format as recommended by Patton (1990). This format was chosen due to the flexibility and focus it offers the interviewer. The journals followed a format which was designed to afford the co-authors some structure and some flexibility. The guidelines suggested that they write at least two times per week, at least two pages per entry, and that the entries be dated. Some suggestions for content were provided, which the co-authors could use if they wished, but they could choose their own content if they wished to. Interview guides are provided in Appendix D (entrance interview) and Appendix E (exit interview). Journal guidelines are provided in Appendix F.
Phase 1: Entrance Interview

At the beginning of each of the entrance interviews, I obtained informed consent of each co-author. At this time, the co-authors selected a pseudonym, by which they were identified during the interviews and in their journals.

The entrance interviews took place in September of 2001, toward the beginning of the fall semester. (Three interviews took place during the second week of practicum and two took place during the fourth week of practicum.) Entrance interviews lasted one and a half to two hours and covered issues related to the co-author's decision to be a counselor and reflections on her development. All co-authors were asked all of the questions in the interview guide during the entrance interview. These questions included demographic information, experiences prior to practicum, and professional goals. These questions were developed by attending to issues of professional development that are theorized to be salient concerns for counselors in the first practicum (e.g., Skovholt, 2001).

In accordance with the planned process of this study, I assessed whether each co-author was invested in the study and whether each could produce an information-rich narrative. I also spoke with all potential co-authors at the end of the entrance interviews to ask if they planned to continue with this study. At the conclusion of the entrance interviews, the co-authors decided to continue with this study. At this time, in the spirit of narrative inquiry, I encouraged our collaboration in this project by requesting permission to call or email in the event I wanted to ask a question or to provide information or assistance. I also encouraged the co-authors to contact me.
with their questions and comments during the course of the research. This proved beneficial because one co-author, Deb, contacted me by email to request encouragement for her difficult semester. I contacted another co-author, Connie, by phone when she did not mail the second set of journals. I called to check in and to try to be helpful in her process. The three co-authors who interviewed prior to September 11 were all emailed on September 11 and were provided with guiding questions for reflecting on the tragedy if they wished to do so. The other two co-authors were provided with guiding questions regarding September 11 after their entrance interview the following week.

The interviews of all co-authors who were interviewed during Phase 1 were audio taped on standard audiocassettes, and I transcribed them. Copies of the transcriptions were sent to the co-authors to confirm accuracy or make corrections. Each of the co-authors confirmed the accuracy of the entrance interviews.

Phase 2: Journal Writing

The journal writing activity took place over a period of ten to twelve weeks. During the entrance interview, I provided the co-authors with journals. The journals were standard 8 ½ x 11” binders with lined paper inside of them. Binders were used so that the co-authors could remove the entries to give to the researcher for feedback. The co-authors could then put the entries back in their journals when I returned the entries to them with feedback so that they would have a full record of their journal. However, the co-authors were free not to use the provided journal if they wished to
type or to use a different written notebook. Only two of the co-authors actually used
the notebook I provided; the other three turned in typewritten copies.

Each co-author was provided with guiding questions for each set of entries.
The first set of guiding questions was based on the content of the entrance interview;
the remaining guiding questions were based on the content of the journal entries. The
co-authors could choose to explore the topics that I asked them about in the guiding
questions if they wished, or to pick new topics of their own choosing that were at least
loosely related to their development as counselors. Full details of the journals (e.g.,
format, pseudonym, instructions for discussing clients to protect client identity, etc.)
are provided in the informed consent (Appendix C) and journal writing guideline
documents (Appendix F).

During each of the entrance interviews, I discussed with the co-authors a
schedule for them to mail the journals to me so that I could provide them with written
feedback on their entries. The schedule involved their mailing entries to me at three
points during the semester, or roughly every four weeks. I read these entries, pro-
vided written feedback and guiding questions, and returned the entries to them via
overnight mail. Feedback was provided 1-3 times per co-author. The variation in the
amount of feedback provided was due to variation in the number of sets of journal
entries received. Two co-authors turned in one set of journals, one co-author turned
in two sets, and the remaining two co-authors turned in all three sets of journals.
Written feedback was provided to each co-author for each set of journals turned in.

Both co-authors who turned in only the first set of journals were contacted
informally when I had not received the second set of journals within the expected time frame. One co-author informed me that she dropped practicum for medical reasons; therefore, she was unable to complete the study. To the other co-author, I offered my assistance with the process, and encouraged her to turn in the final set of journals if she wished to. This co-author’s experience in this study was still deemed useful in terms of seeing how a journal might not work. This co-author opted not to continue with the journals, but still participated in the exit interview. The content and themes in the first set of journals and the process of being in the study were discussed in the exit interview.

The co-author who turned in only two sets of journals informed me that she had completed the third set; however, I did not receive it in the mail, and the co-author had not retained a copy for herself. This co-author remembered what she had written, and brought it up for discussion during the exit interview, along with the content of the other journals and the process of the study.

For each of the co-authors, my written feedback took the form of providing support, asking questions about the content of the journals, requesting clarification, providing guiding questions for them to consider, encouraging them to write in greater detail, challenging them gently on inconsistencies or issues that recurred during the journal, and commenting on recurrences of themes or concerns in the journals. Other researchers providing student participants with written feedback on journal entries have found that the feedback assisted participants in reflecting upon their experiences (e.g., Johnstone, Johnstone, & Balester, 1994). For a summary of each
co-author's journal output in this study, see Appendix G.

**Phase 3: Exit Interview**

The exit interviews occurred in early January, roughly three weeks after the semester had ended. The duration of the exit interview in this study was partly dependent on how many questions were generated from the journal entries. The exit interview lasted between one and a half to two and a half hours. The length of the exit interview did coincide with the length of the journal to some extent; the co-author with the most comprehensive journal did have the longest interview.

The exit interview followed a semi-structured format with a brief interview guide (see Appendix E). Some of these questions pertained to the process of being in this research project and the writing process engaged in by the co-authors. Other questions focused on themes from the journals and from the entrance interview in order to glean further information about the process of the development of reflective practice over the course of the semester. These questions were individualized for each co-author. The exit interview also included discussion of the writing process, for example, whether the co-author tended to write freely, or felt inhibited by the writing. More general process issues were also discussed, such as how the co-authors experienced this research.

During the exit interview, I offered the co-authors my initial interpretations of their narratives, and asked for their impressions and ideas, whether similar or dissimilar to mine. The co-authors all expressed agreement with the construction that I
provided to them and commented that my discussion felt true to their experiences.

As in the entrance interview, the interviews were audio taped on standard audiocassettes, and I later transcribed them word for word. After transcription, the data was returned to the co-authors for their verification or corrections; all co-authors verified the accuracy of the content of the exit interview.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted before the proposed research began. The purpose of the pilot study, according to Glesne and Peshkin (1992) is “not to get data per se, but to learn about your research process, techniques, and yourself” (p. 30). Through the pilot study, I aimed to gain a sense of the “practical aspects” of the research project (Seidman, 1998, p. 32). This aim was accomplished.

One individual, who was enrolled in the 613 Field Practicum, participated in the pilot study for this research. This participant was involved in an abbreviated process of the study. (The consent document for the pilot study is found in Appendix H). She was asked the questions in the interview guide for the entrance interview. She spent approximately an hour on two occasions completing a few pages of a journal, which was read and reviewed by the researcher. The process of journaling and the content of the journal entries was then discussed in the exit interview with the participant.

The pilot study served as an opportunity for me to gain experience and comfort with the study, to gain feedback from the participant about the experience, to
ensure that the guidelines for the journal writing process and the questions asked of the participant in the interviews were clear and made sense, and to examine the process of the exit interview, which was dependent upon the content of the journals. From the pilot study, I learned that the questions asked in the interviews were experienced by the participant as clear and appropriate. The guidelines for the journal writing process were also experienced as clear and appropriate. However, the week-long experience of journal writing could not provide insight into the semester-long journal writing experience. In the pilot study, therefore, the exit interview was quite brief because the journal writing experience was brief and the exit interview was primarily based on the content of the journal entries. As a result of the pilot study, I determined that it was appropriate to proceed with the study.

Data Processing and Analysis

As discussed previously, the data for this study includes two interviews and ten to twelve weeks of journal entries. In this section, the following areas of data processing and analysis are discussed as they pertain to this study: (a) transcription, (b) feedback from co-authors, (c) researcher journal, (d) combining coding techniques and narrative techniques in analysis, (e) trustworthiness, and (f) limitations.

Transcription

I transcribed the audiotapes. Afterward, I played the tapes several times in order to verify or correct errors in the transcription. Playing the tapes several times
has been recommended in order for the researcher to become immersed in the data (Stevens, 1999). Following tape review, I also noted pertinent information that was not written in the transcript, such as pauses or fragments in conversation, voice quality, nervous laughter, or other noteworthy information.

Feedback From Co-authors

In this study, I obtained feedback from the co-authors regarding their interview transcripts and regarding the construction of their final narrative. This decision to do so was based on the value of having a more equal and collaborative research process. Feminist qualitative researchers have written and reflected about their concerns regarding the power relations between a researcher and the participants in a study, and the value of equalizing the power. Of particular concern to Mauthner and Ducet (1998) is the data analysis stage:

Far removed from our respondents, we make choices and decisions about their lives: which particular issues to focus on in the analysis; how to interpret their words; and which extracts to select for quotation... We are in the privileged position of naming and representing our people’s realities... we have to ask ourselves whether we are in fact appropriating their voices and experiences, and further disempowering them by taking away their agency, voice and ownership. (pp. 138-139)

Mauthner and Ducet (1998) go on to acknowledge that it is actually impossible to have an equal research process: the researcher designs and carries out the research, and invariably has more knowledge than the person who is being researched. However, feminist researchers (e.g., Reinharz, 1992) have made recommendations for equalizing some of the power imbalance. One way to do this is to involve participants...
in the data analysis in order to keep their voices alive. This way, the analysis is more collaborative in nature; the participants can then be involved in extracting meaning from the data.

The co-authors were provided with an opportunity to read and check their individual transcripts for both the entrance and exit interview. According to Phillips (1994), this is an important validating step in narrative research. In this study, all of the co-authors verified the accuracy of the entrance and exit interview transcripts. Some of the co-authors corrected typographical errors, some of them commented on the length of the interview and the transcript, and one of the co-authors commented on her perception of her own tendency to ramble in the interview.

After the data were analyzed and the results chapter (Chapter III) was drafted, the co-authors were invited to read my construction of their narrative. I obtained HSIRB permission to contact the co-authors by telephone to invite them to read my construction of their narratives. (See Appendix I for phone script. See also Appendix J for HSIRB letter of approval to conduct this study.) All of the co-authors accepted my invitation and the portions of Chapter III that pertained to their experience were mailed to them for their feedback so that in the spirit of narrative research they could be a part of the construction of their own narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). This allowed them the opportunity to confirm whether the way in which they were represented felt accurate to them, and also afforded them the opportunity to request that the information be disguised or omitted if they wished to in order that their privacy be protected. I talked with each co-author on the phone after she had reviewed
her story. Each co-author confirmed the accuracy of the final narrative without changes.

Researcher Journal

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) recommended the use of a detailed journal kept by the researcher throughout the data collection process. They stated that a researcher's journal can serve multiple purposes: to track what has been covered during interviews, to note ideas, hunches, and gestures, and to search for emerging themes. They also noted the value of recording all interactions with co-authors; informal contacts with co-authors are meaningful and therefore important to analyze along with the rest of the data. Finally, they noted the value of the researcher reading through her own journal so that she may better consolidate what has been learned throughout the process of the research. Consistent with these recommendations, I maintained a journal throughout this research project.

My reasons for keeping a journal closely paralleled the reasons cited by Taylor and Bogdan (1984). In the researcher journal, I tracked contacts with co-authors, recorded impressions after interviews and while reading journals and interview transcriptions. The process of journal writing also helped me to construct my experience of the research in narrative form, which informed my process of narrative construction of the co-authors' narratives. My process of journal writing also stimulated my immersion in the data, which is an important role of the researcher in the qualitative research process.
Combining Coding Techniques and Narrative Techniques in Analysis

In qualitative research, various techniques can be utilized in the analysis and interpretation of data. In this study, narrative inquiry of the case studies was the guiding perspective. However, coding procedures from grounded theory analysis were also used. The combination of procedures was crafted with the intention of constructing a story (narrative) while also breaking down the story to investigate it more closely (coding). This section presents my understanding of the analysis of text, analysis of narrative, and analysis through coding procedures.

Barone (1995) stressed that textual analysis is necessary in narrative research. In this research, the texts to be analyzed are the written journal documents and the interview transcriptions. The analysis of text operates under a framework of narrative analysis. Narrative inquiry approaches analyze text in an effort to find the story embedded in the text.

Barone (1995) discussed a critical issue with analysis in narrative inquiry. The issue he speaks of addresses a difficulty in balancing content and narrative analyses. He spoke of a need to synthesize data, not just separate data into parts. Narrative researchers (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) discuss this issue in the literature because they do not want the story to be lost in the interpretation of elements. However, the story as a whole may have flaws if it is just taken as a whole and left in raw form rather than interpreted.

Zeller (1995) also addressed this issue, in terms of whether to use raw or interpretive data in narrative analysis. Most forms of qualitative research utilize
interpretive data, but some narrative researchers fear that is too reductionistic, and will result in the story line getting lost (e.g., Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Narrative researchers caution that balancing raw and interpretive data is critical in order for the meaning of the narrative to emerge. They value a balance between interpreting data and using the co-authors' voices to let the stories speak for themselves. In fact, the emergence of the subjective voice of the co-author is considered to be a strength in narrative research (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

As mentioned earlier, there are concerns in narrative that relate to the issues of part to whole or whole to part in narrative analysis. The risk of coding a narrative is that the story will be lost, or that the story will be artificially created. However, coding is recommended by some narrative researchers (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a way of finding the larger story if it is done with a narrative analytic perspective. Therefore, it was important for me to develop an analysis plan that would be responsive to the need to both break the data down and to construct a story.

Although Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have made recommendations for coding for narrative research, they have not outlined a coding system for narrative researchers to use. Therefore, the coding procedures used in this study were those of Strauss and Corbin (1990), who view coding as a process of data analysis that involves analyzing data by breaking it down, conceptualizing it, and then putting it together in new ways. Their coding procedures were designed for qualitative researchers who use grounded theory, so it was important for me to also develop a narrative analytic perspective for the coding of the interviews and journal entries.
the present analysis, the data were broken down and conceptualized through labeling ideas and discovering and naming categories. As the process went on, I utilized my own journal to reflect upon how I might organize the information to construct a narrative understanding of the data.

After these steps occurred, I developed rich, dense categories from which possible relationships could be noted. The constant comparison coding process of the journals and the interview transcripts revealed that participants' comments could be classified into eight fairly broad categories. After identifying these categories, I discovered that there was still some overlap of ideas and that the categories could in fact be placed into fewer, broader categories. The process of constant comparison continued and final, more clearly defined categories emerged. These categories embodied three central themes that pertain to the development of reflective practice in the first counseling practicum as demonstrated through interviews and ongoing journals. Collective and individual themes are discussed and presented in the Results chapter, Chapter III.

**Trustworthiness**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) several categories exist which determine the trustworthiness of a research study. Trustworthiness is defined by the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These concepts will be explained in this section.

One definition of credibility is the “degree of confidence in the ‘truth’ that the
findings of a particular inquiry have for the subject with which—and the context within which—the inquiry is carried out” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 29). In order for a study to be credible, the researcher needs to be involved in “activities increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). Within the present research, credibility was ensured by “lengthy and intensive contact” with the co-authors (p. 301). More specifically, credibility was accomplished through the extensive involvement with the co-authors and by returning the data to the co-authors. The entrance and exit interview transcripts were returned to the co-authors for their confirmation, and the written journal installments were returned to them as well. The portions of Chapter III, Results, pertaining to their experiences and their narratives also were returned to them for their confirmation. Each co-author confirmed that the data was an accurate depiction of her experience. Crabtree and Miller (1992) also discussed the method of triangulation, which recommends the use of multiple data sources and is another way to gain credibility.

This study utilized journals written by the co-authors over a period of several months and two interviews with the co-authors so as to provide multiple means of data collection. This study also utilized the researcher journal. The dissertation chair also enhanced credibility through a selective audit of data and themes.

Transferability has been defined as the “extent to which its findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29). In this study, transferability was achieved through thick description of reflective practice. Transferability is also provided through careful sampling. The present co-
authors were purposefully selected for their potential to self-reflect and to provide material that could be translated into thick description. More specifically, the data were extensively analyzed in order to present an integrative and in-depth description of co-authors’ perspectives. Results incorporate extensive quotes. My expertise as a clinical supervisor and my insights about counselor development afforded me the authority to select an effective sample.

Dependability and confirmability are important in the trustworthiness of a study as well. Dependability is achieved by maintaining a running account of the process of inquiry. In this study, this was accomplished through the researcher journal. Confirmability in a study is “the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34). In this study, confirmability was achieved through an ongoing examination of the journals and interviews and the tracking of the narrative construction with the assertions made by the researcher to ensure logic and coherency. Again, the dissertation chair also enhanced credibility through a selective audit of data and themes.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This chapter contains the results of the semester-long journal and interviews with each of the four co-authors who completed this research project: Connie, Deb, Marta, and Linda Chelsea. Selected quotes have been used in order to illustrate the co-authors’ viewpoints in their own words. These quotes also serve to support my analysis of the content of the interviews and of the journals.

The constant comparison coding process of the journals and the interview transcripts revealed that co-authors’ use of journals could be classified into eight fairly broad categories. Each category reflected the role of a certain domain to the co-authors: (1) personal anecdotes about their individual experiences; (2) co-authors’ reflections of their own personal growth; (3) the impact of the training environment, including classmates, supervisors, and the structure of the practicum experience; (4) their reflections and beliefs about their theoretical orientation and the ways in which people whom they counsel might experience growth or change; (5) personality variables, including personal style, introversion/extroversion, and perfectionism; (6) how each co-author approached the journal, including frequency of entries, content of journals, and the usefulness of the journal for each of them; (7) ways in which the researcher was viewed, such as mentor, supervisor, reference point; and (8) narrative elements in the journals and interviews, such as writing style and metaphor.

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After identifying these categories, I discovered that there was still some overlap of ideas and that they could in fact be placed into fewer, broader categories. The process of constant comparison continued and final, more clearly defined, categories emerged. These central, collective themes that pertain to the development of reflective practice in the first counseling practicum as demonstrated through interviews and ongoing journals were: (Theme 1) the integration of personal and professional aspects of identity; (Theme 2) emotional management; (Theme 3) genuineness.

For each co-author, an additional, individualized theme also emerged. For Connie, it was assertiveness; for Deb, it was letting go; for Marta, it was spirituality, and for Linda Chelsea, it was confrontation. Although these themes could be conceptualized as belonging under the other, broader themes (e.g., the development of assertiveness or confrontation as part of Theme 1, spirituality as part of Theme 3), these themes are provided their own category because they emerged repeatedly as being of such individual significance to the co-authors in this study.

Examination of the journal writing experience for each co-author further yielded eight categories related to the process of the journals, including (1) the purpose that keeping a journal served for each co-author; (2) perspectives and topics that the co-authors selected for inclusion in the journals; (3) the experience of receiving feedback from the researcher on the journal; (4) co-authors’ experiences of barriers to the journal writing process; (5) shifts in the co-authors’ journaling topics and process over time; (6) similarities and differences to journals the co-authors had kept in the past; (7) concrete elements of the journal (e.g., adherence to the journal writing...
guidelines); and (8) the impact of the research project, (e.g., how being in this study affected the journal content and process).

Upon closer examination, I discovered that these ideas could also be placed into fewer categories and final, more clearly defined categories emerged. These central themes that pertain to the journal writing process were (Theme 1) Impact of the researcher on this study, including researcher as audience; (Theme 2) Feedback on the journals as an impetus for many reactions, including continued reflection; and (Theme 3) Journals as a record of professional development and a source of continued reflection beyond the study.

The remainder of this chapter presents these results in depth and is structured in this way: (a) situating the co-authors through an introduction of each of the four co-authors, including a brief description of their journal writing process; (b) discussion of collective themes of development; (c) discussion of individual themes of development; and (d) discussion of the journal writing process. Section a will lead us to a better understanding of who these co-authors are as people. Additionally, Sections b-d will provide insights into the research questions that govern this study, which address the development and significance of reflective practice to the co-authors, the process of maintaining a written journal as part of a research project; and the way the co-authors constructed and reconstructed their stories over time.

Situating Co-authors

In this section, I will introduce the co-authors and describe their family and
academic backgrounds, career aspirations, personal challenges, and history of journaling. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) holds that we can examine our actions as an object separate from ourselves through a self-reflective process. These self-reflections shape interactions with others, which in turn shape further self-reflections. Therefore, situating each co-author in her interpersonal context will provide a sense of each co-author’s personal meanings as the developmental journey unfolded for each of them. Each co-author will be discussed separately and in this order: Connie, Deb, Marta, and Linda Chelsea.

Connie

Connie is a twenty-nine year old Caucasian woman. She grew up in Michigan, the middle of three children. She reported that her family values personal growth (including counseling and journal writing) and higher education. At the time of the entrance interview, Connie was in a long-term committed relationship which ended shortly thereafter. She holds an undergraduate sociology degree from a large state university. She worked for several years after college before returning to graduate school. At Western, she was in the counseling and higher education master’s program with the possible career goal of working as a career counselor at a community college. She commented, “I just love college, I love the college atmosphere...it’s such an interesting time of life, whenever you go back to school.” While this research was in place, Connie was a student in CECP 612, and held a part-time position in which she provided guidance for students. She sought this guidance position because:
I, I like feeling very prepared for things and not walking into something feeling, I don’t know how to do this yet. It’s very hard for me, I feel like I need to be trained if I’m going to do something.

She commented in the entrance interview that she often reflected on the difficulty of the relationship with her then-boyfriend, asking herself,

Can you have a good relationship with someone and not have to work that hard? I understand that it takes a lot of work and I’m okay with that, but can it be easier? Can you start with something easier?

I wondered aloud whether this would be a question that Connie would also ask in her professional life as well. To this Connie replied,

Yeah, I guess, like I dealt with some of that in my last class, just, do I have to be working this hard to still succeed? Do I have to be working this hard to feel that I’m doing a good job? Although I never really put all that together, comparing it to the relationship.

Connie’s description of what she had learned about herself as a graduate student in counseling proved to be a crucial aspect of understanding who she is:

One of the more important things I’ve learned... I have really outrageously high expectations for myself and, um, I’m just always very worried that I’m not going to live up to those expectations... is it even unfair to have such high expectations for myself... it needs to be perfect, whatever I’m doing... So I think that’s one of the biggest things I’ve encountered about myself.

Connie expressed an awareness of how she works very hard both personally and professionally, sometimes asking herself whether it is necessary to work as hard as she does. She also realized that her high expectations could affect a counseling situation. She commented,

I’m always very anxious about not doing well and not doing well in a counseling session and so then I feel there’s so much anxiety that I’m not going to be able to focus as much on the client because I’m so worried about my own crap, you know?
Connie shared that this anxiety affected her experience in pre-practicum; she commented that she was afraid that she was not doing well, that she feared she would get worse rather than improve. In pre-practicum, she commented that what helped the most was realizing, “Whew! I finally messed up. Now I can—now I can go somewhere.” In describing that experience, she commented, “I was so frustrated at the time, but it ended up being really good.”

In describing her thoughts thus far about the 612 department practicum, Connie remarked that she experienced a sense of preliminary anxiety that was similar to the anxiety she felt in pre-practicum. “I was just like, oh my God, this is going to be so over my head, I need to start with, like, what to do in the first session.” She shared that she was comforted when her instructor shared that counselors are not responsible for the outcome, but only the process. She commented, “I find that interesting and it in some ways helps me relax because I didn’t have the pressure that I need to have some results at the end of this session.”

Connie reported positive experiences with keeping a journal for personal reasons and for academic reasons. She had kept diaries as a teenager and in college, off and on, and reported that she had benefited from the journal she kept in pre-practicum. She valued the process of journaling, but felt that she would not take the time to do it on her own unless it was required. “I found that to be a good experience [in pre-practicum] which was part of why I said, maybe being part of this study would be good because I’d be forced to have to continue to do it.” She commented, “I just don’t love writing…but at the same time when I sit down and do journaling, once I
get into it, I really enjoy it and don’t have a hard time putting things on paper.”

Ultimately, Connie found that journal writing was not something that she was able to get into, enjoy, or need during the course of this research. Connie turned in the first of the three sets of journals and then discontinued the journal writing process. Her entries were typewritten, double-spaced, and read as though careful attention had been paid to issues of grammar and writing style. Particular attention was paid to her thoughts about being passive and her worries about not being good enough.

Deb

Deb is a forty-six year old Caucasian woman. At the time of this research, she was in the counseling psychology master’s program and enrolled in the 612 department practicum. Deb described herself as a Christian, and spirituality holds an important place in her life. She is divorced and has three children, and is the only co-author not from Michigan, having grown up in the South. Being from the South is a key aspect of Deb’s identity; she spoke poignantly about it and about what she had learned about herself as a graduate student:

One thing I really like that’s changed about me is my self-esteem has improved some, significantly. First of all when you come from the south to the north, you get, you get treated like a dumb hillbilly ... so I think part of me went back to school to prove that I was not dumb. And plus I grew up being told I was stupid ... I went back to school [in part] to prove I wasn’t dumb, not only to others, but to myself... And I, I really haven’t felt ignorant for a long time... but you know, I really can prove it now.

Deb holds an undergraduate social work degree from a large state university. She described a chaotic upbringing, remarking that, “part of my incentive in being a
social worker is growing up the way I did.” Deb had many professional experiences which were relevant to her practicum. She had worked for social services in many roles, including children’s protective services and adoptions. In fact, “many roles” is a descriptor that fits across Deb’s life. She occupied many roles and had a high need for achievement and a need to feel effective in all areas of her life. The many roles she occupied had an impact on her views about practicum, her stresses, and on her future goals.

Deb’s future goals involved staying with her current social services position for practical reasons (“have to keep that job, keep those benefits, as long as my kids are kids... there’s no way I can give up this paycheck”). However, she planned to work part-time as a therapist and to do diversity trainings in addition to her full-time job. She planned to begin this with her 613 field practicum, for which she hoped to obtain a placement with a psychologist in her community who works with adoptive families. She commented that this psychologist would like to work with interracial and adoptive families. This is an area of expertise for Deb in her current job, and an area in which she has personal experience, due to having an interracial family of her own and having adopted one of her children.

Deb expressed concerns about a sense of a lack of preparation from her pre-practicum experience. She reported,

It’s like reading a book about how to swim and getting thrown in the water, I mean, that’s too abrupt. There needs to be some kind of bridge there, I don’t know what would help that, but it seems there needs to be a bridge there.

She went on to say, “I felt like I was doing, but not learning, so then that made me a
little nervous about 612 [department practicum]."

Deb had used a journal in the past during difficult times. She reported many prior experiences with keeping a journal for personal and academic reasons:

I didn’t want anyone to know about all the abuse in my family and all the dysfunction...so I journaled as a child...I guess I learned at an early age, there’s only so much you’re willing to share with someone else.

Currently, she hoped to use the journal as a way to process counseling sessions. “The primary thing is for me to write down what I’m thinking... one thing I learned before was those cognitive distortions. And you know you don’t see these really sometimes until they’re on paper.”

As anticipated, Deb did use the journal to process counseling sessions. She turned in two of the three sets of journal entries, typewritten, single-spaced, in ten-point font. She reported that she completed the third set as well; however, I did not receive it, and she either had not retained a copy for herself, or could not access it if she had. She wrote approximately once a week and often wrote less than a page, so the length and frequency was less than that specified in the recommended guidelines. However, her journal demonstrated an attention to her emotional and cognitive experience, focusing on her clinical interactions and her hopes for her development.

Marta

Marta is a forty-eight year old married Caucasian woman. She was raised in a conservative Christian environment in Michigan, and currently maintains spiritual beliefs but without the strict dogma with which she was raised. Marta experienced
tensions in her family of origin, and this was a topic of importance for her; she was aware of a pull to help her own family and of her limits in being able to do that. She revealed in the entrance interview that her husband was a strong support to her, and that they had been married many years. Marta earned an undergraduate degree in education, followed by a master of fine arts degree in studio art. She has worked in a variety of roles, including teaching mentally ill adults in a community education project, teaching art at the college level, and showing her art at galleries. At the time of this research, she was in the 612 Counseling Practicum, and in the counseling psychology program.

Marta was also pursuing volunteer experiences related to her degree program, including being a volunteer working with individuals who were dying. She remarked:

It’s using art therapy to give help to patients to find meaning and purpose and beauty in the final stages of their life. And you know we help them do whatever they want, if it’s journaling, we can put a life book together, help them do that.

Marta also co-facilitated a support group for women suffering from a chronic illness with which Marta herself was diagnosed as a young adult and continues to battle today. It was a 12-week group for “approaching illness creatively, finding meaning and purpose and beauty through illness.”

Marta’s plans for her 613 field practicum, and her short- and longer-term goals involved working as a therapist, ideally specializing in the treatment of individuals with a chronic physical illness. She remarked, “Through much contemplation, prayer, silence, and just inner guidance, I felt that I had learned so much in my experience with illness that I could utilize this wisdom and experience.” However, she was firm
about the limits her illness imposed on her. "I'm not going to try to do a full-time thing... I know that about myself... make sure I have time to do my journaling and my physical exercise I have to have."

Marta's response to the question of what she had learned as a graduate student in counseling was particularly noteworthy. She remarked:

Well, in my whole education since I started, I have learned that I can do math... I didn't know I could do that... I was the artistic type... I wasn't the math type... And you know, I think you get stereotyped early... so that was like, um, dispelling one of those myths... if that's a myth, what else is a myth in my life, that I've accepted, you know, and I think it makes you more questioning and more willing to try to unlearn things.

Another avenue that Marta has found for being comfortable with herself has been journal writing. She reported a variety of experiences, both personal and academic, with keeping a journal:

It's something that I've always done... since I was a kid. I think I probably started my first journal when I was about thirteen... it got me through the high school crazies and, and then especially you know in college when the disease hit.

She cites college as being a particularly memorable time for her in her journal keeping; this was when she began her journey with chronic illness. She commented,

There were really tough times there, really tough times. And journaling was a way of, of putting my emotions out on paper, um, centering myself in a way, laying it out so that I could look at it and be with it, not in denial but you know sometimes the words were so intense, so sad and yet for me to express it that way. I never did really express it through my art... my anger, my frustrations went into my journaling, as well as my epiphanies, and my mystic experiences and my revelations... I just have permission and the freedom to lay it out, and wherever I am at, it comes.

As in other journaling experiences that Marta had in the past, she used the journal during this research to center herself and to put her emotions on paper, laying
out whatever was on her mind at a given time. During this research, Marta kept a very extensive journal. She included dialogue that had transpired in a given interaction, and shared multiple aspects of her personal and professional life. She also included some artwork that related to her career transition. In so doing, she created a fairly detailed account of many of the facets that went into her developmental experience. Her journal was handwritten and totaled more than 150 pages.

Linda Chelsea

Linda Chelsea is a thirty-seven year old Caucasian woman. She is married, has a young child, and revealed that having family time was a priority for her. She expressed interest in possibly pursuing a doctorate, and possibly having a career in the schools that would allow her to have summers off. She commented,

I just like the diversity that life provides... I like being able to work hard every day, I like running in the morning, I like having my family, I like being able to go to work and go on vacations... I just like that variety... so if a doctoral program would let me continue that, I’ll do it.

Prior to beginning the counseling psychology master's program at Western, Linda Chelsea had a high-stress career. She commented that her previous career was fulfilling; however, she “preferred to get more involved in people’s lives,” hence the change to the counseling field.

At the time of this research, Linda Chelsea had completed her 612 department practicum and was enrolled in her 613 field practicum at a Christian agency where she was already employed as a counselor and caseworker with mostly child and adolescent clients. Linda Chelsea self-identified as Christian and valued working in an
environment where prayer and spirituality could be openly talked about as a means of healing. However, she also worried about being judged or evaluated for her religiosity at work. This was a topic in which she had clearly engaged in self-exploration about her own values prior to her involvement with this study.

For Linda Chelsea, the value of self-exploration was the most important learning of graduate school. She commented,

What was very liberating for me was just, learning to, ask yourself those questions that you don't want to ask yourself that we would ask other people [e.g., about our own pathology]... that was the biggest thing at Western—is um, I think it just allowed, encouraged, sometimes even mandated self-exploration... overall it was a tremendous experience that had little to do with academics.

For Linda Chelsea, keeping a journal was a new experience. She remarked,

I think about it, like many people do, all the time, but have never had the discipline enough to do that—that’s probably not comforting to you, (laughs)... I journaled, but it’s been primarily in class, so it hasn’t been a lot... I will admit that this gives me an opportunity to do something that, one of those things I’ve been meaning to do, but now, you’re actually helping me to do something that I wanted to do anyhow, so if I made a commitment to do it, then I will do it.

Linda Chelsea upheld her commitment to this journaling process, writing roughly twice a week as recommended in the guidelines, often utilizing the optional guiding questions as a way of steering her work. Her journal was handwritten and included sometimes detailed explorations of thoughts and feelings regarding her development.

Collectively, these women were aged 29-48. All of them were Caucasian. Their professional goals included community agency work and private practice, and involved working with children, adolescents, and adults with sex offenses, career
concerns, and chronic illness. All of them had personal experiences which influenced these professional goals, and that is the focus of the first theme.

Collective Themes of Development

Theme 1: Integration of Personal/Professional Aspects of Identity

Beginning counselors engage in “vigorous internal construction work” (Skovholt, 2001) as they develop a professional identity. In this study, the need to integrate an existing, personal self with an emerging professional identity was a key issue for all of the co-authors. The co-authors engaged in a two-fold reflective process in which they both considered what they knew about themselves already and speculated upon who they might become as counselors.

The co-authors addressed this integration of personal and professional identity in a variety of ways. They all tried to use existing knowledge from other areas of their lives and apply that to the counseling situation. For example, Connie identified some of the skills she had learned from work experiences in which she provided guidance for students and sought to apply them to the counseling situation when applicable. Some of the co-authors also tried to address gaps that they discovered between who they were individually and who they were professionally. An excellent example of this was Linda Chelsea, who realized during her field practicum that her own expectations for herself as a professional were often different from the expectations of the field practicum site. When these discrepancies became pronounced, she grappled with and questioned some of the unspoken politics at her field practicum site.
The remaining two co-authors, Deb and Marta, both in their forties, found reflective practice to be significant for them personally as they tolerated the ambiguities associated with constructing a new professional self. For Deb, it was important to integrate her current work role, her burgeoning counselor role, her role as a mother, and her own need to feel effective. For Marta, it became crucial to consider how she would manage a new career with ongoing health problems, while integrating her previous identity as an artist into her counselor self and tolerate feeling like an imposter during the process. For both Deb and Marta, it was clear that there were aspects of their personal selves which needed to find a voice in their new professional identities. The meaning of this theme can be seen more clearly by examining Deb’s and Marta’s stories in more detail.

Deb

For Deb, the integration of the personal and professional aspects of identity was a process that included her current roles as mother and adoption worker, her new counselor role, and her own need to feel effective. Deb had decided to do social work partly as a result of growing up the way she did, in a chaotic family environment. Deb also acknowledged much chaos in her early adulthood before settling down into her current life as mother and adoption worker. Deb remarked during the entrance interview that excelling at being a mother was particularly important to her:

I think I’m paying my children, giving my children something back, I think, that I didn’t give them when they were younger because I wasn’t the best mom... once I decided to settle down I did, I, I’ve been, I have been an excellent mom, my children will tell you that, I’m a wonderful mom, I’m a fantastic
mom, but I think there’s a part of me now that’s saying to them... I’m trying to make up to me, to you, to whomever, for the crap I didn’t do when I should have done it.

In the entrance interview, Deb expressed concerns about managing her many roles, “I always feel this in my classes... the others are students, they’re not working full time and raising families... I just feel I’m not on the ball as much as them. What can I expect? I’m an older, non-traditional student.” Deb went on to share some of her stresses at work, with parenting, and her doubts about choosing to take two classes this term:

I think it’s going to feel overwhelming, and I already feel overwhelmed... I just keep telling myself, you’ll get through it, you’ll get through it, you’ll get through it, you’ll get through it... I should not have probably taken two classes this term. I probably should not have done that, but I can do it. I’m gonna make it work.

This concern about managing multiple roles continued to be an issue during the semester. Deb wrote in her journal:

Regarding balancing multiple roles—I will be very honest, I sometimes wish I had never begun this program. This term, in particular is overwhelming for me. If I were not as far into the program as I am, and if I didn’t have the fantastic grades that I do, I would give up. Working 40+ hours a week, maintaining a home, and keeping up with normal, active pre/teenagers and taking 7 credit hours is way too much for me.

In the exit interview, I commented on this issue of integration and management of multiple roles, asking whether there were additional new thoughts about it that Deb had not written down. Deb responded,

You know, I, I want to be a good counselor, I want to be a good adoption worker, and you’re asking me this right after the holidays... my priority is my family. You know, everything else comes second. I’m gonna do the best I can at being a therapist because I want to do these things, but my priority is gonna be my family, that’s all there is to it... I do have to balance all these
roles still, but and you know I guess I can say that with some ease now
because next term’s not gonna be that difficult... but I think that was a real
frustration for me last term. I missed a lot last term.

Deb went on to describe what she meant when she said she had missed a lot
last term, remarking that she felt cheated when classes conflicted with her children’s
activities. During the exit interview, she shared a realization that she had not had
until after the semester and the journal writing experience had ended.

I never journaled about how I felt that part of my frustration had to do with the
fact that being in this practicum took time away from my family, valuable time
away from my family. Didn’t realize that was part of my frustration until just
recently, actually. And it might have even been during the holidays, you
know, when because all my family was home and you know, I didn’t have to
work and I didn’t have school, I did what I wanted and what I wanted was to
spend 100% of my time with my kids and my family. And I think that’s when
I came to the conclusion that that was part of my frustration with this, this last
term is that I missed some important things. And you know it’s still really
hard for me not to blame school for that... which is silly. You know, it was my
choice to go to school. It was my choice to take this practicum, I made that
choice; therefore, I had to make concessions other places. And you know I’ve
had to do that all along but it just seemed like this term was the worst.

I commented, “The costs really added up this term.” Deb replied. “Exactly...
and I think the reason that wasn’t journaled was because that just came to me during
the holidays.”

In addition to the personal frustrations associated with practicum, Deb also
shared her perspective that the practicum was disorganized, and there were not
enough clients for everyone to obtain the recommended number of clinical hours by
the end of the semester. Deb was one of the students who had not gotten enough
hours, and this was an added stressor for her:

So then they [her supervisor and the clinic director] were scurrying around
trying to figure out what to do, and of course the subject of having to take an
incomplete and finish it next term came up, which I wasn’t willing to do. I mean, I’m working full time, I’m raising my children as a single parent, and again, it’s like I said earlier, I paid for this class, you know, I feel it’s the university’s responsibility to make available to me what I need to complete it, you know, and so I was really not happy about that, and I told [my supervisor] that, that I’m not at all happy about that, and I, you know, I refuse to do that. I’m simply not gonna do that. So the following day she called me and they had a client, they had a new client come in.

Ultimately, Deb was able to obtain the number of hours that she needed for the practicum without taking an incomplete, but the uncertainty had been experienced as an added stressor. It was important to her to gain as much experience as she could in her counseling practicum because she was aware that the work that she did professionally, though social services related, was different from the work of a counselor. These differences meant that she needed to figure out how to integrate her new counselor identity with her existing work identity. During the entrance interview, she described her job this way:

You’ve got a very short period to make a very important decision in my job. And so you don’t have the time to do all that gentle probing and questioning and what have you. You’ve got to get in there and say, this is this and this is that...you’ve got to get everything you need to make the best decision in a short period of time.

One way in which Deb tried to integrate her existing work identity with her new counselor identity was by trying to apply existing skills that she used in her job to the counseling situation. Deb expressed that confrontation was crucial in her work, and during the entrance interview she hypothesized how confrontation might be used in the counseling situation:

I’m not afraid of confronting, because a lot of times when you find those red and yellow flags [discrepancies], they’ll be no more excuses. And you have to confront those excuses. And as [my supervisor] said, I’ll learn to be more
gentle with my confrontation (laughs). Because that’s one thing we don’t always do in my job, and I usually have to just blatantly get to, well, hey, look, this is what you said a few minutes ago, why are you saying such and such now? You know?... after I reviewed [my client's] file, there were a lot of discrepancies, you know, along the way. And [my supervisor] asked me how I felt about confronting him on those and I said, “Frankly I don’t feel comfortable confronting him because he seems like he’s such a volatile person. I could see him becoming very defensive and I don’t think the initial session or session thereafter is the time to do that.” But she was saying, you know, what [my supervisor] was describing as gentle confrontation... I can understand where she is coming from with that, how confrontation is still necessary but you can soften it up... you can use more probing to look at the discrepancies. You can even point out the discrepancies but in a thoughtful, gentler manner.

However, during the semester Deb began to question her ability to translate her existing work skills into the counseling situation. She wrote this in her journal:

Some days I feel like I would make a good counselor, and some days I feel like I am not cut out for this. I guess the reason for this is that I am so accustomed to working with clients in a particular manner, that being primarily expeditious problem solving, that slowing down the pace and getting at what caused the problem in the first place is more difficult than I thought it would be. I think I felt I had enough experience as a social worker that I would be able just to fall in step with the counseling. When it doesn’t feel like I am doing this, I get discouraged and begin to question my ability.

Deb’s questioning of her ability seemed to be related both to her adjusting to her new role as a counselor, as well as to her need to feel effective in all areas of her life. Deb wrote in her journal:

I like to do things well... I like to do a really good job in everything I do, whether it be adoption worker, student, homemaker, mother, friend, etc. I don’t believe this will ever change for me, but I can’t get depressed when I don’t feel I have done my best. And I do get depressed over this type of situation.

Deb’s high need for achievement made it particularly difficult for her to tolerate feeling ineffective, though most new counselors will feel ineffective as they adjust to learning the relationship and technical skills associated with their new professional
identities. In the exit interview, Deb summed up her sense of ineffectiveness by questioning herself in this way:

You know, I guess I left sometimes feeling like I just accomplished enough to maybe get this person through a few weeks, you know what I’m saying... you never know when you’re seeing clients like this on a very short-term basis. And I know, I understand, this is part of my professional development, but... I kind of left thinking, gosh have I helped? Hindered? You know, (laughs) what has been the process here?

Deb had more clarity at the end of the semester in terms of how to integrate her work identity and her counselor identity, both in terms of the relationship with the client and the techniques used. During the exit interview, she remarked, “You know, I believe the client, you should have an open, honest, humanistic, realistic relationship with your client, but you don’t have to be close to that client. You don’t have to be a friend to that client.” She went on to say that this was different from her work, in that it was a goal for an adoption worker to be closer to the family so that they would call her when they were in crisis. In so far as using counseling techniques in her job, she reported,

I try to, since the term is ended, I try to, to still utilize some of the techniques that I used in my practicum, and it’s still a little difficult for me. But I, I’m thinking I don’t feel that it’s so difficult I won’t be able to do it once I start seeing clients again. But it’s something I, I have to be conscious of.

The integration of Deb’s existing roles as mother and adoption worker, and her new role as a counselor was an important process. Deb’s reflections on this process of merging these personal and professional aspects of self over the semester were voiced in her journal. Another co-author who voiced these concerns eloquently in her journal was Marta, who is discussed next.
For Marta, the integration of the personal and professional aspects of her identity involved merging many aspects of herself. In developing her identity as a counselor, she drew on her experiences as an artist. During this process, she felt like an imposter in the counseling field. At the same time, she needed to consider how she would manage a new career as a counselor with ongoing health problems.

The process of developing as a counselor was similar to a process that she went through in her previous career as an artist. In developing her counselor identity, she felt a sense of loss about her identity as an artist, and a need to integrate the two.

In the exit interview, she remarked,

There was a feeling of, um, I guess it was failure, just trying to figure out if it was failure or not in leaving my art profession. That was hard to admit that transition, and sort of like an identity crisis in a way... wondering if I'd quit too early, you know, why did I quit and then dealing with my health.

Drawing on her experiences on building a career as an artist also seemed to be useful for building a career as a counselor. In her exit interview, she stated:

You know, there's some things that I can do that I would to let people know that I'm out there and to get my name around and it's similar to marketing yourself when you were in art. You had to go to the art shows, and what I could do is you know, I have lectures on depression and [chronic illness] you know, that people could come to and offer little workshops... even now I can start to do that. And then talk to other doctors in the area to let them know that, you know, I handle depression, and adjustment to illness.

The degree of integration that Marta had attained with regard to her sense of self as artist and sense of self as counselor was tested when she was asked (during an interview for a 613 field practicum experience) about her switch from art to
counseling. She wrote about her response in her journal: “I said (to my surprise), ‘It is not really a switch, it is more of a progression.’ Wow, my response was so spontaneous. I love it when that happens.” She went on to discuss this in the exit interview. “It’s a continuation, it’s just a progression. And you know, just personal growth. Which I think has been the most exciting part of this whole education, what I’ve learned about myself.”

One way in which Marta reflected on her emerging counselor identity concerned her question of what she would wear as a counselor. This became a metaphor for her desire to fit into the counseling field, to look the part even if she did not feel it. She wrote, “I am thinking about how a psychologist should dress, and yet be true to myself.” Marta reflected further on this clothing issue during the exit interview:

I think that I saw the clothes as like a lifeline, it was like an outward way of trying to define what I was...you just shift into this new identity—it was a lifeline and I did become kind of focused on it, almost obsessed for awhile because I was so floundering on the inside, and it was just an outward way of trying to be stabilized. You know, and of putting on these clothes. Like is this it? Is this it...I obsessed about that for about two or three weeks and, and then it’s really funny because you go through these obsessions like with the clothes and all and then all of a sudden I pass through that phase and it’s not an issue anymore...I was going through this one magazine...and I was looking at the different therapists and they had pictures of them and the ones that I looked at who looked more natural and comfortable in their own bodies, were the ones that I would choose as a therapist. And so I decided to go with, with what I’ve been all along, which has just been me.

The issue of clothing her professional identity and of trying to fit in the counseling field seemed related to doubts that Marta had about whether she was a “real” counselor. In the journal feedback, I related this feeling to imposter phenomenon, or the “internal experience of intellectual phonies, which appears to be particularly prevalent
and intense among a select sample of high-achieving women” (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 1). This is not an uncommon experience as one develops a new professional identity. In the exit interview, Marta confirmed that this fit for her, discussing her experience of self doubt in this way:

It is that imposter thing. And I felt that way with art...I know that I have to work on this [idea] that my achievements are going to somehow make me feel better about myself, that they're going to give me a feeling of authenticity or competence in myself.

One way in which this imposter experience evidenced itself was her writing in her journal that next semester would be “the real thing.” Another, very central way that imposter phenomenon seemed to be occurring was her feeling of being unprepared to talk about her theoretical orientation during her field placement interview. Intuitively, she had many beliefs about what makes people change, these beliefs guided her work, and she was able to use these beliefs in her work, so this would make for a good conversation about her theoretical orientation. However, she believed that she could not articulate it and the lack of a clear definition for the term "theoretical orientation" led her to feel unprepared:

[A fellow student] said that I might be asked about my theoretical orientation. Yikes—God! What is my theoretical orientation? I don't even know. What do you mean...she said, “Don’t tell them that you are Jungian, because that is a school of intense training, and for you to say that would make you appear like you don’t know what you are talking about.” “Okay don’t say that. What do I say—what did you say?” She impressed me with her articulate, well thought-out summary of what she believed...I was feeling so inadequate and weak compared to her. As she spoke I could feel how genuinely centered she is...then she said, “Don’t worry, Marta, they will love you! I would hire you in a minute!” [Another student], who was listening in on our conversation, said, “I would too, you are excellent.” What are they seeing? I wondered. I don’t feel excellent. I don’t even know what my theoretical orientation is. Am I supposed to know at this point? I was feeling so lost, trying to grasp at
something in the dark. It was as if I couldn’t remember anything I had learned over the past two years. What did I learn? Where am I? Yet, somehow I have been counseling lately.

Despite self doubts, wondering what she had learned, and the difficulties of integrating the counselor role into her identity, Marta developed a sense of competence as a counselor during the semester. In her exit interview, Marta reported, “and the profession, the counseling profession, one of the things that was SO neat about it was I think that I’m gonna be very good at it. You know, if I don’t burn out.” This was a progression from an earlier reflection in her journal, in which she had commented, “I wonder if I can really do this work. I wonder...Stay tuned.”

Another personal aspect which needed to be integrated for Marta involved balancing the demands of a chronic illness. Marta addressed the issue of balancing a career with health problems early on in the entrance interview. She reflected:

I’m concerned about...the expectations that the world has on people. That, you know, being a person with a chronic illness, that, that there will be expectations that I can’t meet...that’s a very real concern...but again, you know, if I can’t find a job, I have to create one.

Marta also depicted this concern about her health in her journal through a drawing of a large stairwell over water, leading to a tall tower. Marta had this to say about it:

It’s, it’s sort of precarious. It’s not really strong. It’s just a stairwell, I mean, there’s no support system [no handrail] to it...and there’s this big dangerous sea, and then the sun is going down, and that sort of has to do with my age and my health. You know, wondering is that really something that I can do, or is it too late?

Wondering how she would balance a career with health problems emerged and reemerged throughout the semester, as Marta wrote in her journal about her experience of physical pain, and her need for self care. These concerns will be discussed
further in later sections.

For all of the co-authors in this study, there was a need for integration of their professional identities with the important personal qualities and roles that each of them brought to their work. This integration was reflected upon and given voice in the journals. Voice was also given to their emotional experience of reflection, which is the focus of the next section.

Theme #2: Emotional Management

As discussed in Chapter I, counselor management of emotions is important for counselors at all levels of development (Harris, 1999). Management of negative emotions during training is very important because beginning counselors' lack of experience makes them particularly susceptible to feelings of guilt, anger, and perfectionism (Friedberg & Taylor, 1994). Skovholt (2001) likens novice counselors to adolescents, stating, "This raw mixture of emotions is a predictable outcome when the novice practitioner self steps into the practitioner world," (p. 74).

The co-authors in this study all reflected on their emotional experiences, to varying degrees, in order to manage their feelings and the sometimes rapid shifts in their emotions. For example, Connie reflected in her journal on her fear of not doing enough with clients, and her discomfort with her experience of being at a loss for words. Deb reflected on her emotional experience as well, including her feelings of anxiety and lack of preparation, and anger and disappointment about her sense of the practicum experience having been insufficient.
The remaining two co-authors, Marta and Linda Chelsea, both reflected extensively upon their emotional experiences in their journals, keeping fairly detailed accounts of various emotions that they experienced throughout the semester. For Marta, it was important to consider and reconsider her emotional experience, because she found that her feelings about her practicum experiences, her illness, and the world situation often shifted as she took time to reflect upon them. For Linda Chelsea, reflecting in her journal increased her awareness of her emotional experience, particularly with regard to her emotional reactions to clients. For both Marta and Linda Chelsea, it was clear that keeping a journal helped to facilitate and clarify their emotional exploration. The meaning of this theme can be seen more clearly by examining Marta’s and Linda Chelsea’s stories in more detail.

Marta

Marta found it important to reflect upon her emotional experience and the shifts that took place as she reflected on her own story. In Marta’s first journal entry, she commented:

Sometimes my own story sounds even alien to me. I think sometimes my life is so hard that I do not allow myself to feel the intensity of the difficulty or I would give up—so I focus on a goal, get there, set another goal, get there, and just keep moving.

In this entry, there is a suggestion that Marta’s goal orientation helps her to manage emotional intensity. This entry also provided a glimpse that the emotional management component of reflective practice might be especially important for her.

The process of learning to be present with others in their emotional
experience, for Marta, began in the pre-practicum. In the entrance interview, she had commented that her pre-practicum had been an eye-opener for her:

The techniques we were learning, the reflections, simple, beginning techniques and learning how to listen and give feedback and just sit with those emotions was a new thing for me. It was a new thing...it was like learning a foreign language...really listening to somebody and letting them own their emotions and not try to change them, you know? [Not] say oh, come on now, you know you don’t need to feel that way (laughs) but you know, that’s what people are used to saying...Well let’s get you out of that depression. Don’t be sad, you’ve got a lot of positive things to look at...This was basically where I was coming from before, so this time you know, even with my own family, practicing and letting them just be with their sadness, letting them be with their frustration, rather than trying to give them a pep talk and move them out of that space. That was different. Very different and it was neat to find out that that was good and how that helped them. And I also had a very good little practice group; there were five of us. And doctoral students and we did a lot of practice on each other, and actually that was more intense and profound than my group therapy experience...I felt that we really opened up to each other and that was, that was neat.

This process of learning to sit with others’ emotions in pre-practicum, and Marta’s awareness of the challenges of doing so seemed to be a point of preparation for the emotional challenges of working closely with clients.

After being assigned her first client, Marta wrote in the journal about the range of feelings she was experiencing. She labeled her feelings as nervousness, fear, doubt. She wrote that she pictured her client, “capable of inflicting harm,” and “like the guys I see driving rusty pick-up trucks with a shot gun mounted on the back window.” Her expectation was that he would openly display violence, leading her to conclude, “In other words, I was afraid of him. [My supervisor] says, listen to his story. I pushed my fears back into their box. I will pull them out later to see if they make sense.” This statement seemed to demonstrate both her efforts to experience her

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feelings and her wish to reflect upon them in order to determine a course of action, showing that a cognitive understanding of emotions was part of her approach to reflective practice.

When Marta examined these feelings later, she wrote this about her client's feelings:

Frustrated, tired, stuck. We can work on that. Then later we can work on his tendency to want to control others and his expectations. I think he is a good client for me. I can work with a man, we will see.

Through reflection, Marta seemed able to move to positive self-talk from her initial fear.

The management of emotions through reflection, for Marta, occurred early on during the research process. One week after Marta began writing in her journal, a national tragedy occurred, and Marta’s reactions to it were processed afterward in the journal. A mixture of multiple emotions (fears, compassion, anger) emerged for Marta in the wake of this tragedy and she wrote:

I have not written in this journal—I couldn’t—I’m feeling guilty—yet I know that my life has been on hold since Tues September 11 8:50 am. On hold, as if I put a part of me in a little box, placed on a shelf in a dark, yet safe, closet—out of harm’s way. So much has happened since then and I think I can write about it now, sort it out—it's such a blur.

This reflection seemed to indicate a feeling of being initially too overwhelmed to write, but then waiting a few days to sort through these overwhelming feelings and to make some sense of them. In so doing, she reflected and wrote about her feelings of powerlessness and of wishing she was a professional counselor. She reflected, “If I was done [with training to be a counselor], I would go to New York to help.” In the
exit interview, she remarked further on the complexity of the emotions that she had been feeling:

With all this crap going on in the world and how disgusted I am with human beings and, and actually even feeling hatred. And disgust that goes right into hatred. But at the same time, feeling a very strong pull to help and heal and find compassion. You know, those contradictory feelings.

"Those contradictory feelings" that were so overwhelming to Marta initially shifted through the process of managing them through reflection. Though she had written that initially she was too overwhelmed to write about these feelings, eventually she did write about them, sort through them, manage them, and make sense of them.

Marta’s supervisor emerged again and again in her journal as a key figure in containing her emotions and in facilitating her own emotional management. She reported that her supervisor had a perspective which eased her anxiety about seeing her first client:

I did like his philosophy, you know, when he talked to us—I was a little nervous when I got my first client...a 40 year old man, um, history of physical abuse from his family on him as a child and then later on with his wife and substance abuse and a whole lot of anger problems and I’m reading this and I thought, what do I do to prepare...You know, should I read up on anger management, you know, what should I do? And [my supervisor] said, “Be with him. Go in there and listen to his story.” He was very philosophical about it, you know, this is what we do. Listen to their story. And, you know, it’s sort of going back to like the journal thing and that their story is the therapy...it was sort of like just being comfortable with who you are and letting your intuition work and um, you know, not trying to anticipate and expect and you know, let go of that stuff...I liked that. I felt that that put me at ease...rather than reading the notes and getting all scared and nervous...and you know feeling, you know, am I really qualified for something this complicated? Am I qualified to deal with this person? And then you know [my supervisor] was like, “Well, yeah, you’re a human being.”

The encouragement to use her own intuition, the assurance that being human was a
sufficient qualification, and the mantra, “listen to the story” all helped Marta to manage her anxiety so that she could be present with her clients. Marta referred to the supportive stance of her supervisor again in the exit interview:

You know, one thing [my supervisor] said that I felt was so reassuring was everything that you have learned um, forget about it and just go in there and listen to the story, you know. And don’t be so worried about trying to, you know, fit whatever was said into some analytic category, you know, because you’ll miss things if you do.

Marta’s supervisor also provided her with some direct guidance that relieved some anxiety she had with a different client. Marta was working harder than the client was to manage some scheduling concerns that were occurring, and she wrote about this in her journal:

He [my supervisor] also said that I should not contact [my client] to schedule again—this time it is up to [my client] to call the office if he wishes to reschedule. It was interesting to note my feelings about this—I felt like the big sister who wanted to help the bad little brother, but I also felt relief to let go of it. I realized that [my supervisor] was right in giving the responsibility back to [my client], this is the lesson he needs to learn.

Receiving direct guidance from her supervisor allowed her to step back in this situation, and to reflect on the personal factors (“feeling like the big sister”) that were leading her to accept more responsibility than was clinically recommended. In doing so, she was able to feel relief and to reflect upon the relief of letting go of this responsibility. The journal added to this process by providing a way in which she could reflect on personal factors, supervision, and to observe shifts in her emotions.

An area in which Marta had more difficulty letting go was that of her illness. The process of working toward acceptance of her illness was a crucial aspect of emotional management for Marta. In an early journal entry, she wrote at length about
her acceptance of the various tasks that her body is unable to do due to its illness. A sadness came through in the entry, suggesting that she was possibly still mourning these losses and had not relinquished them. In a later journal entry, she wrote,

This is the same old same old. I don’t seem to learn this lesson. I talk to the support group [of which Marta is the leader] about acceptance, but that’s easy for me to talk about when I’m feeling good—look at me now.

This entry implied that acceptance was a process with steps forward and backward, rather than a destination that Marta had already reached.

Later in the journal, Marta acknowledged this act of acceptance as a still ongoing process, writing:

This is all the stuff that took me years to sort out and I am still in the process... I knew too well what it means to accept disabled and carry the feelings of shame, guilt—to be dependent, and yet to learn to value myself, take care of myself.

She goes on to say in her journal, “I want to live. I don’t want this disease.” Marta remained hopeful that the disease would not flare up again and experienced disappointment when it did. Acceptance, then, remained a process to work toward.

Most notably, Marta used her journal to describe her experience of multiple emotions, both in the moment of relating with a client and in reflections that Marta had after the session. The following is a rich example of the experience of emotions during and after a counseling session, the reflection that took place during and after the counseling session, and her awareness of herself and the client in the process:

She [my client] would seem to want empathy and understanding and open up, even shedding tears, then she seemed to turn on me and would test me, asking questions like, “Is that normal? Does this make sense?” I would be empathic and then she would turn on me and say, “It’s not relevant,” or “this is silly.” I could feel myself trying to sense what she wanted—my chameleon technique.
The good thing is that I recognized, was aware of—this feeling and I was able to observe with my second channel how I was reacting to [my client]. The dynamics were quite complex... at one point she turned her head to see what time it was—she said, “I don’t want to take up too much of your time.” I could feel the hostility, and how this opened up her expectation of a reassuring response—but I remember saying, “We have 20 minutes left.” I could feel that she is in a lot of pain, and she truly wants to heal, but—wow!—she can be nasty! I can see why she has so many difficulties. Still, the interesting thing is that I was aware of my feelings and what I was feeling was telling me about her and her problems with others. I would not want to be her friend. Yet, I am willing to be her counselor! She will be a great learning experience!

It is notable here that Marta experienced herself as trying to sense what her client wanted by using her “chameleon technique,” suggesting that Marta had used this technique in relating with others in the past. However, in this particular situation, Marta both paid attention to the reactions she thought the client wanted, and the reactions that Marta thought would be appropriate. Marta described the complex interplay of feelings and reflections in the moment as observing with her “second channel,” while continuing to observe and reflect upon her feelings after the session as well.

This entry revealed Marta’s process of experiencing multiple thoughts and emotions during and after a counseling session, and also shows the value of reflecting on these thoughts and emotions during and after the session in order to make sense of complicated interpersonal dynamics. Keeping a journal for Marta provided a means for her to manage her emotional experiences and through reflection to experience profound shifts. Linda Chelsea also experienced increased emotional awareness through reflection; her experiences are the focus of the rest of this section.
Linda Chelsea

Like Marta, Linda Chelsea utilized the journal as a means for sorting through emotions and reflecting upon them, particularly with regard to her reactions to clients. During the entrance interview, Linda Chelsea (who at the time of this research was in the 613 field practicum) used a sports metaphor to describe her level of anxiety during the 612 department practicum:

I’d say the first fifteen minutes of the first session—a little anxiety before each session, because you never know what your client’s gonna present but—it was good anxiety, so you looked forward to a client...I’ll use sports, because that’s my thing, but it’s like, okay, well, you’re the starting point guard or whatever, it’s like there’s always anxiety before a ball game, even though you, you want to get out there and start playing ball...it was that type of anxiety.

Linda Chelsea’s description of “good anxiety” seemed to both suggest that the anxiety was manageable for her, and that the wish to “get out there” and counsel the client made the anxiety a desirable state of anticipation.

However, this anxiety also manifested for Linda Chelsea in a more challenging way. Like many new counselors, she had a need to rescue her clients at times and invested emotional energy in doing this. I understood this desire to fix and this need to rescue as being a manifestation of anxiety, so I checked this out with Linda Chelsea during the exit interview. Linda Chelsea responded that she had been reflecting on what this need to rescue meant and what it said about her, and that it was related to settling her anxiety and to her need to do good work with a client:

I just wonder if that will ever change...I guess you get more used to knowing that you feel that way, that need to rescue...I still think there’s a tendency, um, and a real belief in hope and I think that’s good, that somewhere along the line we can facilitate fixing something, tweak something, or whatever. And it, it
just may not happen. And I think, okay, now the difference is I know it may not happen and if it doesn’t happen, that’s okay. But I still have a tendency to need it, I suppose.

This seemed to suggest that the need to rescue had some value for her, that the notion of fixing something was part of having hope for the client’s improved well being.

Linda Chelsea reflected on her work with one client for whom she had both hope and frustration for his improved well being. She wrote in her journal, “I’m not sure what to do to make [my client] feel safe. That continues to challenge and frustrate me.” She reflected at length on her hopes and efforts to build a relationship with him, one in which he would trust her, confide in her, and honestly come clean with regard to his drug use. After a time, she had this to say in her journal:

I’m bummed today after receiving [my client]’s drug screen which was positive—he’s been using drugs all along... It seems that all the progress that I thought he (and I) were making is bullshit. He was so convincing though... I’m not just bummed, I’m rather pissed. If I don’t stick my feelings on the back burner, he’s going to be screwed... it seems like we are all just spinning our wheels once again... I have to remind myself to keep my own feelings about this in check.

The concept of placing her feelings on the back burner also recurrced at other points in her journal. This may have meant that her feelings were receiving less attention, or that they were not being expressed outwardly with her clients or with her supervisor. It seemed that the process of writing in her journal and expressing her feelings gave her permission to bring her emotions to the front burner. The journal, then, seemed to function as a place in which she could explore many “hot” topics at once, in a way that she could not always do with others.

Bringing these emotions about this client to the front burner in her journal

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through reflecting on her relationship with him allowed her an outlet for her anger and in so doing, allowed the compassion she felt for him to emerge again. She had this to say about him ultimately in the exit interview:

I was having difficulty with one young client and the potential that I and my colleagues could see within him, and um, how he’d been making progress but just wouldn’t trust enough... so this was always an aggravating client... Eventually he had major setbacks. But I think in the end it was, it was like, this client isn’t significantly pathological... many clients with far worse histories and, and backgrounds than this kid, I’m thinking, what is it about this that drives me nuts?

Linda Chelsea stated in the exit interview that what had driven her “nuts” with this client was the way in which this client reminded her of herself as an adolescent.

Gaining insight into this brought Linda Chelsea more in touch with what issues were the clients, what issues were hers, and the interaction between the two. This is an excellent example of a complicated situation in which reflection into her emotions led to increased insight.

I summed up this theme in the exit interview, remarking that Linda Chelsea had talked about feeling angry, weak, and guilty, and had gotten insight into these strong feelings. I told her it seemed that these insights were changing her work in a positive way, or helping her to yield new insights. Linda Chelsea agreed with this description. She commented that in writing the feelings down and receiving my feedback, she was able to reflect more and understand more. This use of feedback is discussed further in the section on the journal writing process.

For all of the co-authors, the experience of managing their emotions proved to be an important task that was facilitated by the journal writing. Emotional
management provided a means by which the co-authors were freed up to express themselves genuinely with clients. The quality of genuineness is the focus of the next section.

**Theme 3: Genuineness**

Genuineness is another core theme that emerged in the co-authors' journals. Genuineness has been described in the psychotherapy literature as an important element of the relationship between the counselor and client (Rogers, 1961; Trembley, 1996). Rogers (1961) noted that a counselor facilitates change in the client "when in the relationship with his client he is genuine and without 'front' or façade, openly being the feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him" (p. 61). Trembley's *Relational Therapy Concepts* (1996) is used as the core text for the 612 department practicum course, and is often used in other courses in the counseling master's curriculum at Western as well. As such, it is a text that all of the co-authors had some familiarity with. Trembley (1996) had this to say about genuineness:

The real relationship is based on the positive and negative feelings, perceptions, and attitudes that the client and the therapist develop for each other... the perceptions held by the participants [client and therapist] toward each other are genuine, appropriate, and congruent. Such interactions may be more or less personal and are genuine expressions of realistic experiences in the relationship at the moment. Clearly, a primarily positive bonding between therapist and client is desirable for effective therapy. (p. 130)

The co-authors in this study all reflected on their wish to be genuine in their interactions with clients and all of them pursued genuineness as an implicit goal for themselves in their work throughout the semester. For example, Deb wrote in her
journal about a pivotal relationship with her supervisor that taught Deb about genuineness: "...last time we had supervision it meant more to me than anything I have experienced in my classes. She [my supervisor] let me know that being human, or being myself in session is all right, it is often beneficial." An example of the importance of genuineness for Marta was found in her desire for her professional attire to be congruent with who she was personally—"I am thinking about how a psychologist should dress, and yet be true to myself."

The remaining two co-authors, Linda Chelsea and Connie, both expressed the importance of genuineness as central to their narratives as developing counselors, noting the importance of being authentic in their work. Reflection was important for them both in their process of discovering what was involved for them to become genuine in their work. For Linda Chelsea, it was important to feel that she could be genuine in all realms of her life: with clients, with her supervisor, with her agency, and in personal relationships. For Connie, genuineness was also an important consideration, and she learned through using models, listening to her supervisor, and being genuine successfully with her client. These experiences helped her to move through her initial concerns about her own high demands and her thoughts about helping others who are at a different phase of life than she is. For both Linda Chelsea and Connie, the experience of being genuine helped them to tolerate and even embrace their humanness as counselors and freed them from some unrealistic expectations they held for themselves in their work. The meaning of this theme can be seen more clearly by examining Linda Chelsea and Connie's stories in more detail.
Genuineness emerged for Linda Chelsea as a central narrative for understanding her relational development in all areas of her life, including her relationships with clients and with her supervisor. In fact, from the first line of her first journal entry, genuineness unfolded as a theme for Linda Chelsea:

I've chosen today to write because of a recurring theme that pervades many counseling sessions that I have with clients. It is also a theme that I repeatedly address about myself...[my client] continually tests my genuineness and that becomes frustrating for me.

Linda Chelsea discussed her process of trying to offer him unconditional positive regard, and of trying to be a consistent presence. Although she felt frustrated that what she provided for him did not seem to be enough, it was important for her to continue to try to be a genuine presence for him.

In discussing her relationship with her supervisor, however, it emerged that her genuineness was challenged at times. The challenges seemed to be related to a need of Linda Chelsea's to appear confident and to her fear of not being as competent as others believed her to be. Linda Chelsea went on to discuss the difficulties of being genuine in her relationship with her supervisor in her journal:

Although I typically feel confident...there is a little bit of insecurity that asks, "Am I as accomplished as others see me being?" There is a significant element of trust established [with her supervisor], and of course at times I feel somewhat pressured not to betray that trust. For the most part, both personal and professional, my way of being is genuine, but sometimes I want to say, "Don't always trust me all the time." I want to be able to fail if need be without letting others and myself down.

In this entry, Linda Chelsea expressed the perceived risks in being genuine with her...
supervisor. She worried that demonstrating her insecurity to her supervisor would result in a betrayal of her supervisor's trust, that revealing insecurity to her supervisor would be letting her supervisor or herself down. Although counselor trainees often experience these fears of being or appearing incompetent (Jacobs, David, & Meyer, 1995), a basic goal of clinical supervisors is to promote an atmosphere in which the trainee feels able to think openly, express half-formed ideas, raise questions (no matter how basic), and discuss inner experiences that arise in learning therapy, to the extent that he feels motivated to do so, without undue fear of criticism, humiliation, or intimidation. (p. 233)

After reading several entries in which Linda Chelsea expressed reservations about seeking support from her supervisor, I provided written feedback in the journal that it sounded as though she felt alone and not sufficiently supported by her supervisor. Linda Chelsea reflected on this and found there to be some accuracy in it. In the exit interview she stated:

What you pointed out to me...it sounds like you feel kind of alone in some of these things and that, that is a feeling that I didn't identify, I don't think, in the entries but a feeling that was very accurate...that's just really helped me say yes, that's exactly how I feel...

This realization led her to address the issue with her supervisor, who was responsive to her confiding in him and ready to give her the support she needed. Linda Chelsea summed up her contradictory feelings of confidence and inadequacy in this way:

I feel like I'm a very confident person but I can't imagine that I'm that great when I go into supervision...It's just, kind of the aloneness and then the um, feelings of inadequacy, maybe, and maybe my supervisor knows full and well that I can handle it or whatever...sometimes I don't, we don't always feel like we can handle everything.
For Linda Chelsea, accepting that she could not always handle everything and communicating that experience frankly was an experience of genuineness for her, and allowed her to find congruence between her actual self and the self that she presented for supervision.

Linda Chelsea also experienced a need for congruence between her professional agenda for herself and the professional agenda of her agency, which led her to honestly bring up issues that she had always been afraid to bring up before. As Linda Chelsea was working through this process, she described this issue at length in her journal:

I really cut loose in our big staff meeting today. There is so much superficiality among staff and it's obvious that everyone is skirting the issues and I'm tired of it. Nobody wants to rock the boat and therefore issues are never resolved. I get so frustrated with all of us spinning our wheels. I'm not going to spin mine anymore so I decided to lay the cards on the table about the problems that staff is having...I really felt the need to address issues so that we as an agency could move forward. I think the staff needs to be more accountable for our weaknesses, me included...I felt relieved...after the meeting, a lot of people thanked me for bringing the issues to the forefront...I've often felt so stifled about expressing my true feelings and thoughts and today alleviated some of that. I finally felt that I could be myself and be valued for these thoughts and feelings that I have.

The decision to "lay the cards on the table" was an apt metaphor for revealing her thoughts and feelings rather than holding them close to her and pretending to have a better or different hand of cards than she really had. She had this to say about it afterward in the exit interview:

Another issue was, I mentioned a couple of times I think in a couple of entries was the um, the organization that I work for is very, extremely conservative...which I am not...I could have journaled about this forever too, just the feelings that I had initially trying to conform to that standard and almost faking, you know, presenting with a different identity than, than what was true to
me... and I would just think, well this is who I am, I fit into this organization regardless if we have a problem, we'll have to work it out, or I'll have to find a different agency.

The pressure to adapt to the agency's conservative style, then, initially left Linda Chelsea feeling false and ultimately unwilling to conform to external standards that did not fit with her internal standards.

In the exit interview, I summarized her narrative of genuineness in this way:

The genuineness just seemed to be the strongest thing throughout, that wish to be genuine with clients, with your supervisors, at work, with your own feelings. At work, not wanting to hold back, but wanting to be careful and how to strike that balance of being real and being careful... I don't know if you have something to add to that right now or if it feels like I left anything out?

Linda Chelsea responded, "Oh no, that sounds very appropriate. You hit the nail on the head," and laughed.

For Linda Chelsea, it was important to feel that she could be genuine in all realms of her life and that this would be valued and appreciated. Reflection in her journal illuminated the aspects of her experience that were incongruent and provided the motivation for her to construct a more genuine experience. Genuineness was also a salient theme for Connie, her experience of genuineness is the focus of the next narrative.

Connie

At first glance, genuineness did not seem to be a core theme for Connie. Connie's high demands of herself, her concerns about helping others with problems that were beyond her own experience and development, and her need to feel prepared
or trained to do a particular task ahead of time seemed to speak more to the fulfilling of a particular role. However, as she learned from her supervisor, her peers, and from experiences of being genuine with clients, she felt more prepared and more comfortable in the counseling role. This preparedness seemed to help her to manage the high demands she had of herself, to be genuine, and for that to emerge as part of her style.

Connie's sense of her own inexperience, both as a counselor and in terms of life experiences, led her to wonder how she would manage certain aspects of the counseling role. During the entrance interview, she expressed concerns about her own ability to be helpful to others. "How will I help people who are at a different phase of life than I am?" She expanded upon this idea in her journal:

One of my concerns about counseling is how to work with clients who are dealing with issues that I feel are beyond my own growth, understanding, and development...I know that I have not reached a level of development and understanding about many of the larger existential questions of the universe. How could I counsel someone who is grappling with these issues? In some respects, I understand that the role of a counselor is to listen attentively and reflect, piece together, and summarize what the client expresses. I don't need to have the answers. My role is to help the client find his or her own answers. "In some respects," Connie seemed to understand that by offering herself as a listening, reflecting person, she would be fulfilling her role as a counselor and helping the client to find answers. However, there is a hint here that Connie might prefer to have a better understanding of the "larger existential questions of the universe," that she might have been concerned that her personal and professional experiences would potentially not be sufficient enough for her to be of help.

The worry that her experiences might not be sufficient for her to be helpful seemed to be related to the high expectations that Connie has for herself. She
reflected on this in the entrance interview:

I’ll be interested to see with clients if I feel like I need to take on everything and see if I feel like, “I am responsible for their problems,” or if I can let it still be theirs and just be there with them and their problems.

Connie’s expectations of herself, then, seemed to put her at risk for potentially taking on too much responsibility in a counseling session. She elaborated in her journal:

I have very high expectations for myself and feel like a bit of a failure when I don’t live up to them… I have been trying to learn how to set more realistic expectations for myself. I believe this is important as a counselor because, though I want my clients to grow and evolve and learn to manage their issues, I do not want to impose my high expectations on them.

Here Connie demonstrated a sense of wanting to be accepting of her clients in a way that she had historically not been able to be accepting of herself. It seemed that Connie might be at risk of expecting too much of her clients, just as she expected too much of herself. Though Connie felt like a failure when she did not meet her own expectations, she reported that she did not want her clients to feel as though they had failed if they did not meet their own expectations.

Connie experienced a shift in her level of expectation of herself in her work. In the exit interview, she reported:

I guess in some ways I’ve let the save-the-world thoughts drift away a bit, seeing what is realistic in different settings… I know that when I try to do so much more and it backfires in some way… I can feel that it’s just pulling on me so much more than it should be and that I’m not being effective in the rest of my life.

It in unclear how and when this shift occurred because Connie stopped documenting these reflections in the journal. Therefore, it is not possible to see her development as it unfolds and to make interpretations of it. We have Connie’s reports of her
development. Connie did believe that a reflective process was still taking place in which she began to feel more comfortable, more prepared, and was able to be more genuine in her work.

One influence over Connie's development of genuineness was her supervisor, who had communicated the importance of a sense of genuineness to the class the first night. Connie related this during the entrance interview:

I think I was just so, it was so different than I had expected it to be that first night I was just like, what are you doing with us this semester? What is going to happen to us? Am I going to get any better? Or am I just going to be really frustrated because I can't do it the way he would like us to be doing it? Um, and I think I feel more comfortable now that he said, “You may end up doing things that are sort of like me... but if you don’t that’s fine because I want you to be you.” And you know I like some of the things he shared and I believe that you pick and choose the things you like from other people’s skills and this and that and you put it together, the things that make sense to you, and come up with your own style that way. I don’t have to come out a carbon copy of his philosophy and his style. I think we felt like we did that in 604 [pre-practicum], because it was just so—because it was just so focused on technique, it was all technique... we all ended up sounding like little carbon copies of each other in our responses. So to me of course that didn’t feel very genuine, as much as we tried to make it as much us as possible, it still felt pretty formulaic. So I’m, I’m hoping that I can, you know, let some of the formula go and be more myself through the practicum or not panic about following the technique, but let that become a little more second nature and more genuine, and just let myself do that.

The first night, then, Connie seemed hopeful that she would be more directly prepared by her supervisor (“What are you doing with us this semester”), but ultimately she felt more comfortable when her supervisor gave her and her classmates permission to be themselves (“I don't have to come out a carbon copy of his philosophy”). It is notable that as much as she wanted to be prepared, trained, and to meet her high expectations of herself in the counseling role, she clearly also wanted genuineness to be part of her
Part of how Connie approached the process of discovering the meaning of genuineness for her was by looking to her classmates for ideas, while also feeling free not to follow what others did and to instead develop her own style. She remarked in the exit interview:

I just really like watching other people’s styles because I was really trying to figure out what mine is, and it’s not figured out yet, but it certainly helps me to see how other people do things. Sort of to see, yeah, it’s okay to do it like that. That works too. So if something comes up where I feel I want to do that, I can. You know. It’s like giving myself permission to do something.

For Connie, giving herself permission to do something was key. The sense that there were many valid ways of pursuing a clinical interaction and the experience of seeing the different approaches others used allowed her the freedom to try various things in her own work.

Connie shared an anecdote in which she had given herself permission to try something new, different, and genuine with a client she had seen throughout the semester. She provided her client with honest, genuine feedback about his development and had this to say about it during the exit interview:

In the final session when [my client] was talking to me about what he thought his progress had been and where he was and how he’s handling things... I remember thinking in my head ... Can I say that he sounds mature now? Is that gonna be condescending, will that imply that he was immature before you know (laughs) and I was really struggling with that and I was just like you know what? Final session. I’m just gonna say it (laughs) so I did. Um, and I talked to my supervisor about it and he laughed first and he said, “No, that’s, that’s fine and that’s your reaction and you’re allowed to give your reaction.”

Taking a risk and sharing her own perspective with her client was, for Connie, a way in which she grew able to be genuine in the process of doing her work. Connie had
noted the positive change of growth and maturity in her client, Connie herself was likely an active facilitator of that change, and she wanted to communicate what she had noticed to him. This is reminiscent of Rogers (1961), who wrote that a counselor facilitates change in the client “when in the relationship with his client he is genu­ine… openly being the feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him” (p. 61).

For Connie, having this genuineness validated by her supervisor throughout the practicum experience was freeing for her, and left her less worried about the outcome of her work. She commented during the exit interview, “With [my client] I have no idea [what’s going to happen]. But I, I know I did all I could do at this point.” I commented that this was reminiscent of the entrance interview, when Connie had reported that her instructor told the class they are not responsible for the outcome, just for their own work. Connie responded, “Just the process yeah. And I, I know that I keep that in mind.”

Connie’s experience illustrates that in trying to fulfill the counseling role, paradoxically she was better able to do so by allowing herself to think less about the role and the proper techniques involved and to instead attend to her own reactions and be genuine. Part of her development of genuineness involved learning to be more assertive, which is discussed in the next section on individual themes.

The goal of this section was to present the three collective themes (the integration of personal and professional aspects of identity, emotional management, and genuineness) that were common to the developmental journeys of all of the co-authors.
These themes provide a way to understand the co-authors' growth in reflective practice and the way this development was constructed in their journals. Themes that were individual to the developmental journeys of each co-author were also identified. These individual themes are the focus of the next section.

Individualized Themes of Development

For each co-author, an individual theme that was specific only to her own developmental journey emerged. These individual themes are presented in this order: Connie (assertiveness); Linda Chelsea (confrontation), Marta (spirituality), and Deb (letting go).

Assertiveness

The psychological and self help literature abounds with resources for developing assertive behavior. Assertiveness has been defined in the self-help literature as a process in which a person stands up for his or her own rights in a way that is direct, honest, appropriate, and does not violate another person's rights (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976). The dictionary defines assertive as "confidently aggressive or self-assured" (Random House, 1997). "Part of being a good-enough adult for a client is talking with the client in a respectful, supportive, and persistent manner about issues the client may well resist," (Trembley, 1996, p. 145). The concept of assertiveness, then, has implications for therapy in that it is useful for a therapist to communicate a sense of self-assurance to a client and to communicate the ability to persistently 
and assertively probe into a client’s experience.

Throughout the 612 department practicum experience, Connie felt concerned that she would not be able to behave assertively and to take the initiative that she needed as a counselor. For her, part of becoming a counselor was directly related to knowing what to say to clients and being able to say those things to clients. What a therapist says indeed is important; Trembley (1996) noted, “Much of what the client consciously internalizes is based on what the therapist says,” (p. 145). The development of assertiveness was central to Connie’s narrative as a counselor. In the exit interview, she summed it up in this way:

The first part of my journal—the part that I actually journaled—I, I knew that I was just very afraid to speak, very hesitant, didn’t know what to say, didn’t know when to say it, um, and then the second part I was starting to see where I could be speaking and I was starting to pick up on what I might be able to be saying, um, but I still couldn’t quite get it out of my mouth...it would take me that long to process that, that whole part there, that I could be speaking, this is what I could say. And by the time that I might get the courage to say it, the moment had passed. And we were on to something else...In the final weeks I saw there was an opportunity and I thought of something that could work or I might want to say and I was starting to take those risks and opening my mouth and um, just putting it out there and seeing what happened from there.

Connie’s conceptualization of her narrative of assertiveness, then, had three parts: Stage 1--feeling uncertain about what to say; Stage 2--identifying what to say but lacking the courage to say it, and Stage 3--taking the risk of saying something that might work. The remainder of this section will be organized using her three-part narrative and will also show the influences of her supervisor and an assertiveness course on her process of becoming assertive. It is important to note that her narrative is limited because she completed only one third of the journals; this narrative is a
retrospective of the *outcome* of her development, rather than the narrative unfolding through the journal *process*.

Connie’s experience in Stage 1 was such that there was a gap at first between what she thought she wanted to say and what she actually would say to her client. In the exit interview, Connie described her process of feeling uncertain:

I of course listened to every one of my tapes and I would write down what my client was saying and then I would sort of write, jot down notes of you know, duh, why didn’t you say this? Or, why didn’t you ask this? Or, you didn’t get into this at all. Um, and there were many times, not quite as many as there were in the beginning, that you know, oh, an issue is coming up that I really wanted to talk about, oh, am I going to mention it? Oops, missed it, he just moved on to something else. You know? And that would happen sometimes and toward the end I started to stop those more often and talk about that before I felt like, oops, missed it.

In listening to her tapes of the therapy session, Connie would reflect upon what topics remained unexplored. It seems that the process of reflecting after a session was useful for helping her to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2—from not knowing what to say, toward having some ideas of what she might wish to explore in the future. In the exit interview, Connie discussed a technique her supervisor had taught her early on about what she might ask while trying to understand the client’s experience:

And then what did you do? And what were you thinking? And what were you feeling? And what were you doing? And I, I did use that um, a number of times to talk through different situations, whether it was trying to figure out why he got so mad about something or why he was um, really hesitant to speak up about something. Um, it ended up coming out that he’s just terribly um, afraid of confrontation…he’s talking about being passive aggressive and that he doesn’t like confrontation and I can totally relate because that’s where I am but I don’t know how to move him past that because I haven’t moved past that. I’m working on it. But um, that was an interesting process. As, you know, I was working on helping him be more assertive during the semester, I think I was becoming more assertive also—not just with him but in other areas of my life too.
Connie demonstrated that she was able to talk to her client by using a technique that her supervisor provided to question different aspects of the client’s experience. The barrier for Connie here was the sense of not knowing how to help the client to grow in ways in which she herself felt that she needed to grow as well. Here Connie seemed to be firmly in Stage 2--she had identified that she might want to address the issue of passive-aggressive behavior in her client, but she felt unable to do so.

Connie linked her ability to help her client with assertiveness to her own process of growing to be a more assertive person. Connie had enrolled in a day-long didactic assertiveness training course and she believed that this experience had helped her to be responsive to her client. She shared this in the exit interview:

If I had not gone through the training, or was not trying to be more aware of my own assertiveness level, I don’t know how helpful I would have been with him. I don’t know how assertive I would have been with him and just opened my mouth and said, you know, this is what I’m thinking and this, this could be something you could say, how do you feel about this...I do believe that for each person, whatever they’re dealing with is, is, their experience...but I think it did put some things in perspective for me, so. So that was a good experience. That part of it, helping people with issues that I feel I’m working with too.

Connie’s development of assertiveness also came through in her personal life. During the entrance interview, she had remarked, “I just don’t give myself permission to be able to be assertive or to get what I feel I need and deserve...putting people’s feelings ahead of what my need may be.” However, in the exit interview, Connie went on to share this anecdote of assertiveness:

There were just a number of situations throughout the semester that I, that I found myself starting to be more assertive. And I don’t know that I really thought about it, thinking, “I’m going to be assertive now,” it just, it just started happening and I wouldn’t even notice and I would be talking to my dad
or a friend and saying, “you know I just got these new contacts or these new
glasses,” all of which I did this semester, “and the prescription just doesn’t
seem to be right, but maybe I just need to get used to it and deal.” But I’ve
been to see my eye doctor four or five times this semester...and someone
pointed out to me, wow, you’re really being assertive about this. And I said,
“I am? Yeah! Go me, I’m being assertive.”

Just as Connie had found her lack of assertiveness to be a barrier for her as a coun­
selor, so she found her development of assertiveness to be a newfound strength. She
experienced herself gradually growing more assertive in the sessions, revealing this in
the exit interview:

I became a lot more assertive...there were many times [my client] would say
something and I’d think in my head, am I gonna say it? Am I gonna say it?
Am I gonna let the moment pass? Am I gonna say it? And um, I finally
started to say the things more often, um, calling him on something if I hear
he’s describing an incident with his mom...before I’d just listen and that was
about it. And towards the end of the semester I’d start saying, “Well that just
sounds particularly passive-aggressive to me.” And he would agree (laughs).

Here Connie demonstrated that developing her own assertiveness brought her from
Stage 2 (identifying what to say but lacking the courage to say it) to Stage 3 of her
narrative (taking the risk of saying something that might work). Connie went on in
the exit interview to describe some other occasions in which she began to interject her
perspective and to use opportunities as they arose in counseling sessions. She
reported:

Certainly with [my client] later on and with my other client also, I, I really
questioned a lot of things. Um, my second client kept talking about equality
this in the relationship, independence this, and I really questioned her on what
those things mean for her and what they look like in the relationship, just so I
had a really clear picture of what she was talking about, um, and I, I found that
certainly to be very helpful. But I know those were things that I couldn’t quite
open my mouth up about at the beginning.

Here Connie revealed that she experienced a major shift—from being passive in
sessions and noting all the missed opportunities ("why didn't you say this? or, why didn’t you ask this? or, you didn’t get into this at all") to really questioning to find out more about the client’s meanings and experiences in relationships.

During Connie’s developmental journey, she progressed from being “very afraid to speak, very hesitant,” to “starting to pick up on what I might be able to be saying,” to “starting to take those risks and opening my mouth.” Connie clearly grew more self-assured both personally and professionally over the course of this 612 department practicum. A related theme, confrontation, emerged as being crucial to another co-author; confrontation is the focus of the next section.

Confrontation

For Linda Chelsea, confrontation emerged as a theme which she reflected upon extensively in her journal. Confrontation has been defined as “an open conflict of opposing ideas, forces, etc.” (Random House, 1997, p. 277). In the clinical situation, confrontation is also referred to as therapeutic contrasting (Trembley, 1996), which is a way in which a therapist uses “processes like contradiction, interpretations, and explanations... to bring a different and healthier perspective into client awareness” (p. 146). Linda Chelsea’s reflections about confrontation were both personal and clinical. She also noted experiencing me as having been confrontational in my relationship with her.

Linda Chelsea explored a variety of personal and clinical issues in her journal. As mentioned earlier, genuineness was an important theme for her throughout the
journal writing process. I wondered during the exit interview whether Linda Chelsea’s growth in her ability to be more genuine then paved the way for her to confront. She confirmed that this seemed to be so. Therefore, confrontation could be viewed as developmentally the next step for Linda Chelsea. Growing more comfortable with genuineness in personal and clinical encounters paved the way for her to begin to use confrontation in these same encounters. Perhaps this is why confrontation did not emerge as a journaling topic until the third set of journals. Nonetheless, it did emerge as a central theme for Linda Chelsea. She began her first entry in the third set of journals in this way:

I want to write about the issue of confrontation—about what confrontation is like for me. This is an area I’ve meant to explore for some time as I think it’s kind of a bittersweet experience both personally and professionally.

Linda Chelsea went on to describe theoretically in her journal what some of the barriers to confrontation were. She reported:

I think the greatest fear of confrontation for many people may be a fear of rejection. Clinical confrontation can be justified as part of the process, but if it’s not done right, may lead to a clinical relationship setback [a topic that emerged in the genuineness section]. I think that’s what I worry about most, damaging the relationship... sometimes I feel like a confrontation challenges their denials and if I take their denials away from them, I take away their protection, thereby leaving them very vulnerable... I wonder if I’ll be able to replace the denial with something more useful where they can continue to remain safe yet exposed. This seems an enormous responsibility and often very unpredictable. But I can handle it if it’s for a clinically positive purpose.

Although Linda Chelsea experienced some reservations in her ability to handle clinical confrontation, she believed in theory that she could handle it. In practice, however, she found confrontation to be much more challenging. She went on to write,

I’ve noticed, though, that it’s so tempting to let clients “off the hook”
prematurely because of my discomfort and I struggle to hang in there and let the process continue. I struggle with them struggling. I sometimes feel I’ve caused their desperation even though I clinically and cognitively know that the desperation needs to happen.

Here Linda Chelsea poignantly described the difficulty with utilizing her own power and authority in therapy. In writing, “I struggle with them struggling,” her experience is emblematic of the difficulty that many therapists experience in hanging in there with clients, while personally feeling the client’s discomfort or pain.

Linda Chelsea also experienced and explored the impact of confrontation in personal relationships, reporting similar fears for what it might do to the relationship. She wrote in her journal about the “biggest fear” of personal confrontation being the same as that of professional confrontation:

The biggest fear with personal confrontation is that it may result in further dissension in whatever relationship the confrontation occurs within. Naturally my more stable relationships can handle confrontation as long as the confrontation is appropriate. I also notice that the one confronting seems to hold the power and control albeit momentarily and in quality, personal relationships, I wish to share the control with another, not own it solely.

The challenge of confrontation, then, seemed related to issues of power and control for Linda Chelsea. These power and control dynamics emerged in clinical encounters (“sometimes I feel like a confrontation challenges their denials…thereby leaving them very vulnerable”) and in personal encounters (“the one confronting seems to hold the power… I wish to share the control”).

Linda Chelsea went on to describe times that she has skipped confronting others personally. This seemed to be due to a wish not to make others uncomfortable, as well as to an effort not to take on control in the relationship. She had this to say in
the exit interview about avoiding confrontation in a personal relationship: “I just want to say, look, you, you’re lying to me, this is ridiculous, but... if right now this person needs to be believed by somebody and that is my role... I need to believe them right now.” This was a contrast to her desire to be genuine in relationships. However, in this context, it seemed that foregoing confrontation was important in terms of upholding relationships. She elaborated:

Okay, even though cognitively, I know they’re lying but if what they need is for me to seemingly believe what they’re saying, if that’s the most beneficial to them at the time, I will forego the confrontation and let them feel supported by me I guess and I think I journaled a little bit about that.

The value of letting others feel supported, then, superseded the value of genuineness in some situations. More discussion and elaboration occurred regarding the process of journaling about confrontation, yielding a deeper understanding of this dynamic during the exit interview. Linda Chelsea remarked:

The journal—it did bring out—confrontation... that’s something that’s not resolved now by any means... You don’t want to confront because you don’t want to make people uncomfortable. Well, what is it about me that doesn’t want to make people uncomfortable? Am I afraid I’m gonna piss somebody off and they’re not gonna like me? I don’t think that’s my fear...

However, later in the exit interview, she acquiesced, “But I guess clinically, you know, there still is that desire not to piss people off.”

Linda Chelsea shared these thoughts about the ongoing concern of confrontation and where she now stood regarding this issue professionally:

I’m working through that and getting more to a clinical locus where okay, if confrontation is appropriate here, I need to confront, regardless of how I feel... It’s not easy for me, it’s difficult... the biggest thing is, is, is it in the right place [clinically]. You know, sometimes it’s, I mean, it’s the greatest thing that could happen, but it’s like jumping into cold water, you know, you
never really know how it’s going to turn out.

The relationship between Linda Chelsea and me was one in which confrontation felt useful and effective to Linda Chelsea. Interestingly, although she stated in the journal and in the exit interview that she felt concerned that confrontation could damage relationships that she had with her clients, she stated in the exit interview that she felt that confrontation by me was a facilitative process and useful to her development:

You kept me in line, and you, you confronted, um, with your feedback and that was good, I mean, a lot of things that just caused me to reflect more... it was just, it was like a therapy session, it was good.

In this context, Linda Chelsea placed me in the role of therapist and herself in the role of client, that I confronted her in her journal in a way that is similar to the way a therapist confronts a client during a therapy session. She also pointed out that the feedback that I provided in the journal was useful in addressing some incongruities that emerged in her journal. When asked what these were, she elaborated:

There were a couple of things. Confrontation was one, the issue of confrontation. Um, also sometimes—we always talk about putting our, our own feelings on the back burner with a client. And your point, is that necessary? And I’m thinking, that is very profound.

In the exit interview, then, Linda Chelsea likened the process of my feedback to that of a therapist who appropriately confronted and who facilitated further reflection. She appreciated my illuminating some incongruities that emerged in her journal entries about confrontation as she tried to make sense of them. Although confrontation emerged as a central theme, it emerged late in the process, after Linda Chelsea's development of genuineness provided room for the theme of confrontation to emerge.
Because the theme of confrontation emerged later in the process, it was less
fully understood than many of the other themes, though Linda Chelsea clearly was
engaged in a reflective practice in order to understand this narrative of confrontation
better. This narrative of confrontation remained an ongoing one for her as this
research ended. Another theme which gained momentum as this research ended was
one co-author’s experience of spirituality as a central theme; spirituality is the focus
of the next section.

Spirituality

Each of the co-authors was asked in the entrance interview, as one of the
demographic questions, with what religious tradition she identified. However, only
for Marta did spirituality emerge as a major theme, continuously important in her
journal, interviews, and interactions with herself and others. For Marta, spirituality
was a central theme that emerged in her journal and in her new professional identity
through her ongoing efforts at self care, acceptance of her illness, and her desire for
mindfulness.

In the entrance interview, Marta reflected on the importance of mindfulness,
and her wish to be in the present moment. She remarked:

Letting go of the outcome and being fully present...is really important. That
is one thing that I have learned and that’s what I know I have. Because for
awhile my future was very uncertain and very scary...I’ve learned to let go of
expectations and outcomes and believe in the unfolding of the process.

Marta’s belief in the "unfolding of the process" led her to an interest in journal writing
and in regular spiritual practices. In an early journal entry, Marta began sharing the
importance of mindfulness for her journal writing process and was encouraged to clarify the meaning of her experience of this state of being. The concept of mindfulness recurred over and over in her entries. In some ways, it seemed to be an antidote to anxiety. Marta wrote in her journal about the fears leading up to her first client session. She wrote, “I pushed my fears back into their box. I will pull them out later and examine them to see if they make sense...these fears are intruding upon my mindfulness.”

However, mindfulness seemed to win out over fearfulness as Marta developed reflective practice in her journal. In an early entry reflecting on her first therapy session with that same client, she wrote, “I felt in control. I was mindful.” She discussed that her client relaxed and she relaxed too. In relaxing, she wrote that she was able to do the reflection of his feelings and to keep him on track.

In the exit interview, Marta reflected further on the process of getting centered, which for her involved rituals and helped her to get into a mindful state. For Marta, rituals had emerged as important throughout this research—in fact, the ritual of journal writing as a spiritual practice and the structure provided by this project was part of its appeal as a way to self-care. Marta had this to say during the exit interview:

Last night I realized that it’s really important for me to take the time to center myself every day and the therapist that I used to see did it before she counseled in the morning, she sort of had a little ritual where she lit a candle and just, you know, centered herself and then when she was done for the day she would take a shower. Every day this was a ritual, she would take a shower and when she was in the shower, the shower was symbolic of just washing all the stuff away so that she could go on with her life. Sort of a, a cleansing, you know, that she didn’t want to carry that stuff around with her.
Here, Marta demonstrated the importance to her of ritual, of cleansing, and of the desire and need to center herself not just personally, but also to have a spiritual practice in her demanding work as a counselor. Further, centering herself and cleansing were both particularly necessary and complicated by her illness. Marta reflected in her journal:

> It is difficult for me to admit that I am not rid of this disease...I truly want to believe that it is gone from my life--and I can get on with being an employed professional and join the ranks of the average healthy folks, It's an illusion. What is the average healthy person anyway...I want to be well now. I have a job to do. I can't be sick anymore!

The process Marta described here is that of finding her professional purpose, growing as a counselor, and reflecting upon it throughout the construction of her narrative. However, at the same time, despite her efforts, Marta needed to release herself from the idea of having a certain spiritual purpose and accept again the realities of her illness. She reflected upon this in the exit interview as well:

> I've always had an idea that I was destined for some sort of purpose in life and what if that's an illusion...this purpose thing is sort of like, you know, in a spiritual way, saying I have work to do to help humanity, and what if that's not true? What if I'm just destined to illness and death? What if that's it...Is that okay? Can I live with that? That I don't have any purpose or destiny, you know? That [maybe] I haven't been called to do something great.

Here there is a shift from the earlier journal entry ("I have a job to do. I can't be sick anymore") to the soul-searching in the exit interview ("Can I live with that? That I don't have any purpose or destiny?"). Letting go of the notion of being destined for a purpose in life, particularly while training successfully for that very purpose, was a paradox, in that Marta was being called upon to both grow professionally as a counselor, while accepting the idea that her health might ultimately limit the work she was
able to do. In doing this, Marta needed a reflective and spiritual practice to remain centered and mindful, so that she could work toward this acceptance through her journal and self care rituals. In the journal, she reflected:

I have been sick with this disease for 30 years...I talk about acceptance, but in my heart--hope that the disease will go away--is always there. Hope is always there. Does that mean that somehow I think my life would be better...I know this isn't true. I have written about this many times. Yet, I seem to have to remind myself. It is the way it is. Accept it.

This entry is poignant in its reminder that the process of acceptance is always a process. Many times, Marta would think she had reached acceptance, only to find that it was elusive, and a process rather than a destination. For Marta, there was a hope that acceptance would not be necessary, particularly now that she had found her professional purpose.

The connection of acceptance of illness to the spiritual realm was a topic of much reflection for Marta throughout this journal writing process. This is further elucidated by Marta in the exit interview:

You know, you have to have a warrior spirit, it's not that you get complacent. But then there's a point of acceptance as well and it's hard to describe that to people. That um, that in coming to terms with living with illness is, um, it's so hard because we place values on everything. You know, good or bad, and illness is usually bad, it's bad. It's evil, it's punishment, it's something that's undesirable, and then there's also all sorts of other things that are attached to it, like there's something wrong with you if you're sick. Wrong spirituality, wrong mentally, you're not living right, you know you're degenerate, you know there are all these attachments... when I first started in the holistic health movement a long, long time ago they had a thing where they said disease, and they would, they would separate it out as disease. And then they would say, that means that your soul is in disease and that's why you are sick. You got to get your soul right.

For Marta, coming to terms with living with illness was made difficult by the values...
placed on illness; namely, that physical illness is a sign that something is wrong spiritually. The necessity of having a "warrior spirit" and having a point of acceptance at the same time was notable; here Marta illustrated that while she did keep fighting and she didn't want to be complacent, at the same time there was a need for acceptance that aspects of illness were out of her control. At the same time, in cultivating mindfulness and reflective and spiritual practice, Marta was able to experience some control over aspects of this experience ("I felt in control. I was mindful").

Although the theme of spirituality was always central for Marta, it seemed to shift and to gain momentum as her sense of her professional identity was realized over the course of her development as a counselor. For Marta, her spirituality provided assistance with the process of acceptance of her illness, and with the paradox of preparing professionally and letting go of aspirations at the same time. Spirituality also helped Marta to remain mindful and to experience relief. Deb also had an experience of relief through a process of letting go; letting go is the focus of the next section.

**Letting Go**

All of the co-authors in this study understandably had anxieties and concerns about their development as counselors. For Deb, these anxieties were intense, and then there was an experience of letting go which was also quite pronounced. Skovholt (2001) noted that letting go is related to learning to set limits, which many counselors do not learn until they first overdo it and exhaust themselves. “For some practitioners, finding the appropriate level of letting go is difficult,” (Skovholt, 2001,
For Deb, her process of letting go was related to a complex configuration of experiences with her supervisor and with her first client. She reflected on this letting-go experience in her journal, and it emerged as a core part of her narrative as a counselor. As Deb reflected, her initial self doubt, her supervisor, and her client all played key roles in her process of letting go.

For Deb, letting go of a prevalent sense of self doubt was crucial in her narrative. She commented in the entrance interview on her experience of self-doubt and sense of being unprepared as a counselor:

I guess when you start this practicum there's a part of you that feels like, okay, I wouldn't be here if I didn't know what to do. But then when you get in there and start doing it and it doesn't feel right... it's like oh my god, you know? (laughs). What am I doing, haven't I learned anything, am I ready for this? You know, I started doing a lot of that self-doubt stuff after that first session.

In fact, Deb's self doubt led her to assume that because of her, her client would not be coming back for further sessions after the first night. She commented in the entrance interview:

I want to know what the statistics are of counselors coming, or clients coming for one time and then never coming back. I want to know statistics. That will either help my case or hurt my case against myself, I guess.

Because of Deb's self doubt, she hoped for reassurance from her supervisor, but also felt that it was not her supervisor's role to give that to her. Deb viewed her supervisor as being very serious. Deb remarked in the entrance interview:

You know, she's very serious about it... all in all she is serious and I know we're going to learn, I know I will learn from her, I already have... I'm not saying she's rigid, I'm not saying she's inflexible, but she does take it serious... you know I have this, this dry sense of humor and sometimes I'll say something and you know at first she would just kind of look at me, you know? (laughs). And I thought, oh dear, this is not gonna go good.
Though Deb experienced her supervisor as being very serious and her supervisor did not reassure Deb with regard to Deb’s sense of self doubt, Deb also viewed her supervisor as supportive. During the entrance interview, Deb remarked,

You know the one time I did feel that she was really supportive is when she came in the room [before Deb’s first session as a counselor] and she went, “Deb, that is him [Deb’s client] with the baby. Now what do you think we should do,” or something, I can’t remember how she put it... I sensed that she was a little panicked by it... we were on an equal level and that felt kind of good. And she didn’t pressure me when I’m like, “I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know what to do (laughs). I’m not that kind of person, I just gotta go out there and do it.” She’s like, “ Okay.” So I appreciated that... I felt pretty fond toward her that night.

Deb reflected in her journal about feeling good in this interaction with her supervisor and with how she handled this issue with the client, which was to ask him to let her know in the future if he had a babysitter problem so that she and he could discuss whether he should bring the baby or just cancel the appointment. However, that same night, Deb immediately felt concerns about her ability to work effectively with her client. Deb wrote in her journal:

[My client] talked a lot and was difficult to follow. I really fault myself for this rambling as I had asked [him] to bring me up to speed as to why he entered counseling in the first place... I felt like I was lost for the most part of the session.

This sense of being lost and her self blame for not handling the session differently reflect both Deb’s self doubt and her high demands of herself. She disclosed in her journal many reactions about this client and her concerns about being able to work with him effectively:

This man has been in counseling since 1999... nothing’s been resolved, nothing’s been really concretely worked on... So my anxiety is more along the lines of, okay, I know what needs to be done, now, can I do this and can I
reach some resolution with this man? Because there is no need for this man to continue on the way he’s coming... I really feel I will be doing the same thing all the many other counselors have done with [him] and that is to let him vent. I don’t particularly feel good about doing that as I feel if [he] can be kept on the right track there may be some progress to be made with him.

Here Deb reflected on her beliefs of what might elicit change from the client. These beliefs included the sense that venting in therapy is not sufficient to bring about client change, and also her hypothesis that helping her client to stay “on the right track” could yield therapeutic progress. In this entry, Deb also revealed her sense that this client had not yet accomplished anything in counseling and that she wanted to be the one who would reach him—revealing her sense of the “glamorized expectations” (Skovholt, 2001) that a beginning therapist often has with clients. Deb also relayed this in the entrance interview, adding, “That’s a pet peeve for me—people who do not finish things.” As mentioned earlier, a sense of effectiveness was important to Deb, and it was evidenced here again in her desire to be the counselor who makes a difference for this client.

The pivotal experience of letting go that occurred for Deb was, not surprisingly, related to a mixture of intense personal and professional interactions, in which Deb had a difficult personal experience, followed by an important individual supervision session and a counseling session with this client. Deb related in her journal the very sad story of a young girl with whom she had worked closely over several years of this girl’s involvement with the state. This girl had experienced so much abuse and suffered so many losses in her family of origin that she was not able to be adopted and to live within a family; she kept running away. She eventually gave birth to a baby,
who died. Deb went to the funeral. Deb wrote in her journal:

It was especially sad since it was a baby, but also it was a declaration of all that has been bad in her life. No one seemed to cry for this young girl’s pain but me, and when I did, everyone looked at me like I was stupid...I was mortified by the course of events that took place at this funeral. Even the pastor fell asleep while others read scriptures. The events surrounding this funeral felt surreal. After the funeral, I had to go to class, but I first had supervision with [my supervisor]. I would never have gotten through this night without that hour I spent with her in supervision. I had such a flurry of emotions going on; I couldn’t discern what I felt much less what someone else felt. [My supervisor] helped me process my own feelings and how my emotions may affect my session tonight. She said a lot that was especially helpful, but the one piece I remember so vividly because it proved to be very true that night was that no therapist is always at 100% when they are conducting sessions and sometimes, these are the sessions that prove to be some of the best.

Feeling “such a flurry of emotions,” being validated in these emotions, and then assured that “no therapist is always at 100%” was a very powerful experience. For Deb, being told that when a counselor feels less than perfect “these are the sessions that prove to be some of the best,” freed her from some of her high expectations of needing to be at her absolute best in order to be effective. She went on to write this in her journal:

I wasn’t feeling much like being a counselor that night, I just felt like being a human, and that is how I planned to deal with my upcoming session with [my client]. It was amazing how this worked this evening. When [my client] began to ramble I said, “I only want to talk about what happened today, stay with today only”...he stayed with the day quite well and we were even able to take some of his issues from the day and relate them to his anger, which he decided he wanted to be his goal to work on.

Earlier, Deb had identified her belief that if she helped her client to “stay on track” that he and she could work productively on helping him to meet some of his therapeutic goals. Deb had spent energy trying to redirect her client in the past when he switched from topic to topic. However, it seemed that as Deb accepted herself for
feeling less than her best during this session, she allowed herself to ask the client
directly to stay on task. She felt a sense of effectiveness in doing so. Deb wrote
about her gratitude for this event in her journal:

I am so thankful to [my supervisor] and her wealth of knowledge and skill, but
also her support. I know at one time, early in this practicum, I felt she was too
serious about all this... I felt it was more about techniques and not about using
experience and insights. I feel that I have a vast experience to draw from and I
have pretty good instincts, but I didn’t feel [my supervisor] wanted me to util-
ize these things as much as she did techniques. I am beginning to see... that
“feeling” a session (if that makes sense) and utilizing good techniques is pro-
ably the best a counselor can do for a client. [My supervisor] was so suppor-
tive of my feelings today, too, which is not really her job, to uphold my emo-
tions, but she did, and I truly appreciate that support.

Here Deb relates her experience of feeling supported emotionally and being able to
then support her client emotionally as well. Deb also began to feel that her experience
and instincts were as important as the counseling techniques, and to begin to put all
these pieces together as a counselor.

In a later entry, Deb wrote in her journal that she told her supervisor during
their next supervision session what the previous interaction in supervision had meant
to her. Deb wrote in her journal about this:

It meant more to me than anything I have experienced in my classes... I felt
more relaxed at that moment than at any other time during my practicum. We
talked about what that meant in terms of my working with [my client] this
evening. It dawned on me that if I feel relaxed and comfortable and safe, so
might [my client]. This was in fact the case.

Deb’s feeling of relaxation is a critical element here. In feeling like she could be
human and that it was okay not to have a perfect session, she could finally relax not
just in one session, but also to feel more relaxed in future sessions as well. Deb attri-
buted much of this relaxation to her supervisor. Ultimately, in the exit interview, Deb
had this to say about her supervisor: "She kind of allowed me to be myself... I learned a lot from her, I learned how to be comfortable with myself from her, and that’s because she let me be."

For Deb, the letting go she experienced seemed to be complete when she realized that this client had made progress in counseling. Deb remarked in the exit interview:

He had actually internalized something at the end of our session. We were walking out and he stopped and he said, "You know, I’ve got to tell you something, Deb." He said, "My cousin was talking to me about her relationships and her life and you know, everything she said to me was negative. You know what I told her? I told her, now let’s review this situation. What are the positives about this situation?" And you know I [Deb] was really impressed and I told him…"That is just very, very impressive to me because that’s what you’ve been working on is how to take these negative situations and really look at them realistically and you can take a negative situation and just make it snowball into a huge, huge horrible mess, or you can take a negative situation and you can really work through where your thoughts are coming from, why those thoughts might be coming to you and turn it into a more realistic, more positive situation," I said, "and that’s what you were doing with your cousin" and I said, "that’s great, that’s wonderful, you’re doing that for you, and you’re actually doing that with somebody else." So that’s when I felt better.

Internalization is a process in which people “take in psychologically, aspects of their significant relational experiences... these internalized self-other experiences... eventually become a part of the self” (Trembley, 1996). The sense that her client had internalized the counseling experience and was sharing with significant others in his life what he had learned from Deb let Deb know that she had been effective in working with this client. Deb had also written about this event in her journal, adding, “I was ecstatic. It affirmed that [my client] has actually been getting something out of the sessions. I was elated to see [my client’s] growth... I am feeling some relief.”
Relief was a welcome emotion after feelings of being overwhelmed and anxious. Relief was a crucial aspect of this letting-go process that Deb went through during the practicum. Although for some counselors it is difficult to figure out how to set limits and how to find a level of letting go (Skovholt, 2001), Deb figured much of this out during the practicum, and seemed to internalize it.

The goal of this section was to present the four individual themes (assertiveness, confrontation, spirituality, letting go) that were personal to the developmental journeys of the co-authors individually. These themes provide a way to understand the co-authors' growth in reflective practice and the way this development was constructed in their journals. Themes pertaining to the process of the journal writing experience were also identified. These process themes are the focus of the next section.

Process of Journal Writing

The process of journal writing for each of the co-authors was examined throughout this study. Keeping a journal for a class and for an audience was not a new experience for some of the co-authors, and yet the process of doing so did affect what the co-authors wrote and how they went about the writing process. Therefore, it was a topic that was discussed at length with each co-author during the exit interview. Several core themes emerged and will be discussed in this section. The themes that emerged are Theme 1: the impact of the researcher on this study; Theme 2: the role of feedback on the process, and Theme 3: journals as a record of professional
development and a source of continued reflection beyond the study.

Theme 1: Impact of the Researcher on This Study

In general, qualitative research is personal, and the relationship between the researcher and those participating in the study tends to be closer than that which occurs in quantitative research (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Sharing a private journal for a researcher audience, while developing a new professional identity also could be expected to be a sensitive process for the co-authors. For the co-authors even to agree to participate was to consent to a process that would inherently have some vulnerability for them. In examining the journal writing process in this study, the researcher’s impact on this study emerged as a central theme. The researcher as audience had a crucial impact on many key components of this study, including the co-authors’ process of keeping a journal, the similarities and differences of this journal to other journals the co-authors had kept, their adherence to the suggested writing guidelines, and their perceived barriers to the journal. These components are all discussed in this section, with quotes from selected co-authors to illustrate this theme. This section is organized in this way: (a) structure, (b) utility of this journal, (c) researcher as audience, (d) researcher as therapist, and (e) maintaining the journal.

Structure

Three of the co-authors had commented at the beginning of this study that being involved in this research would require them to keep a journal, and this was
appealing to them. Even the decision to be involved in this research was partly out of an expectation that participation would provide a structure for them that they might not provide for themselves. Marta wrote this in her first journal entry the same day as the entrance interview:

I believe in the therapeutic power of journal writing and welcome the structure the project provides in ensuring that I do journal this semester. I know I have issues to uncover and explore and I know I need healing in some areas. The most important aspect is making sure I set aside time to reflect, sort out my feelings and thoughts, centering myself, so that I can conserve my energy and not waste it through anxious distraction and turmoil, which is what happens to me when I get too busy, overwhelmed.

In this entry, Marta’s goals for the journal are clear: to reflect, to sort out her feelings and thoughts, and to center herself. She viewed participation in this research as a way to “ensure that I do journal this semester.” In this entry, there is a hint that when she is busy and overwhelmed, it might be hard to maintain a journal, but that possibly making a commitment to the project, or being held accountable by the researcher would promote her following through with the journal. It seemed that committing to another person carried a sense of duty or responsibility that committing to self alone might not have had for Marta.

Committing to the researcher and then feeling a sense of responsibility that might not have occurred for herself alone also seemed to be a factor for Connie. Connie made a similar remark in the entrance interview about welcoming the structure of this project, notable perhaps because she did not actually follow through with the journal after all:

Maybe being part of this study would be good because I’d be forced to have to continue to do that [keep a journal]. Because I would not sit down and do that
on my own, I just, I just know me and wouldn’t do it (laughs). Much as I’d want to, so knowing that I have to makes me do it, and I’m always glad I did.

The thought of the research or researcher “forcing” Connie to keep a journal is striking in that it reveals something of the expected challenge of the journal writing process for Connie. The awareness that “I would not sit down and do that on my own,” paired with the realization that the outcome of keeping a journal has been worthwhile (“I’m always glad I did”) seemed to lead to her decision to take part in this study.

Linda Chelsea also experienced this research as structuring a process for her. In fact, she had never kept her own journal, though she had always wanted to, and she looked to the structure of this research to make her do something she had always wanted to do. She remarked in the entrance interview.

Actually, I don’t keep my own journal. I think about it, like many people do, all the time, but have never had discipline enough to do that...I would very much like to do that, so I will admit that this gives me an opportunity to do something that, one of those things I’ve been meaning to do, but now, you’re actually helping me to do something that I wanted to do anyhow, so if I made a commitment to do it, then I will do it.

As with Connie and Marta, making a commitment to me to engage in this research project was an important factor in Linda Chelsea’s decision to keep a journal. In making a commitment to me, she was provided with an opportunity in which she could work on something she had always wanted to work on for herself but had never actually committed to doing.

In considering the development and significance of reflective practice to the co-authors and the way in which they constructed their written narratives through journals, the context in which they kept these journals is important. Several of the
co-authors utilized this research to take part in a process they wanted to do anyway, wanting to be committed to it and seeking the structure provided by this research.

**Utility of the Journal**

For the co-authors who had kept journals before, the wish for the kind of structure provided by this research suggests the possibility of their wanting to keep a different kind of journal this semester than they had in the past, or certainly the possibility of wanting to increase the likelihood of sticking with the process. Linda Chelsea, who had no prior experiences with keeping a personal journal, (and only one brief academic experience), had this to say during the exit interview about the process:

I haven’t journaled much... reflecting a lot on thoughts and feelings on paper... the effects of clients on us, how we affect clients, and then even as I reflected a lot on like, personal situations that were important to me at the time... [for me] to submit entries and [you to] point out maybe some incongruities between what we think we’re experiencing and what really may be going on. Sometimes we don’t have the foresight to do that ourselves, so again, the journaling helped with that as well, it helped bridge the gap so that was neat.

For Linda Chelsea to be an inexperienced journal keeper and to have the ability to readily reflect on important personal and professional experiences is noteworthy, as is her willingness to acknowledge gaps or incongruities between her experience and “what really may be going on.” Linda Chelsea demonstrated a willingness to reflect on potential misperceptions, to construct a story and then to try to construct a more accurate story that would reflect her perceptions and her own limitations.

For Deb, this journal was useful to her in a way that was similar to previous
journals she had kept, though during the exit interview she noted one difference as well:

It’s always good for me to put on paper how I’m feeling because sometimes it’s easier for me to do that than to tell somebody... I think journaling helps me keep in touch with all aspects of myself... physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. And I think that’s how, in a nutshell, journaling helps me. I can keep in touch; I can look at all aspects of my life... as far as my practicum goes, there wasn’t any kind of spiritual—so that wasn’t really addressed. But I don’t think that was an issue either.

“In a nutshell,” Deb summarized what the value of the journal writing experience had been. The content of her journal does demonstrate that she often wrote when she felt ill (physically); when she was stretched in her new professional role (mentally), and when she was experiencing feelings like frustration or satisfaction (emotionally). In this particular journal, she did not attend to the spiritual, though she also noted that this aspect did not emerge as a salient part of her practicum experience.

Marta also experienced this journal writing process as different from her experience of keeping other journals in the past. She remarked in the exit interview:

I think that for this one I paid more attention to the professional aspect. And more of like, how I was dealing with my clients and stuff... life is big and complicated, you could write all day. You know, so I just wrote about highlights of, basically of my counseling and a lot of times in my other journals they’ll be more poetic and have more imagery. This was more cerebral I think...

Paying more attention to the professional aspect was a decision that made sense, given that this project was focused on counselor development. Marta experienced a need to limit what she wrote (“life is big and complicated, you could write all day”). It is notable that she decided that imagery and poetic material was perhaps not appropriate for this type of journal, though the guidelines had stated that anything was appropriate, as...
long as there was some attention to counselor development.

Like Marta, Connie also experienced this journal as being different from others she had kept:

It did feel more academic than just a personal journal would... as I think back, I was not very consistent with personal journals either um, I guess it [this journal] was hard because I, I have a hard time feeling like I have to sit down to do some writing rather than, “I feel like I want to write something,” or “I’m feeling like I want to figure this out,” um, and I think even when I’m doing that writing is not the most comfortable way for me to do that. So it’s, it’s just easier for me to talk it through, than you know, be trying to write it out... I haven’t done a personal journal in quite some time.

This statement represented a shift for Connie from the entrance interview and her initial thoughts that being “forced” to write would be useful. Here she clarified that if given the choice between writing it out and talking it through, it would be more comfortable and desirable to choose to talk it out. Connie did have that choice this semester, and experienced supervision as an excellent place to reflect and to work through issues:

I certainly felt I was processing the whole semester, either in class or with my individual supervision... though I wasn’t writing things down, you know, by that point, I was certainly still thinking about things... I didn’t feel like I was coming up with anything new that would have, that I would have felt I wanted to write down in the journal, that I hadn’t talked about in supervision... I was, I was having a very hard time being still, um, and writing just was too still a project for me.

Connie believed that her development of reflective practice was able to occur outside of the journal, and that this made the journal writing process unnecessary for her. She remarked in the exit interview:

I had to rehash the same stuff that I rehashed in class and then with individual supervision... I felt like I just kept rehashing and I felt like I didn’t have time to keep rehashing... it felt like it was being so redundant for me.
According to Connie, reflection seemed to occur for Connie in multiple places, though eventually she stopped using the journal to reflect. I also wondered later whether she was processing outside of the journal in an other-centered way with her supervisor and peers, but not actually engaging in a self-reflective process. During the exit interview, Connie stated, “I guess I’m fortunate that I did have so many venues and was getting what I felt I needed.”

Like Connie, Deb experienced the benefits of reflecting outside of the journal through different venues. One way in which she reflected outside of the journal was through a communication with me during the semester. Deb emailed me this question: “Do you have some words of advice, encouragement, humor, ANYTHING that will help... I need all the listening ears I can get right now to get through school.” I sent a response in which I expressed empathy for Deb’s struggle, requesting that Deb continue to let me know about her process and how I might be helpful, and questioning whether the journal was useful in providing relief or perspective. I also asked in the email, “Are there topics that you need to go over that you have not, or stresses that you have had no outlet for in the journal?” Because Deb did not ultimately address this event in the journal, I wondered whether there were other times when strong feelings or crucial experiences were going on that did not get explored in the journal. Deb had this to say about it during the exit interview:

You know, I probably didn’t write that because we had talked about it, or I had emailed it. It’s still journaling in my head... I think I didn’t realize some of the things that I could have journaled until now... I never journaled about how I felt that part of my frustration had to do with the fact that being in this practicum took time away from my family... didn’t realize that was part of my frustration until just recently, actually.
Deb's process of "journaling in my head" was a way in which she was reflecting outside of the journal, thereby making the need to write in the journal less necessary in this instance. Her comment that she didn't realize some of the things that she could have journaled until now also is noteworthy; reflection outside of the journal seemed to stimulate an awareness of additional areas of reflection that might have been included in the journal. The reverse may have also been true: the act of journaling may have also facilitated these out-of-journal experiences.

**Researcher as Audience**

In this past section, the co-authors' process of keeping a journal and the similarities and differences of this journal to others they had kept were discussed. One way in which reflection occurred was within the journal, but there were also venues outside of the journal, such as supervision and "journaling in my head." In this study, the researcher also stimulated further reflection by acting as a resource for the co-authors. For example, as discussed, Deb contacted the researcher for some support during a stressful time.

Another way in which the researcher stimulated further reflection was through being an audience for the co-authors' journals. Although I experienced myself as being straightforward with regard to my expectations for the written journals, some of the co-authors perceive me as having unspoken expectations. The co-authors demonstrated an awareness that they were keeping their journal for an audience, which had an impact on what they chose to write.
An example of a co-author's interpretation of my expectations can be found in the experience of Connie. While engaged in this research project, Connie had the sense that her journaling was not what I had in mind. She remarked in the exit interview:

It did feel a little bit like, I don't know. I don't know how it felt. To some extent...that you were looking for something deeper than I had the time to be doing, or that I felt I had the patience to be journaling.

Here Connie revealed a sense of not being deep enough. This seems similar to her experience in the pre-practicum and to her initial experience in this practicum, of not being good enough. It seems here that she was revealing a sense that she was unable to meet some unstated expectation of this project, and this was experienced as frustrating to her. Although she had reported that she has very high expectations of herself, being accountable to a researcher audience seemed to add to her stress level in this project.

Marta also commented during the exit interview that her awareness of the researcher as audience contributed somewhat to the content of the journal. She mentioned that she did not share certain private experiences with anyone, and that these were also left out of her journal:

I guess I wrote about pretty much everything. I think that, once in awhile I would edit it, I mean there are places, private areas that I just don't show to people, you know. That no one's going to know and that's just...you were getting, you know, what I could write about.

Marta did not comment on what these private experiences were for her, but did remark, “I think I was pretty open with regard to my clients,” revealing that she was not omitting these aspects of her professional development in the journal. Her
awareness of the researcher as audience also contributed to her experience of the jour-
nal in that she felt a responsibility to provide details for my benefit:

I think it [the journal] was more difficult because I wanted you to understand it, you know... I couldn’t just mention somebody, you know, it seemed like I had to give a little background. And, you know, kind of give you a platform of understanding, you know, where things were coming from. And I didn’t want to just go into the poetic thing (laughs), then that would be way open to interpretation, it’s like, not necessarily, you wouldn’t necessarily really know what I was experiencing. But I did want to give you some of my art because I felt that that was you know, um, a lot of how I express myself and work things out.

The desire to give me “a platform of understanding” was revealed in the introductions and descriptions that Marta provided of the people in her personal and professional lives. Her decision to provide me with some of her art, but not with her poetry is interesting, being that I have more of a background with which to understand poetry than art. Regardless, she revealed here a concern that I “wouldn't necessarily know what she was experiencing” and made efforts to prevent that through providing background and choosing particular journaling formats.

Marta commented directly on the new experience of having an audience for her journal, describing it as therapeutic. She stated:

When you have diaries and journals, you know, they just go back into the footlocker afterward. And it’s not something that anybody reads. And so that was interesting. And I didn’t find it offensive or annoying or anything... there was actually a comfort in it that someone was reading my innermost thoughts. And sharing that with somebody else was therapeutic...

For Marta as an experienced journal writer, she was not accustomed to having her journal read by others. Having an audience was not a bad experience; in fact, she found it to be a “comfort,” still choosing to share some of her innermost thoughts and
experiencing it as comforting to do so.

**Researcher as Therapist**

The researcher as audience emerged as an important component of the researcher's impact. Another important component was the perception of the researcher as a therapist and of this process of journal writing as being comparable to the therapeutic process. This was true of Linda Chelsea's experience. She found consulting with me to be beneficial, likening my role to that of a therapist, who was able both to support and to appropriately challenge at times. She commented in the exit interview:

> It was just, it was like a therapy session, it was good... you confronted with your feedback and that was good, I mean, a lot of things that just caused me to reflect more, so, as long as there's another individual to process with, I think it's great.

Linda Chelsea particularly appreciated having another person to process with, and viewed me as being a major impetus for stimulating her further reflection. During the exit interview, she went on to say:

> It would be neat if, if students could connect with someone, a mentor, that person stayed with you throughout your tenure in graduate school and maybe you met once a week or once every two weeks for forty-five minutes and you journaled or something. Almost like therapy.

Here Linda Chelsea makes a training suggestion, expressing her belief that counseling students in general would benefit from the outside support and encouragement of a mentor. Not surprisingly, she also expressed that she wished this project would have gone on longer because the process was highly beneficial for her.
Linda Chelsea drew further parallels to a therapy session, discussing how she got into the process of journaling slowly, but then grew more comfortable with self-disclosing as she went along with the process. She mused, "If I were, if I were a client, how would I enter the therapeutic process? Probably the same way I entered the journal writing process... I didn’t even think about that until just now." Linda Chelsea elaborated further on this idea:

I would probably enter a therapeutic situation the same, as a client, or um, in a group or something or peer supervision the same way. I don’t think I’d jump in saying, okay, this is what I need and this is what I feel... Maybe I was testing the waters, didn’t think consciously that I was testing the waters... there’s a comfort level you have to establish with journaling... certainly I felt okay, this is journaling, I’ve gone deep enough for now (laughs). So maybe I put a limit on it... I actually got them out and was reading the early entries versus the entries at the end, are completely different, you know, and was it my comfort level in journaling?

This reflection on her reflection that took place during the exit interview revealed many important aspects of Linda Chelsea’s experience. She evaluated her own journal as being at first not “deep,” noting that she didn’t just “jump in” and state how she felt. She then was able to draw a comparison to the way in which clients in therapy might be “testing the waters” at first without even realizing it. Ultimately, she reviewed her entries and discovered that the later entries were less limited or more extensive in reflection and pondered the reasons why. In doing so, Linda Chelsea demonstrated the utility of looking back at the journal. The notion of the journal as a continual source of reflection to look back on will be detailed in the discussion of Theme 3. The idea of reflecting on reflection is worthy of further discussion here, especially in the context of looking at the journal writing guidelines and how they
were implemented.

Maintaining the Journal

In the exit interviews, part of the discussion of the journal writing was related to the process of maintaining the journal. This included how much the co-authors wrote, how often, and whether they utilized the guiding questions that I provided. Most notably, it was recommended that the participants do an analysis section, in which they would “reflect on their reflection” immediately afterward, yet none of the co-authors did this.

Linda Chelsea described in detail how much she had written, and pondered about how the guidelines influenced her process:

I’m wondering if you hadn’t suggested two a week, which was a suggestion, I believe, would I have done two a week, probably not more... there was so much that I could have written about, but I think it was at least twice a week. Um, I noticed a pattern, I was writing like on every Tuesday or Thursday or something like that. So I tried to get out of that, I tried to pick up a weekend day here or there... maybe there were times that I was feeling a little more vulnerable or a little more facilitative myself to journaling or what all... I feel like writing about—maybe my anger that took place three hours after I left [my client] if I would have written about that same anger two days later, would I have been the same? So I don’t know.

Linda Chelsea’s reflection about what she wrote raises an important consideration of the possible influence of a writer’s mood on when she writes and on the content of the entries. This is reminiscent of Wiener and Rosenwald’s (1993) observation that individuals sometimes write in the journal while in a particular frame of mind, potentially skewing their written experience. For Linda Chelsea to note that sometimes she might be feeling more vulnerable or facilitative and try to then write at those times...
speaks to her level of engagement with the process. Linda Chelsea used the guiding questions that were provided to structure her entries, and also engaged in reflection about why she picked certain guiding questions over other ones.

Although Marta was focused on the professional, academic aspects of the journal, she did not use the guiding questions to structure her journal. She remarked:

I was hoping that was not going to be a problem because you know, at times I would read them I would say, okay, you know, let’s try to consider that, but it was more like what would overshadow those guiding questions? You know, what would come up that seemed more beckoning to my attention... and so I just decided that I would go with that. Rather than, you know, stick to a structure.

For Marta, who was an experienced journal keeper and wrote more extensively than any other co-author, use of the guiding questions was not necessary and she was able to look instead at what seemed more “beckoning” for her consideration.

Like Marta, Deb had many experiences in keeping a journal, and also like Marta, Deb felt comfortable going in her own direction. For Deb, going her own direction was writing fewer pages and writing less frequently than suggested. In the exit interview, she commented:

When I journal, I tend to pick out the most significant thing of that day, and that’s what I talk about. For me, it’s not that things are insignificant, but there’s, there’s things that I will think about more intensely than other things. Those are the things that I write about when I journal. And that’s pretty much how I did that. It’s the things that I have the most thoughts about that I journal about.

For Deb, the journal writing process was such that she intentionally limited what she wrote to the most important thing that was going on for her. Deb further reported in the exit interview that, for her, it is a positive sign when she is not writing at length in
her journal. She shared a previous experience in keeping a journal to illustrate this:

One of the times I was journaling was when, um, I was home on medical leave... every single day, I’d journal a lot because what was going on is, you know, I had so much anxiety... I’d journal pages and pages and pages because everything—was intense those days... I was home on, medical leave for I think eight weeks and it went for like three or four weeks and it was just intense. It was just volumes for about four weeks. And you could tell when I was getting better, you know, because there would be less for me to obsess over every day and to feel so intense about every day, there would be less and less.

This example of a previous journal demonstrates that, for Deb, a major function of journaling is for expressing the feelings and thoughts associated with very difficult experiences. To Deb, the fact that she did not have volumes to write about during this practicum, then, meant that she was experiencing fewer stresses than she was at the time that she was on medical leave and writing extensively. The fact that she did not have volumes to write about during this practicum may have also meant that she was managing her stresses outside of the journal.

Deb’s process of limiting what she wrote in her journal to a single important thing was comparable to Linda Chelsea’s process of limiting her writing to certain guiding questions or to Marta’s process of focusing on the professional and leaving out poetic imagery. Unlike the others, Connie did not know how she would limit the journal, remarking in the exit interview that she had thought, “If I try and do my next journal with this much detail, am I gonna get through anything?” This sense of needing to do the journal in detail and not feeling like she could put limits on it seemed to play a major role in her decision to discontinue writing in it. For example, Connie had this to say about the guiding questions:

I knew that I could choose one if I wanted to, um, but I guess more couldn’t
quite figure out how I would want to incorporate it or which seemed more important to me: to just answer one of the questions or to write out my reaction to the session that I had that week, and I knew I just didn’t have time for both (laughs).

For Connie, feeling like she needed to make choices about what to write in the journal due to time constraints and feeling unable to make choices proved to be a barrier to her in the journaling process.

Another barrier to the journaling process was the analysis section. The journal guidelines encouraged the co-authors to reflect on each entry after they had completed it, thereby creating a short “analysis section” at the end of each entry. The rationale for this was that in reflecting on their reflection, the co-authors might realize new things. None of the co-authors followed this guideline, even though I provided feedback on the first and second sets of journal entries that they might wish to do so. I wanted to learn what it was about the analysis section that did not work for the co-authors, so I inquired about it in the exit interview.

Linda Chelsea did make an attempt to follow this guideline by summarizing her first two entries briefly, but then she stopped doing it. She discussed this in depth:

It was not to, not to disrupt any type of format... it wasn’t like when I completed a journal entry things were wrapped up... it wasn’t wrapped up, so I didn’t feel a summary was, like, appropriate... If we summarize then we’re kind of reflecting again on what we wrote... But for me it was like well I don’t know, I just don’t feel like re-reflecting on it... it was almost like if you start summarizing again you start reflecting again even though I would continue reflecting cognitively without writing down. Some way you just had to put a stop to the, the writing, you would have been doing it forever.

The reflection section felt to Linda Chelsea like a redoing of the entire process. It didn’t feel appropriate or necessary to her. Again, the perceived need to limit the
process of journaling so as not to be doing it “forever” comes through in her decision
not to do the analysis.

In contrast, Linda Chelsea stated that it was helpful to re-read entries after
some time had passed. She remarked in the exit interview, “I actually got them out
and was reading the early entries versus the entries at the end, are completely differ­
ent.” This implies, then, that re-reflecting after some time has elapsed might be a
more useful process than re-reflecting right after the journal entry was written.

Deb expressed a similar viewpoint to Linda Chelsea in the exit interview about
the analysis section:

I did go back and review what I had written but I didn’t have any different
thoughts... You know, it might be beneficial for me to do that like, you know, a month or so down the way, down the road... I probably now, I probably have
a little bit of reflection on it and that goes back to what I was just talking
about, about how my frustration, how I can look at what caused me frustration
and I know a little better now as to what caused me frustrations with that prac­
ticum. But yeah, when I go back and read it, I’m thinking, well, I don’t have
anything to reflect on. I don’t think anything or feel anything differently, so.
But I think that would be a real beneficial thing to do, maybe three months
down the road.

This is reminiscent of Deb’s earlier comment about going back to a journal that she
had kept while she was on medical leave, and noting her growth and improved feel­
ings after a significant amount of time had passed.

Marta also expressed that she reflected on her entries after a period of time had
passed. She expressed that she reflected on her reflection and engaged in an analysis
process after she received the written comments, but not immediately after each par­
ticular entry was completed. Her reason for this was that after writing a specific
entry:
You’re too close to it. You’re way too close to it. There needs to be a little time in there for it to kind of settle down and mature and, and to be able to come back with a refreshed mind.

Marta’s perspective of being too close to her writing immediately afterward and needing a little distance put her in a position to really benefit from my written comments, which she received after some time had passed. (This will be discussed further in Theme 2).

Although Connie did not maintain the journal after the first set of entries, she had a similar perspective to Deb that it would be useful to reflect on her entries after time had passed and a similar perspective to Linda Chelsea that it felt unnecessary to re-reflect after the initial reflection. Connie had this to say about it in the exit interview:

I think it was enough for me to process what I had written, or to get to the point that I could write that, that like I, I, had done my work by writing through it. That trying to do an analysis of it—like I don’t know that I could do the analysis then. If I had kept up with the journaling, I might be able to do an analysis on some of the things I had written, but I felt that doing the analysis at that point—I wasn’t ready to do the analysis...I’m trying to figure out how to describe it. Um, okay, I had solved the problem by writing it out and then I felt like I was being asked to solve the problem again...but I can see, um, I can see that analysis would be really interesting once the journal was done to read through the journal again and look at where I went and what I did. But I guess that’s sort of like this interview (laughs). It’s my analysis of where I was and where I am now. But I felt that doing it right after what I had written, um, wasn’t, I wasn’t prepared to do that part yet.

For Connie, doing the analysis section felt redundant, like being asked to redo something that she had already done. Connie’s perspective was that it would be useful to reflect after time had passed and that’s “sort of like this interview.” The exit interview, then, provided a way in which the co-authors could re-reflect on the journaling
experience, outside of the journal, after time had elapsed.

The analysis of entries was a barrier to all of the co-authors while maintaining their journals. For Connie, there were also other barriers to the journal writing experience. One barrier for Connie is related to her style of needing to stick with something or else abandon it completely. Connie described a sense of losing momentum for this project and then not being able to go back to it. She remarked in the exit interview:

I’m really bad if I stop doing something, I cannot pick it back up...Because I lose the momentum totally for something...and I don’t know if some of that is because I feel like, how am I going to catch up with the stuff I missed, or do I just pick up where I am and that’s, that’s it? But I feel like, I need to be catching myself up (laughs). So I know that was a, a large part of it was, I just cannot get caught up now and, and now I just don’t feel like sitting down and doing it. And I feel bad that I’m not doing it, so I’m not doing it (laughs).

I commented that I had wanted Connie to feel free to continue with the journal even if there had been a gap of several weeks without journaling. Connie remarked, “Right, and by that point I was like, wow...I just cannot sit down and do this now. I have lost the momentum for it. And I, I just figured that out, that it was, it was a momentum thing.”

Looking at Connie’s initial entries, it seems that it was challenging for her even initially to engage with the process, never mind maintain momentum. Throughout the journal, Connie had written about her difficulties with keeping the journal. The first line of the first entry was, “I have had a hard time sitting down to write in my journal—this is my first entry when it should be my second or third.” Her second entry began, “I’m clearly not doing a very good job of staying updated on my journal entries...I feel like I’m balancing and juggling so many things right now.” Her third
entry began, "I finally feel like I have something to write about." Her fifth and final entry began:

Journaling is being a challenge for me. It's not that I feel there is nothing to talk about or that I'm not reflecting on my strengths, weaknesses, growth, and progress as a counselor. I feel like everywhere I go right now I'm focusing on this and discussing it—whether it is in group supervision during class, one-on-one supervision, or my own personal therapy sessions. I feel like I don't have time to nor want to discuss it in one more place. But, I will continue trying.

These journal entries reveal that the process was hard for her to engage in, that she was reflecting in other places outside of the journal, and that it was even hard to figure out what to write about. Though she cited time constraints, it feels possible that she might have felt a lack of energy for the emotional impact of reflection in all the arenas of her life. As a result, she needed to let the something go, and chose to let journaling go.

After I received these journals, I checked in with Connie by email and briefly by phone to see if I might be able to be helpful to her. I also commented on the difficulties of the process for Connie in the written feedback that I provided on the first set of journal entries. Connie emailed to let me know that she was behind on entries and would not be continuing with the journal, but she offered to still participate in the exit interview; this allowed her and allowed me to learn about what made the process difficult for her. Other difficulties with the process for Connie will be discussed in the next section on journal feedback.

**Theme 2: Feedback on the Journals as an Impetus for Many Reactions**

In the last section, the impact of the researcher was discussed. In this section,
the impact of the journal feedback is the focus. My provision of feedback on the journal entries was built into the design for the purpose of facilitating further reflection in the co-authors. In this section, the journal feedback will be discussed in depth, and the way that the feedback on the journals acted as an impetus for many reactions.

Deb had little to say during the exit interview about the feedback, so her viewpoint is not represented in this section. On the other hand, Linda Chelsea had much to say about it, as she spoke extensively about the impact of the feedback on the process for her. Marta, Connie, and Linda Chelsea had a variety of reactions to the feedback, finding it overwhelming, valuable, and helpful in clarifying feelings. These will be discussed, as well as a discussion of Linda Chelsea’s perspective that feedback is actually a necessary component for journal writing, that a “reference point” or consultant was needed.

In the last portion of Theme 1, barriers to the journaling process as experienced by Connie were discussed. The feedback I provided was also a barrier for Connie, who reported that it felt like too much to respond to. She commented:

I guess with, with some of the feedback it was like, “Okay, do I continue just where I am with journaling now, or do I go back and address everything that was mentioned in your feedback, you know? Like, oh my God, do I start over?” (laughs) And how do I incorporate some of that stuff into some of the newer stuff, ’cause I feel like I’m sort of in a different place right now, working on different issues, so I, like, I’m done with that issue. That was a month ago. I’m done with that one. Or I worked that one out fine...I don’t have time to journal that I’m done with that and how I got through that because then I’m not moving on with where I am now, and then my [family member] died and it all broke loose. So um, so I—the feedback was interesting. I think in some ways it made me feel like, where do I go from here?

Here Connie makes an excellent point about the process of mailing a month's entries.
to me for feedback, and receiving the feedback after my review of it. The reality was that in reviewing my feedback, some of the comments that I made were no longer valid because I was commenting on certain entries over a month after they were written and Connie had achieved resolution with some of these areas.

During the exit interview, I encouraged Connie to continue to explore this issue of feedback. I clarified, “So even though the feedback was meant as a, a guide that you could take or leave, it felt implicitly like you should explore it?” Connie affirmed that this was so. It seemed to Connie that the feedback was asking her to explore more deeply than she was prepared to do. She remarked, “I wouldn’t normally take it that deep with anything I was talking about… it was hard for me to do that in the journals.”

Like Connie, Marta commented that a similar experience happened to her at times with regard to reading feedback about an issue that had already passed for her. However, she had a different perspective on it. She shared this during the exit interview:

Coming in you know from a couple of days, weeks, month later and saying, oh yeah, that, and then reading your comments on it was like being able to experience it from a different perspective. And I think that was a good way to process it. And I think that was the real therapeutic value…

Marta’s slant on looking at feedback after the fact, then, was such that she could see that she had changed or that her perspective was different, and this was valuable for her. Although an issue had passed, she found that it was valuable to read the feedback, to reflect on where she had been, and to see that growth had taken place. Writing about a topic, getting feedback from me, and finding herself at a place further than
where she had been was valuable to her because it provided a venue for reflection and processing.

Linda Chelsea's perspective on the feedback also was that it was extremely valuable as a venue for reflection and processing. She stated that her lack of confidence and fear of not being able to handle everything were feelings that were clarified for her in the process of keeping the journal. In the exit interview, she related how this was for her:

I can't think of a specific thing—there have been many that have come up, but um, just, and that's what you pointed out to me [in the journal feedback]... “it sounds like you feel kind of alone in some of these things” and that, that is a feeling that I didn't identify, I don't think in the entries, but a feeling that was very accurate, so, and that’s just really helped me say, “Yes, that’s exactly how I feel.”

Journaling, then, was a way for Linda Chelsea to have increased clarity about what she was feeling and what that feeling meant for her. She went on to describe a core theme for her, confrontation, and how that emerged in the journal:

I guess I just had to get to that point eventually where it's like, what is it about you that feels this way when you're writing about something... What is it about you that um, is afraid of confrontation, or why do you enjoy confrontation, what is this about who you are... But again, it helped to write it down and make it real, um, because then it was real and I could read it again... so it was nice having it written down and then again the feedback... because then I couldn't forget it. It was obviously something that I don't want to forget.

For Linda Chelsea, writing it down made it “real” and rereading it with the feedback made it "real" again, leading her to be more likely to remember things “that I don't want to forget.”

The experience of receiving feedback on her journal was pivotal for Linda Chelsea. In fact, she remarked that she could not imagine keeping a journal without
feedback. She described this extensively in the exit interview:

If it would have been up to me to take and reflect on those entries by myself at a later date—without your, um, feedback, I don’t think it would have been as valuable... if it would have been up to me to journal, just for my own, I don’t know if it would have been that appealing, but it was appealing with feedback. So if, so if it were in a work situation or even an academic situation where I could go to a supervisor and talk about things or go over some entries or something with a therapist... it would be beneficial. But to me to just keep it like a diary for my own self—I don’t know if I would have given it much—given it a second thought really ... So if I knew I was getting feedback I think journaling would just be an incredible experience... I don’t know that I’m being asked to make a recommendation, um, it was neat, it was good for that reason, and as, as long as I had you... to assist in the feedback. If not, I could almost see it being confusing for somebody if they didn’t have someone to um, help guide the, the process. It just, it needed some extra intervention to—just the journaling alone wouldn’t have been adequate enough.

Although Linda Chelsea discussed the helpfulness of the feedback, like Connie, she also discussed that there was at times too much of it. Linda Chelsea stated during the exit interview, “You provided... a ton of feedback. And you probably could have provided more... I couldn’t even touch on all your feedback then in, in future entries, there was just so much and it was like, I was almost overwhelmed then.”

Because Linda Chelsea mentioned that the feedback was at times overwhelming and too much, I wondered whether it had felt critical or scrutinizing in any way.

Linda Chelsea had a very thoughtful response:

I think if you would have asked me that maybe three or four years ago, it would have... but the thing was, your feedback was very appropriate and very valuable... there are things that you pointed out that in the past, um, I might have wanted to deny altogether. But um, and then that would have put a barrier between us and your feedback and my receptiveness to it... certainly I don’t think it should be limited at all because you wouldn’t be doing what you should be doing and what needs to be done, so. And I think that discomfort, um, is good also, it says a lot. And that was your feedback that provided the opening for me.
Linda Chelsea went on to give an example of the feedback providing an opening for her. She stated:

I think that was really helpful when you pointed out, I said I used the words putting my anger on the back burner, so, and you, that’s when you said, is it really necessary? And what is the anger about? And what’s it like? I just said I felt angry... But that’s what I need to address is, is why that is so and why I’m angry in the first place and why I need to put on, maybe I don’t need to, do I clinically? Do I personally need to? You know, what’s what, so there’s a bazillion things to be explored from that.

In fact, the number of issues that could be explored created a need to put some limits on the process of journaling. Linda Chelsea remarked in the exit interview:

There was so much [in the feedback] to write about in future entries, though, so I just put a limit, okay, two a week... I could see where journaling could have been, without the feedback, could have been, I don’t want to say detrimental, but certainly not as effective... so there definitely has to be some reference point, someone else to consult with.

Linda Chelsea benefited from and appreciated the feedback a great deal, to a point where she could not imagine the journal writing process to be useful without it. It may be important to recall that she was also the only co-author in the group to lack experience with keeping journals, and as such, unlike the other co-authors, she did not have recollections of other journals that had been kept without feedback or outside structure. For her, the journal feedback was very important in increasing her level of reflectivity. However, she also engaged in a reflective process without the journal, and likely would continue to do so. Her experience of the use of the journal for continued reflection and the viewpoints of other co-authors is addressed in the next section, Theme 3.
Theme 3: Journals as a Record of Professional Development, Source of Continued Reflection

By the end of this study, the co-authors had constructed narratives of their experiences as beginning counselors. The journals were a way in which they developed reflective practice and a source of continued reflection after the journal was finished; this is the third central theme that emerged with regard to the process of journal writing for the co-authors. Because Connie did not continue the journal after the first set, she did not end up with the same record of professional development as the others, so this section focuses on the experiences of the other co-authors.

A central issue that illuminated Marta’s experience with keeping this journal was that the process of rereading the journal afterwards and reflecting on the journal was as important to her as the initial writing was. She remarked in the exit interview:

I think that just writing it down is therapeutic in itself. But going back and reviewing it, is a process thing that’s important... and I think that’s a real important part of it. And, and in your research I think that you know, that should be noted. That processing it afterwards, you know, rereading what you wrote is important as a, as the initial writing, yeah.

For Marta, having a record of her professional development and a place to reflect was not only of importance, but the rereading and re-reflecting later also was a key factor in to her experience. In this way, the process of the journal writing led to a process of continual reflection.

Marta commented that rereading her journal and reflecting on it was a process similar to listening to her therapy tapes. In the exit interview, she remarked:

I would have a certain feeling that would taint what I thought the whole experience was and then two days later... it’s like, oh that’s different. Because I
may have been feeling like oh, I missed that or I had these overwhelming feelings... Two days later... it would be different. You know, I was looking at it from a different objective position. And then I would say, um, either I could tell where I missed something, you know, because I was caught up in my own emotions. Or I would say, oh, I did well on that, where before I thought that I had screwed up on that. You know, and it wasn’t like my first feelings when I came out of the session were necessarily the only objective assessment that I should consider.

In this statement, Marta demonstrated the value of continued reflection in order to assess how she thought a counseling session had gone. She used the same process with her journal, finding that it was not like her “first feelings” were “the only objective assessment” to consider. In managing the overwhelmed feelings and then re-reflecting, new insights were experienced. As a whole, Marta had this to say about the journal:

It always, always was helpful. I always was really glad that I would take the time to go over those issues and to look at it, you know, because if I didn’t, I think that I was so busy and you know other things just would have gotten in the way. And my head would have been more of a cement mixer, [a reiterated statement in her journal] this was one way of slowing it down.

Taking the time to look at issues was important for Marta so that other things would not get in the way of reflecting and processing her experiences. At the end of this process, she had a record of her development that she would be able to reflect on again and again over time.

For Deb, being able to reflect and re-reflect on her journal over time was also important. Although Deb had kept a journal while she was on medical leave in order to manage the intensity of her anxiety, she was still clearly able to benefit from rereading it, reflecting on where she had been, and visualizing her own growth over time. The prospect of benefiting from her journal at a later date also applied to this
particular journal. Deb reflected:

I know I’ll look back at them over time. You know and it’s kind of funny, I, I keep everything, I’m kind of a pack rat and during the holidays I was doing a lot of cleaning out and what have you and I found my school work from my undergraduate degree in social work and reading through some of the papers I wrote...I know that’s what you mean by reflecting. And I’m sure that, the copies of these things I will look back over in time and I’ll learn from them...I think that’s a really good feeling for me because I do worry about am I growing? Am I making progress? You know? That’s usually the case, is I find that when I look back at something like this I have grown and I don’t even realize it, which is a good feeling.

Deb's statement about wondering and worrying if she was growing and making progress gives credence to the value of having a record of growth and progress so that she could look back and re-reflect. In looking back later, she would have the insight to measure and map her growth. At the end of this study, Deb's narrative of her development as a counselor in her journal was something that she would be able to look at over time and in that way to learn from and to see her growth after the fact.

Deb ended the exit interview with a comment about the helpfulness of this journal to her professional development:

I think it was very helpful to me because journaling is helpful to me, but I think it was helpful for my professional development. I think it was real helpful in that respect. And I think the most helpful part of my practicum was the professional development piece. It wasn’t what I was doing with my clients; it was how I was actually doing it. And I think that, that comes with, you know, being able to chronicle where I was, where I’ve been, where I am, through the journaling.

Journaling, then, had been helpful for Deb in a variety of contexts in her life. In this context, Deb found journaling to be helpful for her professional development, to chronicle not only what she was doing, but how she was actually doing it.

Like Deb, Linda Chelsea also found journaling to be helpful to her
professional development and in chronicling the journey over time. She reflected on
the differences between entries from beginning to end. In reflecting on these differ­
ences, she reported that the entries changed when she got more into the process.

I grew and got more into it, as I, I think you can probably see my initial entries
and then, um, my final entries, there’s a huge difference in the level of intro­
spection, I think, and really even like maybe coming clean...the journaling
changed, what I wanted to put in journals, how I was thinking. There was less
inhibition.

Linda Chelsea’s perception of the journals changing seems to reveal that over time, as
she grew less inhibited, she wanted to write about different things in the journal. At
the same time, her thinking shifted and the journal writing process also changed for
her. Some of these differences Linda Chelsea attributed to my probing. In the exit
interview, she remarked:

As time went on, and with more feedback that pushed a few more buttons....
and helped me to open a few more doors and it’s like, okay, stuff flowed out
that much easier...it was kind of a chain reaction or domino effect...here I, I
feel I’m in touch with my feelings and I know myself and it’s like, wait, you
know there’s a lot of different avenues to take to get to, to a deeper level, there
really is, and the awareness just wasn’t there and at least journaling helped to
start that process...

Linda Chelsea’s commentary here illustrates that although she had felt in touch with
her feelings prior to keeping a journal, her experience with keeping the journal helped
her to “get to a deeper level” and to further develop reflective practice. The fact that
journaling “helped to start that process” suggests that the process of developing
reflective practice and continuing to reflect would an ongoing one for Linda Chelsea
that would continue beyond this study.

Although the process of reflection and continued attention to her professional
development would be continued beyond this study, Linda Chelsea volunteered in the exit interview that she would have liked the study to go on a little longer. She stated that she felt “kind of bummed it’s over... This was a neat process, it’s just unfortunate it had to end really.” This suggestion of a counselor development study utilizing journal writing over a longer period of time will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The goal of this section was to present the three core journal writing process themes that were common to the developmental journeys of the co-authors as they constructed their written narratives. In the next chapter, these results will be explained and discussed in light of existing counselor development research, along with a discussion of unanticipated findings and implications for future research.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

A central finding of this dissertation study was that, through journal writing, beginning counselors engaged in a reflective process in which they constructed narratives of their own development. In the process of maintaining a written journal for this research project, the co-authors constructed and reconstructed their narratives and revealed their needs to integrate their personal and professional experiences, to manage their emotions, and to be genuine in their work. This chapter elaborates on and explores the meanings of core findings in the following sections: (a) explanation of results, (b) unanticipated findings, (c) implications, (d) suggestions for future research, (e) limitations, and (f) contribution of the study.

Explanation of Results

In Chapter III, several collective and individual content themes were reported. The three collective content themes were (a) the balance between personal and professional aspects of self, (b) emotional management, and (c) genuineness. These three major themes were common across co-author narratives, illustrating the core contents of the journal. For each co-author, an additional, individual content theme also emerged as being of significance for the co-authors in this study. Individual content themes focused on the development of assertiveness, confrontation, spirituality, and
letting go.

Three core process themes were also reported in Chapter III. These themes focused on the process of journal writing and self-reflection, rather than on the content of these reflections. Core process themes that emerged were (a) the impact of the researcher on this study; (b) the role of feedback on the journal writing and self-reflective process; and (c) journals as a record of professional development and a source of continued reflection beyond the study.

The content and process themes all provide a way of responding to the research questions. These themes also provide a way in which the results can be understood. The remainder of this section consists of an elaboration and discussion of each of the three research questions that govern this study.

Question 1: What can we learn about the development and significance of reflective practice from the co-authors' narrative representations of their practicum experience?

Each of the co-authors maintained a journal. The journal was a tool for stimulating the development of reflective practice and for tracking the process over time. However, “diaries may only seem to reveal their private meanings fully if the researcher has also ‘called the informant to account’ through conducting interviews with informants in which these issues can be discussed,” (Bell, 1998, p. 79). In this study, I put Bell (1998) into practice and “called the informant to account” in three ways: through written feedback in the journals, through exit interviewing, and through discussing the results chapter with the co-authors after they reviewed it. Encouraging
the co-authors in the written feedback to reflect further on certain issues, and to clarify and express their meanings more fully, stimulated the development of reflective practice. Discussing the journal in the exit interview provided a means for investigating and clarifying the process of reflective practice in their journals. Having an additional discussion with the co-authors after they read their narrative as written in the results chapter provided another opportunity for clarifying the process of reflective practice.

The co-authors in this study utilized their journals to engage in a process of reflection and found the pursuit of reflective practice to be significant in their work as developing counselors. All of the co-authors expressed that reflection was important to them. For example, for Marta, the process of rereading the journal afterwards and reflecting on the journal was as important to her as the initial writing was. Taking the time to look at important issues was important for Marta so that other things would not get in the way of reflecting and processing her experiences. Deb found journaling to be helpful for her professional development, to chronicle not only what she was doing, but how she was actually doing it. All of the co-authors reported that they were engaged in a reflective process, both through journal writing and in other venues, although Connie stopped writing in the journal, which makes it impossible to see the process of reflection unfold, or to evaluate whether she actually developed reflective practice.

These beginning counselors benefited from engaging in reflective practice and using reflection to inform their work. This finding adds to the existing counseling
literature on reflective practice, which has been focused more exclusively on seasoned practitioners (e.g., Skovholt, 2001). Other beginning counselors would likely also benefit from having a structured experience such as a journal writing process with which to facilitate their development of reflection.

As discussed in Chapter I, most of what we have known about the development of reflection in beginning counselors comes from the supervision literature. Neufeldt et al (1996) established four arenas which describe reflectivity in supervision: the causal condition, the intervening condition, process, and consequences. All four of these will be discussed in relation to the co-authors’ process of keeping a journal in this research.

The causal condition is the trigger or event that initiates the process of reflection. In this dissertation study, the co-authors acknowledged the process of participating in this research as one of several triggers that initiated a process of reflection, reflection was facilitated by the journal, the researcher, supervisors, therapists, and peers in the practicum groups. For example, Linda Chelsea reported that my probing triggered her reflection and encouraged her to reflect more deeply. Deb and Marta frequently referred to their supervisors as triggers of reflection. Deb’s supervisor allowed Deb to reflect on how to handle the issue of her client bringing his baby to session, Connie’s supervisor assisted her in her central journey toward assertiveness by assuring her that she could give her opinion, and Marta’s supervisor encouraged her to listen to the client’s story and not get bogged down in techniques. Consistent with previous research, the causal condition for the present co-authors could be a
counseling session or a supervision session, or the subjective feeling the counselor has before or after the session. For example, Marta and Connie referred to their feelings as they listened to their therapy tapes and Deb cited an experience in individual supervision of feeling “more relaxed than I have ever felt in my practicum.”

Intervening conditions include such attributes as the training environment, and the trainee’s personality and the trainee’s tendency to seek out reflective processes, possibly through peer supervision, personal therapy, or journal writing (Neufeldt et al., 1996). Although the co-authors in this study had mixed feelings about the training environment (e.g., concerns about a lack of client hours, perceptions of the training environment being insufficient), all sought out reflective processes by choosing to be a co-author in this study. Several also cited the benefits of peer supervision. Connie appreciated being able to see how assertive her peers might be or the styles they were developing, where Deb, who felt she was good at problem solving, found that she learned from peers who were better at empathizing with a client’s feelings.

The process of reflection in the Neufeldt et al. (1996) study was further viewed as having four qualities. These qualities were locus of attention, stance, sources of understanding, and depth. Locus of attention was described as occurring along two dimensions: the actions, emotions, and thoughts of the therapist, and the interaction between the client and the therapist. As discussed in Chapter III with regard to the theme of emotional management, each of the co-authors used the journal to describe and reflect on their own actions, emotions, and thoughts, and then to consider the impact of these actions, emotions, and thoughts on their interactions with
clients. For example, when Marta was sitting with a difficult female client, she observed her thoughts, her emotional response, and what she said to the client, and then evaluated the interaction of these components. Stance, according to Neufeldt et al., included the areas of intention, active inquiry, openness, and capacity for vulnerability. Openness and capacity for vulnerability were two aspects of stance which were revealed in the journals of the co-authors in this study. For example, Marta and Deb both openly disclosed their fears that they were insufficient and ineffective as counselors.

Sources of understanding were one quality in the Neufeldt et al (1996) conceptualization that was particularly salient in this study. Sources of understanding can include theory, personal and professional experiences, and the experience of self. The co-authors in the present study frequently referred to theory, perhaps because the need and the use of theory to inform practice are stressed in the practicum training experience. Connie, Deb, and Marta all discussed their theoretical orientations and shared their efforts to apply their orientations to their work with clients. As discussed in Chapter III, all of the co-authors shared personal and professional experiences and worked toward integration of these experiences. The experience of self was also a prevalent theme in the journals and was discussed extensively in the genuineness portion of the results chapter. For each of the co-authors, it was important to figure out how she could be herself and be a counselor at the same time.

Finally, according to Neufeldt et al. (1996), the consequences of reflective thinking were conceptualized as having two properties: change in the therapist’s
understanding and approach with clients as a result of reflection, and growth over
time in the therapist’s ability to make meaning of their own responses and their inter-
actions with clients. For example, Linda Chelsea learned a great deal about her per-
sonal reactions to a client who drove her “nuts” and taught her both the need to be
genuine and the need to confront, sometimes simultaneously.

In this study, journals were a useful tool for the development of reflective
practice. However, it was important that the issues in the journal also be reflected
upon further by the co-authors in order to better understand the process of reflection.
Several co-authors found the receipt of written feedback on their journals to be a
critical factor in their experience. The co-authors were called into account (Bell,
1998) for what they wrote through my provision of written feedback in the journals,
through exit interviewing with me at the end of the study, and through discussing the
results chapter with me after they reviewed it. The reflection that the co-authors uti-
lized in their journals also fits in with the four arenas that Neufeldt et al. (1996) estab-
lished with regard to understanding the reflective process in counselor supervision.

**Question 2:** What is the process like for co-authors' to create their individual
narratives through interviews and journals, as part of this research project?

In the spirit of narrative research, “when we come together in research pro-
jects, all of us begin to live and tell a new story of our collaborative work together,”
(Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 418). The researcher and the participants have an
impact on one another. The researcher becomes part of the story and the participants’
narratives unfold necessarily in a way different than they would have had the research
not taken place. The co-authors described their process of keeping a journal during the exit interview. For all of the co-authors, being interviewed at length, keeping a journal in which each of them received extensive feedback, and then being interviewed again about the process of keeping a journal was a new experience. The co-authors’ various, shifting views of the researcher illuminate what the research process was like for them. The research process was intrinsically interpersonal. As such the relationships the co-authors had with the researcher necessarily affected their processes of journaling, as well as the outcome of this study.

Over the course of this research, the co-authors viewed the researcher as (a) audience, (b) therapist, (c) supervisor, (d) mentor, and (e) potential advocate.

**Audience**

As discussed in the results chapter, the co-authors demonstrated an awareness of me, the researcher, as their audience. Their awareness of audience influenced how they approached this study, and what they wrote about. In their approach to this study, each of the co-authors consistently treated me with respect and honored their commitment to participate in this study. For example, Linda Chelsea wanted to make sure she had enough entries, Connie offered to take part in an exit interview though she had given up the journal, and Marta expressed that she hoped it was not a problem that she did not use the optional guiding questions to frame her entries.

As mentioned earlier, because of having an audience, Marta left out some private aspects of her life in journal. She was the only co-author who gave voice to
having done this. She remarked in the exit interview, “There are places, private areas that I just don’t show to people...that no one’s going to know.” She also expressed that having an audience in this situation created extra work in the writing process in terms of her perceived need to give background and to clarify information. However, she felt that it was “friendly” to have an audience taking part in her journey. Marta closed her first and second set of journal entries with the phrase, “stay tuned” and commented in an early entry that

It was interesting to tell my story to Jean. And it helped me “see” my journey as I told it to her wondering what my story might sound like to another person, especially a younger woman with a story of her own.

This quote in her journal seems to indicate that she felt a friendly bond with me, and may have been the beginning of her view of me as a friendly audience.

In contrast, Connie’s awareness of an audience as she wrote her journal may have contributed to her stopping the journal writing portion of the research. She wrote in her first entry, “I enjoyed the interview. I felt comfortable sharing information about my life as well as my thoughts and feelings about various topics.” This seemed to indicate that she experienced the entrance interview positively, but maybe not with warmth. She went on to write that, “as easy as it is to share personal information with those I do not know well, it can be challenging for me to be truly honest and open about my thoughts and feelings and opinions with those close to me.” As mentioned in the results chapter, Connie also expressed in the exit interview that she experienced me, her audience, as wanting something more “deep” in the journal than she was able to provide. Taken together, Connie experienced me as both a stranger,
and as having high expectations of the depth of information that she was to provide in
the journals.

Therapist

For some of the co-authors, I emerged as a therapeutic figure. For others, the
presence of other therapeutic figures may have made me unnecessary in that light.
For several reasons, I was not surprised by this. First, the co-authors knew me to be a
more experienced therapist than they were. Linda Chelsea stated, “I know you know
things, and I valued your wisdom,” demonstrating her perception of me as a knowl-
dedgeable figure in a more advanced position than she herself. Second, the co-authors
knew that the study was confidential, and therefore felt some freedom to reveal per-
sonal information about themselves. This is parallel to the way in which clients know
that therapy is confidential and therefore can openly reveal personal information
about themselves without fear of negative repercussions. Third, the nature of journal
writing is a highly intimate activity. Marta noted, “This was different than other jour-
nals I kept. It was so intimate to have someone reading it and offering comments. At
the same time, it was therapeutic.” Marta referred several times to the journal writing
process as being therapeutic. Therefore, it is not a stretch to consider me, as facilita-
tor of this process, as having the potential to be viewed as a therapeutic figure. Linda
Chelsea also stated, very directly, “It was like a therapy session,” and later, “It would
be a good way to do therapy... I had to ease into the process, just as I might have
eased into a therapy process.” Connie, who did not complete the journal writing
process, had shared in the entrance interview that she has her own personal therapy, and in the exit interview cited this as an available means of processing which she believed made the journal writing less necessary for her.

Supervisor

I also felt viewed as a supervisor during this study. This was most noticeable in the early stages of this project with Deb. She needed to feel “not an idiot” and was disappointed not to receive this feedback from her supervisor. Deb also stated that her peers were supportive, but that “sometimes you need to hear it from someone who knows more than you.” Deb stuck with this topic for a long time in the entrance interview, repeatedly discussing that she wanted her supervisor to be supportive by telling Deb that she had done okay in her first client session. My experience of Deb was that Deb wanted me to confirm that she was not an idiot in the same way that Deb wanted to hear that from her supervisor. In effect, it felt to me like Deb wanted me to act as a supportive supervisor to counteract her experience of her actual supervisor as failing to validate that Deb wasn’t an idiot. During the journal writing process, Deb’s view of her supervisor began to shift. She began to see her actual supervisor in a positive light and to receive the support she wanted from this supervisor. Though I had anticipated that Deb would view me as a supervisor throughout the study, ultimately Deb did not need me to fill that role.
Potential Advocate

It was a surprise to me that the co-authors in this study made a range of training recommendations. I heard their training concerns and validated their experiences, as they made a stirring case for the lack of preparation they felt and the desire for aspects of the training experience to feel more structured to them. I heard some of the concerns as venting, or possibly as a way of attributing their anxiety to factors that existed outside of their experiences. However, it seemed the co-authors appreciated having the opportunity to make recommendations, as if trying to find an advocate that could help to change the training situation for future groups of counselor trainees. The co-authors requested experiences observing client sessions earlier in the master’s program. Requests were made for more guidance and instruction in writing progress notes. They also recommended that acting students join their pre-practicum class to role play clients in order to gain experience with more complicated and real people. Recommendations to the training clinic were also made, including developing a means of ensuring that each student obtained enough client hours, and that the clients obtained be screened better so as to be more appropriate to their levels of experience. Linda Chelsea’s recommendation that students journal and discuss their journals regularly with assigned mentors seemed to be a request for a regular arena for the development of reflection.

Though some of these recommendations could be considered unrealistic, the co-authors’ communications of barriers to their experience and what would reduce these barriers was significant, particularly since training recommendations were not
asked for but were readily volunteered by them throughout the research process.

**Question 3:** How will the co-authors in this study construct and re-construct their stories about themselves as counselors throughout the course of the semester-long practicum?

My written feedback on the journals and my comments and questions during the entrance and exit interviews were designed to speak to what was being constructed by the co-authors and to stimulate the thinking, integration, and possible reconstruction of the different perspectives and experiences that were addressed. The written feedback often inquired about the current *construction* of the story, asked for clarification, provided interpretations, noted repetitions and preliminary themes, and provided recommendations for ways in which the co-authors could *reconstruct* or pursue a given topic again if they chose to do so. The exit interview then provided a means in which the construction of the story could be verified and any reconstructions could be noted.

Connie constructed a three-part story about a counselor who was afraid to open her mouth. The first part was the part that she actually journaled, while the other two parts were relayed in the exit interview. She relayed the conflict in a style that communicated her discomfort as she described asking herself, “am I gonna say it? Am I gonna say it?” In the first chapter of the story, she took an assertiveness training course and thought about how to prepare to open her mouth. In the next part she was beginning to take preliminary steps toward assertive behavior by evaluating times when she allowed a moment to pass by without being assertive and to consider what
actually stood in her way. In the final part she was able to assert herself more consistently and to take more risks. Although this story was not all available in the written journal, Connie's account of it in the exit interview suggested that it was a bumpy but straightforward journey, focused on construction. Because we were not able to see her development unfold in the journal, any reconstruction that she might have done is less apparent. The incomplete journal also restricts the observation of her narrative.

Deb's primary construction was that of a woman with a variety of personal and professional responsibilities who bore the burden of feeling that being a counselor was in conflict with being herself. Deb's central narrative ultimately was a triumphant and powerful story of facing supervision and counseling after a day of personal grieving, loss, and exhaustion. Her supervisor gave her a priceless gift that day by sharing that no counselor is ever 100% and that is okay. As a result, Deb went into her counseling session choosing to be herself and to be human, not thinking about being a counselor, and learned that she was a more effective counselor as her own human self. This narrative was told in her journal in a compelling style. I read of Deb's relief, lightness, and resultant freedom, and experienced the lightness and relief through the reading of it. Deb had constructed a story of a no-win situation—after all, how could she be a good counselor and feel good about it if she could not be herself—and ultimately reconstructed the story of a woman who was able to integrate her personal and professional selves as a result of obtaining permission to be imperfect, to be human, and to be herself.

Linda Chelsea constructed a narrative of a counselor who thought that she had
to be competent and effective without asking anyone for help. She worried that her supervisor would think less of her if he knew she did not feel competent all the time. Her apparent confidence was not a comfort to her because it was in conflict with her feelings of self-doubt and her frustrations with her clients and with herself. A related contradiction also existed—she wanted to be genuine with clients but also to keep her feelings on the back burner. I played a role in Linda Chelsea’s narrative in that I questioned her need to be competent, the need to put feelings on the back burner, and the lack of support that she seemed to be experiencing. Linda Chelsea was in the process of reconstructing a narrative in which she could begin to use her feelings, use confrontation, and to ask her supervisor for help. This reconstruction was still in progress at the end of this research.

Marta constructed the story of a complex woman—an artist/counselor who valued spirituality, managed a chronic illness, and continually questioned who she was personally and professionally. Her journal writing style was anecdotal in nature—her supervisor encouraged her to listen to client stories and she immediately noticed a parallel between the story she was telling in her journal and the stories that her clients were telling, even the stories her family history told her and the story of the world in a troubled condition. Marta noted in the exit interview that the feedback on her journal entries provided a way for her to reconstruct her story—she reported reading my feedback and noting what her growth had been over the past several weeks. She found that as helpful as the initial writing of the journal. In reconstructing her story, she continued the ongoing process of acceptance of her illness and seemed to
mostly complete her grief over the loss of her art career. At the same time, she questioned her place in the counseling world, and worked toward crafting an identity in which she could integrate art and counseling, using them both together. This reconstruction, like professional identity, was very much in progress when this research ended.

In this section, the results that were discussed in Chapter III were explained. The content and process themes all provided a way of responding to the research questions that were generated. The remainder of this section consisted of an elaboration and discussion of each of the three research questions that governed this study. However, not all findings were anticipated in advance or contained within the research questions. Unanticipated findings are discussed in the next section.

Unanticipated Findings

No formal research questions were asked about my view of my own role as researcher or about the data that made up the researcher journal. However, in asking how the co-authors constructed and reconstructed their experiences, I became more aware of my own role and I began to explore more fully the role of the researcher journal. Bell (1998) reflected on the utilization of the researcher journal: “Shouldn’t the researcher also be ‘called to account’ for his or her own experiences, in the same way as informants are asked to be?” (p. 82). Bell’s research on the qualitative process argues for an examination of “what connections there may be between diaries solicited from informants and researchers’ own ‘field’ diaries,” (p. 76). During this
research, I anticipated the potential value of drawing connections between the co-author's journals and my own researcher journal. The notion of being called to account for the researcher journal was unanticipated, however; I imagined that I myself was the only audience for my journal and am only now making the private public.

My intention was for the journal to be an extensive record of many details of this research experience. As discussed in Chapter II, the researcher journal can serve many purposes: to track what has been covered during interviews, to note ideas, hunches, and gestures, and to search for emerging themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Ultimately, my researcher journal was less extensive than I had envisioned it would be. However, it did serve as a place for me to (a) write down possible impressions, interpretations, and reflections that I did not want to forget; (b) record my emotional reactions to the co-authors and to different aspects of the study; and (c) evaluate and examine my own role throughout the study. My own role included my sense of myself as a therapist, supervisor, and mentor.

**Impressions, Interpretations, Reflections**

In my researcher journal, I tracked my impressions of each of the co-authors at the time of first phone contact. I continued this tracking of preliminary impressions during the entrance interview in order to try to get a sense of who each co-author was and how I could be helpful to each of them individually in this study.

The first co-author with whom I had an initial phone contact was Deb, who
left a phone message for me just a few days after the invitations to participate were sent in the mail. From the brief voice mail message, my first thought was that Deb was highly anxious and wanted to take part in this study in order to manage that anxiety. As a result, I experienced myself as being cautious as I responded to Deb in the entrance interview, not wanting to foster further anxiety. I also noted that I felt unsure how Deb was responding to me during the entrance interview, and that it seemed to take some time for her to warm up. However, Deb’s willingness to speak directly about the difficulties she foresaw in her practicum facilitated the building of rapport in the relationship between us.

As I prepared for the first entrance interview, I wondered how it would go and indeed how this study would fit with the co-authors’ expectations or wishes. I experienced a variety of emotions that seemed similar to the emotions the co-authors reported experiencing prior to meeting with their clients for the first time. The questions that I asked myself included, Can I do this? Am I experienced enough to oversee their process? Will this research work out? Will she want to be part of this study? Will I be helpful? Am I prepared for this interaction? I reminded myself of the reasons that I was prepared and tried to relax into the process.

Marta was the first co-author to be interviewed. Marta’s exuberance for the journal writing process, the openness that she demonstrated in the interview, and the inspirational components of her story of struggle and triumph over chronic illness left me feeling exuberant and energized for this research.

I also used my researcher journal to track interpretations and reflections after
reading a co-author's journal or an interview transcript. I made notes about whether a particular theme was emerging, or the meaning of a particular experience. These notes often took the form of a question or possible reflection with a page number to a journal entry or interview transcript. These notes were utilized throughout the analysis.

**Emotional Reactions**

The potential value of emotional reaction in a researcher journal is illustrated by the following account of a researcher who found her own journal to have suppressed emotional reactions in an effort to maintain an objective stance and to keep a straightforward and "rational" journal. Bell (1998) commented that she kept a public voice even in her own private diary, "my public role as a researcher predominated: it was their opinions I was listening for, not my own voice" (p. 83). She wrote,

I either failed to record conflict between myself and the women I was with, or much more likely, I was extremely careful...not to express any kind of "dissent" from the expressed opinions I noted around me, and that this is what I therefore recorded in the diary. (p. 83)

She remarked that her field diary therefore felt incomplete; she reported, "I maintained a 'public' voice (which I felt would be acceptable academically) even in my private diary," (p. 83).

Although in the present study I initially anticipated that my researcher journal would be a forum primarily for me to describe impressions and initial interpretations, and certainly a rational, intellectual account, I was surprised to find that it emerged most prominently as a forum for me to express emotions that emerged over the course
of this study. In retrospect, this should not have been surprising, as I had kept an extensive personal journal for years which was very focused on emotional experiences.

Some of the emotional experiences that I wrote about in my journal included my fears that I would not facilitate the process well enough for the co-authors, and therefore the research data would not be good enough. In the analysis stage of this research, I noted repeatedly that I felt very overwhelmed by the amount of data, and by the organizational processes involved. I also reflected that my own feelings of being overwhelmed by the data analysis component seemed parallel to Connie's experiences of being overwhelmed by the number of possibilities for what she could write in the journal and the impossibility of writing about all of it.

I also noted when I felt "pulled" by a co-author to respond in a certain way. My coursework and experience as a therapist had provided me with an understanding of a dynamic called projective identification, in which a client induces a therapist to feel a certain way (Trembley, 1996). As a therapist, I had learned to reflect upon situations in which I felt pulled emotionally by a client to respond in a certain way. I felt this pull with Deb in the entrance interview, the pull to offer Deb reassurance that she was doing a good job as a therapist in order to avoid increasing her anxiety. I wanted to reassure Deb that this was true, but I also felt that it was not my place to do so, and that I in fact did not feel able to offer feedback to Deb on her therapy skills. I was also aware that I only wanted to offer reassurance to Deb as a reaction to the pull that I was experiencing, and not out of a desire to be reassuring in that moment. In
addition, I felt that reassurance would not really help Deb, in part because I had learned in my own clinical training that reassurance cannot eliminate or address a deep need (S. Cummings, personal communication, September, 2001). I also felt, as a researcher, that I wanted to document and to provide a forum for Deb to experience her anxiety rather than to bail her out of it. Although this interaction was brief, the dynamics occurring were quite complex and I benefited personally and professionally from recording these feelings in my researcher journal.

I found this process of recording my own emotional experience to be useful in ways that seem similar to the co-authors' use of the journal for emotional management. As discussed in Chapter III, by writing down their feelings and reflecting on them, the co-authors found that their experience of the emotions often shifted, and that by being in tune with their own emotional experiences, they were better able to help their clients be in tune with their emotional experiences. Similarly, I recorded feelings of frustration, annoyance, and anxiety in my journal so that by doing so these feelings would not spill into my relationships with the co-authors in ways that might have been unhelpful. As a result of doing this, I could acknowledge my emotional experience, reflect on what it might mean, and remain present to the process of this research. Remaining present to the process of the research involved, among other things, responding to the co-authors' emotional experiences.

**Researcher Role**

I found myself evaluating and examining my own role throughout the study,
and some of this examination took place in the researcher journal, too. Though this research took place over a period of only a few months, those were months of growth and development as clinicians for the co-authors in this study. A parallel process was occurring for me at the same time, engaged as I was in an intensive, process-oriented internship experience. I noted that in the exit interviews I felt more aggressive in pursuit of data and more probing of the co-authors than I had in the entrance interviews. This is in keeping with a recommendation by Kanitz (1996), who acknowledged that her own lack of probing for deeper responses during her interviews was a limitation, implying that it may have been beneficial for her to assertively probe her participants for information that participants may be reluctant to volunteer independently. In the exit interview with Connie, I sensed that Connie was being polite with regard to her difficulties with the journal writing experience. Connie was discussing how the journal writing had not been useful for her this semester, and I was interested in finding out whether the feedback, guiding questions, or other aspects of the study had helped or hindered her journal writing process. At first, Connie seemed reluctant to say anything that might be construed as negative to me. However, I wanted feedback about what made the process difficult for her and therefore decided to probe directly into the process of journal writing for Connie. Connie’s experience with the journal demonstrated that there were barriers for her in terms of the use of the journal as a tool for reflective practice. I was eager to learn more about these barriers, even if I myself was perceived by Connie to be a barrier. From this, I learned much about Connie’s journaling experience. Her perception was that I expected "something deeper" than
she felt she had the time or the patience to do. In retrospect, I realized that Connie’s
perfectionism, her preference for the cognitive over the affective, and her need to
work within a set structure rather than an ambiguous one all placed her at risk for not
completing the journal. Regardless of whether I might have intervened more exten-
sively and assisted Connie with continuing the journal, my probing in the exit inter-
view was instrumental in finding out the barriers to the process for Connie.

This example seems to be emblematic of many important dynamics that were
going on in this study. It illustrates that the researcher as instrument was important
during this research, even as I developed and shifted as an instrument throughout the
process of this study. This example also illustrates that at the beginning of the project
I constructed my role as a primarily benign, supportive figure to the co-authors, and
that I eventually allowed myself the room to reconstruct that role to also include being
very probing of the co-authors. This example further suggests that I went through a
process in which I wanted to be genuine with the co-authors, even though it was risky
in terms of potentially offending or alienating them. This parallels Connie’s journey
to be more assertive and Linda Chelsea’s journey to confront appropriately.

Although I did not consider the issue of self-disclosure with the co-authors
until the study was underway, I quickly found that some of the co-authors did ask me
questions, generally about my academic and counseling experiences, during the
entrance and exit interviews. I wanted to build a supportive relationship with them,
and wanted my own experiences to facilitate the telling of their stories, not to detract
from their sharing of their stories. In the feminist psychological literature, self-
disclosure is often looked upon as a way that the therapist can serve as a role model for a client, to incorporate the use of self with a client (Mahalik, Van Ormer, & Simi, 2000), and as a way the therapist can work toward equalizing the power differential between herself and her client (Brown & Walker, 1990). All of these ways in which self-disclosure is utilized in therapy can also be applied to how self-disclosure was used in this research. I knew that as a researcher in this study, I could be viewed as a role model by the co-authors, that I did use my own self (researcher as instrument) with the co-authors, and also that my goal was to foster an equal relationship with the co-authors. For these reasons, I responded to the co-authors' questions, all of which were within appropriate boundaries, in the spirit of being honest and open with them.

Some of the experiences of self-disclosure that took place fostered my sense of myself as a mentor to the co-authors. I view mentoring as a process in which reciprocal disclosure can take place and both the mentor and the protégé benefit from the experience, though the experience is typically designed for the benefit of the protégé. For example, Marta spoke in the exit interview about how tired she was and returned to a metaphor that she had used earlier in the semester of her head feeling “like a cement mixer.” She asked me about my current clinical experiences, my caseload, and whether I felt tired sometimes. I remarked that I did feel tired sometimes, sharing that my own metaphor that semester in my own journal had been feeling like I was “a tire with a slow leak.” I experienced this disclosure as being useful in that it revealed to Marta that her feelings were normal.

I also noted in my researcher journal when I felt an impulse to behave as a
supervisor. Most of the time I noted that I felt like placing myself into a supervisory role and offering feedback to the co-authors, but I did not do so, accepting that they had supervision and that this was not my role. In one instance, I commented in my own researcher journal, “My supervisory self kicked in.” This was in reaction to Linda Chelsea, who had stated in her entrance interview, “As a counselor I feel very competent. But was I adequate enough? Because I had a girl with—I wouldn’t—and I’m in no position to diagnose—but I would say pretty close to being, um, borderline.” I wanted to ask, “Why aren’t you in a position to diagnose,” and to encourage her to step into the role of diagnostician, which is part of the supervisor’s role with a trainee (Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998). Interestingly, as Linda Chelsea completed her journal entries and relayed her experiences with making fairly autonomous decisions about her clients, I found myself asking, first in my researcher journal and eventually in the written feedback to Linda Chelsea, “Where is your supervisor? Why are you alone in this decision?”

Part of my reaction to the co-authors as a supervisor was a reaction to what seemed to be their attempts to communicate a positive impression of their skills to me. Although I initially viewed myself as a non-evaluative presence, all of the co-authors seemed to feel some need to present themselves in a positive light to me. Ironically, at times this actually underscored the fact that they were novices. For example, Linda Chelsea, in the entrance interview, made several comments about complex clinical situations in which she said, “of course” this situation had a certain meaning, when from my perspective the particular situations might have had many
meanings. Connie remarked matter-of-factly, in the exit interview, that she told her client anger as an emotion was usually more complicated than just anger, it was usually about a more primary emotion like fear. I found this perspective interesting, but wondered how it was relevant to helping her client, and again wondered about the unequivocal nature in which she expressed it. Deb seemed to have a perspective that it was a given that a goal of treatment for a client with a negative perspective was to show the client the benefits of thinking about his life situations in a more positive light. These examples were ways in which the co-authors showed some signs of developing their own style and of building their confidence in their work, which is an important part of beginning counselor development (Stoltenberg et al., 1998). At the same time, these were ways in which the co-authors showed some absolute ways of thinking that are also characteristic of beginning counselors (Stoltenberg, 1981).

I also tracked times in my journal when I felt judgmental of the co-authors in order to understand the meaning of that perception. For example, at times I disagreed with a particular action taken by one of the co-authors or disagreed with a co-author's logic with regard to a given situation. Although I believe that all theoretical orientations have merit, at the time I was engaged in a highly influential training experience that was entirely psychodynamic. Therefore, I noted in my researcher journal when I felt judgmental or less open to other approaches to therapy and did not disrupt the co-authors' process of developing their own theoretical orientation, which is a goal of the first practicum experiences.

Overall, the researcher journal served many functions. It was a place for me to
write down particular themes that were emerging, or the meaning of a particular experience; to record my emotional reactions to the co-authors, including feelings of fear, anxiety, and annoyance; and to evaluate and examine my own role throughout the study, which involved considering issues of self-disclosure, judgmental reactions, my sense of self as mentor or supervisor, and finally reconstructing my role to be both supporting and probing of the co-authors. The researcher journal also afforded parallels to the co-authors' journals.

Training Implications

This dissertation study was undertaken to obtain a better understanding of how journals could be used as a tool to promote the development of reflective practice among beginning students in counseling practicum. An examination of the development of reflective practice through interviews and written journal accounts revealed a dynamic process in which the co-authors struggled to balance an identity made up of personal and professional components.

The co-authors' development of reflective practice during this early stage of counselor development has important implications for counselor training. Beginning counselor training typically attends closely to the acquisition of skills that counselors use (Borders, 1989), such as reflecting, clarifying, and summarizing. While skills acquisition is clearly important for beginning counselor trainees, the results of this study suggest that the acquisition of counseling techniques felt mechanical and rote for the co-authors. Many remarks were made by the co-authors in which they
discussed their opinions that the skills acquisition course, 604 pre-practicum, did not prepare them for the 612 master's in-department practicum. The actual application of skills was difficult because there was a perceived gap between being a counselor and being themselves. During the process of reflection in this study, the co-authors learned that it was important that they act in accordance with who they were as individuals. Adding the reflective component would be useful in helping the trainees to see that they can indeed be themselves while they are with their clients. This would also foster genuineness, another central theme in the present study.

In the present study, Linda Chelsea’s recommendation for journal writing with an advisor as a programmatic requirement seemed to be a request for a structured arena for reflection, or for an arena of reflection that would last longer than this research did (one semester). Combining a reflective component in the didactic training of skills acquisition for beginning counselor trainees would likely be useful and appreciated as a way to make the acquisition of skills feel more natural and less mechanical. This integration of skills acquisition and reflection would be useful in helping trainees in the process of integrating their personal and professional selves.

Existing literature on counselor development emphasizes primarily the process of skills acquisition (e.g., Borders, 1989; Murdock, 1991) and secondarily counselor management of negative emotions during training (Mahoney, 1995). Beginning counselors often have glamorized expectations of being a life-changing force with clients (Skovholt, 2001). In this study, Deb hoped to be the one person to finally have a positive impact on her client. The management of emotions during training is important.
because counselors’ lack of experience makes them more susceptible to feelings of guilt, anger, confusion, and perfectionism (Friedberg & Taylor, 1994). In this research, all of the co-authors benefited from having a forum for emotional management through supervision and/or this journal. Connie’s perfectionism, and Linda Chelsea’s anger and guilt toward her client for relapsing illustrate the need for emotional management particularly well. Accordingly, an appropriate training implication would be that clinical supervisors and directors of training should emphasize to beginning trainees that supervision is meant to be utilized as a forum for emotional management. Structuring multiple means for emotional management, such as journal writing, also are recommended. This study clearly demonstrates the value of providing intensive feedback to beginning counselors who are developing reflective practice. Therefore, providing feedback to counselors—whether it is feedback on journals, whether it is training students in peer supervision to provide each other with thoughtful feedback, or whether it is implementing more feedback into a mentoring relationship—is important. Additionally, checking in with counselors about how the process of reflection is going for them and clarifying that they have permission to be critical of the process, is highly recommended in order to gain a clearer sense of what works.

Mahoney (1995) underscored the importance of trainees managing negative emotions in training so that they might in turn manage client affect, be emotionally present to the client, and grow professionally as a result of their personal growth. In this research, Marta used her journal as a way of managing her emotions and then in
turn as a way to be emotionally present to her client ("the interesting thing is that I was aware of my feelings and what I was feeling was telling me about her and her problems with others"). I too used the researcher journal in order to manage my emotions, particularly anxiety, about this research so that I could remain emotionally present to the co-authors and grow professionally at the same time. Providing an environment for self-reflection through written journals such as those utilized in this study can indeed assist in the management of the variable, shifting emotions experienced by counselor trainees and in turn facilitate their professional development. Again, this implies that training programs facilitate reflective processes in their students.

Suggestions for Future Research

The most obvious direction for future research is the continued exploration of the development of reflective practice in beginning counselor trainees. This dissertation study represented only an initial study of the development of reflective practice in counselor trainees and how reflective practice is useful to them in their work.

Narrative researchers (e.g., Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Zeller, 1995) stress the importance of telling richly detailed stories in depth. Richly detailed narrative accounts of counselors from different backgrounds would add to the existing body of research. Future research could build upon this dissertation research by studying counselor trainees of different genders, cultural groups, and at different levels of training.
The literature that addresses the development of reflective practice in counselors is growing; this study represented a shift to looking at reflective practice in beginning trainees rather than in seasoned practitioners. If more researchers investigate reflective practice in beginning counselor trainees, more specific research questions about different components of the development of reflective practice could be developed. For example, if co-authors were asked to narrow their reflections to certain topics, such as their experience with confrontation or self-disclosure, we would not only have a larger framework for understanding the process of reflective practice, but also a better understanding of more specific meaning-making processes of beginning counselor trainees. It would also be useful for future research to facilitate beginning counselors' reflections on their own processes. Future studies investigating the best process of developing reflective practice would be useful in tailoring the research for trainees at different levels.

Some specific recommendations for future research might include replicating this study with students enrolled in CECP 612 and 613 (or equivalent courses at other universities) but with the requirement that the students keep journals, rather than only conducting the study with volunteers. This might shed light on how the journaling process might be useful for those who have not self-selected and committed the time to an intensive journaling experience. If supervisors or instructors were the ones giving the feedback, it might reveal different things about the impact of a different audience on the process. Another possibility would be the replication of this study with an additional writing theme requiring students to read their journals and reflect on the
content, the themes, and the process at a couple of key points during the semester. This variation might be helpful as a variation on the analysis section that was suggested in this study.

Limitations

A few limitations to this study need to be noted: (a) the potential of co-authors for impression management; (b) potential of journals to reflect certain, but not all, dimensions of experience; (c) time; and (d) diversity issues.

Although I was not in an evaluative role in the way that a supervisor might have been, nevertheless I was viewed by the co-authors as an expert. Therefore, the co-authors in this study may have tried to make a positive impression on me (e.g., to appear competent or cooperative) to construct a narrative that would cast a particular light on experiences of the co-authors. Several factors were put into place in order to encourage frankness and to increase the co-authors' comfort with self-disclosure. First, during the interviews and in the written journal feedback, I spent some time normalizing certain experiences and feelings that trainees have which they may have been reluctant to share in depth, e.g., negative feelings about clients and supervisors, feelings of anger and frustration with different elements of the training process, etc. I also frankly answered questions that co-authors asked about my experiences and perspectives, in an attempt to model genuineness and to demonstrate a level of accessibility to them. The co-authors seemed to present themselves in a forthright manner. I further endeavored to both challenge co-authors to be honest, and to validate the
co-authors' frankness and open self-disclosure with supportive comments about these feelings and experiences. As Linda Chelsea stated during the exit interview, “You kept me in line, you confronted with your feedback, and that was good, that caused me to reflect more.”

Another possible limitation relates to the concern that the content of the journals might not reveal certain aspects of the co-authors’ experiences. This can happen (a) if journals are sought only during certain emotional experiences, or (b) if significant experiences are not included in journals. Sometimes individuals’ written experience may be skewed, appearing unrealistically negative or positive (Wiener & Rosenwald, 1993). Sometimes individuals fail to include certain experiences in their written journals, choosing to keep some aspects of their lives private in their journals or during interviews, and therefore some parts of their narrative may remain vague, or unclear, and may be more easily misconstrued by the researcher.

In the exit interview, I addressed these issues that related to the content of the journals. The co-authors were asked in the exit interview whether they felt the journal was an accurate depiction of their experiences, or whether they felt the journal was skewed in any way. This gave them the opportunity to share ways in which their journal might not be an accurate depiction of their experience. For example, Deb reported her tendency to write only about particularly difficult experiences, and Marta shared her tendency to keep certain aspects of her life private.

Another limitation in this study was time. There were two components to this limitation: brevity of the study, and time factors in the co-authors’ receipt of
feedback. Kanitz (1996) had acknowledged the brevity of the three-day journaling intervention in her study as being a limitation, and recommended that future research should take place over a longer period of time. In accordance with this recommendation, the present study took place over the course of a semester-long practicum. However, co-authors may have had additional insights if they were interviewed again after a period of time had elapsed or if they had maintained a journal for a longer period of time. Linda Chelsea even remarked that she would have been interested to see the study continue over a longer period of time, and to observe the direction her journals might have gone. In this study, an additional time limitation was related to the feedback provided on the journals. The co-authors typically wrote for a month, mailed the journals to me, and I provided them with feedback, which I then mailed back. Marta found this useful, as it allowed her to see her development and to note which issues had stopped being salient for her. However, at times my providing feedback on issues that were no longer salient seemed to be a limitation. Although it may not be practical for journal writers to turn in their journals on a weekly basis for feedback, I think it would have been more useful if I had collected the journals from them every two weeks, or six times instead of three times, in order to stay more current and to be maximally helpful to them.

Lack of diversity also was a limitation in this study. The co-authors came exclusively from one counseling program in the Midwest, thus limiting the variability within the sample. All of the volunteers were women. The act of journal writing tends to be a female domain (Gannett, 1992), so this was not a surprise. Departmental
data suggests that there have been roughly 10% students of color and 20% male students in the counseling programs in recent years, which also explains the fact that the co-authors were all Caucasian women. I did not have access to the names of those enrolled in the master's department practicum and the field practicum, so it is unknown if any students of color or any men were even invited to participate. Future studies that investigate the development of reflective practice in men and in students of color would provide a perspective that this study did not provide. This study provides a perspective on four women of various ages, personal and professional backgrounds, with various clinical interests and professional goals. These women provided insight into the development of reflective practice in the first practicum, insights that can be utilized in future research and to assist with the development of appropriate training experiences.

Contribution of the Study

To summarize, this dissertation study examined how four counselor trainees developed reflective practice; the process of this development was followed through two interviews and a semester-long journal. An important finding of this dissertation study was that counselors in training are capable of engaging in reflective practice and find the pursuit of reflective practice to be valuable in their work. A thematic analysis of the co-authors’ personal reactions revealed a process of development in which the co-authors engaged in reflection in order to balance their professional and personal selves, manage their emotions, and do so in a way that felt authentic to them. In
addition, the relationship to the researcher was significant because the researcher herself became part of the narratives of these counselor trainees.

Many of the themes expressed by the beginning counselor trainees in this study resonated with previous literature. Some specific examples include the importance of counselor management of negative emotions during training (Friedberg & Taylor, 1994), the use of self as instrument (Holmes, 1999), and the shifting of counselor narratives (Herman, 1998; Lillich, 1998). The usefulness of journals as tools for self-reflection also resonates with the counseling literature (e.g., Kanitz, 1996; Lopez et al., 1989) and with the psychological and journal writing literature (e.g., DeSalvo, 1999; Yinger & Clark, 1981).

This dissertation study contributes to the counselor development literature in that it is the only known study to investigate in depth the process of reflective practice in counselor trainees as it unfolds. This study provides support for the notion that the cultivation of reflective practice for personal and professional development is important for beginning counselor trainees, not just for seasoned practitioners. This dissertation tells the story of four co-authors in their own words as they construct the narratives of their development as counselors. Finally, this dissertation research demonstrates the use of written journals as a useful and evocative tool for counselors' development of reflective practice.
Appendix A

Invitation to Participate
Invitation to CECP 612 and CECP 613 students to participate in research

My name is Jean Germain. I am pursuing my doctorate in counseling psychology in the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology (CECP) at Western Michigan University. At the present time, I am conducting research for my dissertation, which is entitled, The process of counselor development in the master’s practicum: a multiple-case, narrative study. I’m looking for persons who are enrolled in CECP 612 (Counseling Practicum) or CECP 613 (Field Practicum), who would be interested in discussing and writing about their perspectives concerning the counseling process and themselves as counselors at this stage of their training. At this time, I would like to invite you to participate. I believe that what you have to say and write about your perspectives on counseling could make a real contribution to increased understanding about the process of counselor development.

This research has three phases. Phase 1 is an initial audiotaped interview at the beginning of the semester, and a review of the written transcript of the interview. If you complete the initial interview and review of the written transcript, I will pay you $10 as a small compensation for your time. It is estimated that the time commitment for this portion will be two hours for the interview and one hour for the written transcript review.

Phase 2 involves maintaining a written journal for up to ten weeks during the semester. During this phase, I will also provide feedback and guidance on the journal. You may also have other informal contacts with me to discuss the process as needed. It is estimated that the time commitment for this portion will be up to two hours per week, though you are free to write for longer if you wish.

Phase 3 is an audiotaped exit interview at the end of the semester, and a review of the written transcript of the interview. It is estimated that the time commitment for this portion will be two hours for the interview and one hour for the written transcript review.

No 612 or 613 supervisors will be informed of your participation. In fact, your names will not be used at any time during this research, so that your confidentiality will be protected. If you are interested in participating, please call me at (716) 275-2361. Whether you reach me personally or reach my voice mail, I will call you back so that you will not incur additional long distance charges. Or, if you prefer, we can arrange a phone appointment through email; my email address is J8germai@wmich.edu. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jean Germain
J8germai@wmich.edu
(716)275-2361
Appendix B

Participant Phone Contact Script 1
Participant Phone Contact Script 1

Thanks for calling me. I gather you read my announcement and are interested in possibly participating in my research for my dissertation, which is called The process of counselor development in the master’s practicum: a multiple-case, narrative study. If it’s okay with you, I’d like to discuss the project further, respond to any questions you might have, and then talk about whether you are still interested in participating. I will be discussing this in detail, so please feel free to interrupt me if you would like me to slow down or if you want to ask a question.

My name is Jean Germain, and I’m a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University. The purpose of my research is to investigate the process of counselor development during the master’s practicum. I hope this research will lead to a better understanding of counselor trainees’ experiences, which may have implications for counselor training and supervision.

As you probably read, there are three phases to this research. Phase 1 consists of an initial interview at the beginning of the semester, and review of the written interview transcript. The initial interview involves your sharing your perspectives about yourself as a counselor at this stage of your training. The anticipated time commitment is up to two hours for the interview and up to one hour for the review.

Up to six persons may participate in Phases 2 and 3. If at the end of Phase 1, more than six persons wish to continue with Phases 2 and 3, they will be placed on a waiting list and permitted to continue if others drop out. Because it may not be possible for everyone who is interested to have the experience of continuing in Phases 2 and 3, all
participants will be given $10 for participation in Phase 1 as a way of reimbursing them in a small way for their time.

**Phase 2** of the study involves your keeping a journal over the course of the semester. The journal will be related to your development as a counselor. You will be provided with some general guidelines for the journal, but will ultimately have the freedom to decide what to write. I will provide general written feedback on the journals on three occasions during the semester. During Phase 2, you are also free to contact me by phone or email if there are questions, concerns, or additional feedback is required. I may also contact you if I have questions or concerns about how the process is going for you. These contacts are expected to be minimal and may not occur at all. The total time commitment for Phase 2 may vary, depending on the amount of time that you decide to spend writing. *It is estimated that Phase 2 (the journal writing commitment, informal contacts, and time spent reviewing written feedback on journals) will take two hours per week for up to ten weeks.* Again, you may take longer if you prefer to write more.

**Phase 3**. The third phase of the study involves an audiotaped exit interview, which will take place at the end of the semester. The exit interview will be based primarily on the content and the process of the journal entries. After this interview has been transcribed, I will again mail the transcription to you and ask that you review the transcript and mail it back to me. The anticipated time commitment for Phase 3 is approximately two hours for the interview and approximately one hour for the review.

All the participants' confidentiality will be strictly protected. I will not record anyone’s real name at anytime. Instead, I’ll use pseudonyms to identify the participants.
You will read a consent statement at the start of the first interview, which we can also discuss. You are free to agree or disagree to participate. If you agree, I will then invite you to sign the consent document and to keep a copy for yourself. Should you choose to participate, you are also free to withdraw from this research at any time.

Toward the conclusion of this phone contact, if you say that you wish to participate in my research, you and I will decide together on places on Western’s campus in Kalamazoo or Grand Rapids for the interviews, and also set up a date and time.

I’d just like to express my appreciation again for your willingness to inquire about this research. I’m very enthused about the potential contribution this research can make to the understanding the process of counselor development.

I hope I’ve explained this research clearly in this brief explanation. If you have any questions, I’d be happy to answer them at this time [a pause occurs, while questions are answered]. If not, I would like to invite you to tell me if you have understood my description of this research, and if you are interested in participating.

[Assuming that the potential participant has expressed their interest in participating, I would then say the following]: Thank you. At this time, I’d like us to arrange a date, time, and location for the initial interview.

Jean Germain

(716) 275-2361

j8germai@wmich.edu
Appendix C

Consent Document for Dissertation Research
I am invited to participate in a dissertation research project entitled, *The practice of journal writing in the master's counseling practicum*. This research is conducted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the student investigator’s doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology, Western Michigan University.

This research intends to explore in-depth the experience of my professional development as a counselor over the course of my CECP 612 Counseling Practicum or CECP 613 Field Practicum. The only conditions of participation are that I am enrolled in one of these courses and am willing to invest time in self-exploration of my development through journal writing and through interviews with the Student Investigator. There is a possibility that space limitations will not allow me to complete the study. Because of this, after I complete the initial interview and review the written transcript of it, I will be paid $10 to compensate me in a small way for my time. If there are space limitations, I will also be placed on a waiting list and then permitted to continue with the study if others drop out of the study.

Should I participate in this study, I will be interviewed at the beginning and the end of the semester. There will be two separate interviews, each running for about 2 hours. Both interviews will be audio taped. During the course of these interviews, I will be invited to share my perceptions and experiences of development as a counselor. After each interview, I will be mailed a written transcription of the interview and invited to review it privately and mail it back to the student investigator in order to provide feedback. Transcript review is expected to take approximately one hour per interview. The interviews will be conducted at a day and time, and location at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo or Western Michigan University in Grand Rapids that is mutually convenient for the student investigator and me.

I am invited to maintain a written journal for ten weeks during the semester. The journal will be related to my development as a counselor. I will be provided with some general guidelines for the journal (such as format, length, etc), but will ultimately have the freedom to decide what to write. I will send the student investigator my journals on three occasions during the semester so that I can receive general written feedback on the journals. I am also encouraged to contact the student investigator by phone or email if I have questions, concerns, or additional feedback is required. The student investigator may also contact me if she has questions or concerns about how the process is going for me. These contacts are expected to be
minimal and may not occur at all. The total time commitment for journal writing may vary substantially, depending on the amount of time that I decide to spend writing. It is estimated that my journal writing commitment, informal contacts, and my time spent reviewing written feedback on journals will take one and a half to two hours per week for up to ten weeks. I may take longer if I prefer to write more. My total commitment for all parts of the study is anticipated to be no more than twenty-six hours.

All of the information collected from me will be confidential. A pseudonym will be used to protect my identity. My real name will not be recorded at any time. All forms, audiotapes, transcripts of interviews, and analyzed journals, be it in printed form or in the form of diskettes, will be secured in a file cabinet in the locked office of the student investigator during data collection and analysis. After that, it will be retained for at least three years at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University in a secure, locked file. If publication of all or portions of the dissertation occurs, data will remain stored in a secure, locked file at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology for a period of 5 years after publication, in accordance with American Psychological Association practices. Following this time, all data will be destroyed.

I may benefit from this research project by becoming more aware of the factors involved in my development as a counselor. By sharing my experience, I may help to provide knowledge and raise awareness of the process of counselor development, which may be helpful to training programs, supervisors, and educators. Because the study involves my reflections upon my thoughts, feelings, and development as counselors, there is the potential for disclosure of sensitive information in the interviews and journals. I am free to choose what information I feel comfortable revealing to the student investigator in my journals and in the interviews.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participants. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or additional treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise stated in this consent form. The anticipated risks due to participation in this study are expected to be minimal. The only anticipated risk is the effect of expressing personal perceptions and experiences to the researchers. If emotional distress should during the course of participating in this research, the student investigator will refer me to Western Michigan University’s University Counseling and Testing Center, where services can be provided at no cost to me. Referrals can also be made to other appropriate counseling agencies. In these latter instances, I would be responsible for the cost of counseling if I choose to seek it.

This consent document has been approved for use for 1 year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the

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board chair in the upper right hand corner of all three pages. I should not participate in this project if the corner does not have a stamped date and signature.

Because participation is voluntary, I may withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice or penalty. If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Jean Germain (the Student Investigator) at (716) 275-2361 or Dr. Mary Z. Anderson (the Principal Investigator) at (616) 387-5113. I may also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (616) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (616) 387-8298 with any concerns that I have.

Participant's Signature

Date

Student Investigator's Signature

Date

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Appendix D

Entrance Interview Questions
Entrance Interview Questions

1) Pseudonym
2) Age
3) Relationship status
4) Race/ethnicity
5) Religion
6) Educational background
7) Current occupation
8) Degree program
9) Volunteer or occupational experiences related to their degree program
10) Short- and long-term goals upon completion of the master's program
11) Goals upon completion of the current practicum
12) What have you learned about yourself in your graduate training in counseling?
13) Tell me about your experiences in pre-practicum.
14) Tell me about your thoughts and feelings regarding this practicum.
15) Talk about any experience you have in keeping a journal or diary.
16) Tell me what interests you about this research project.
Appendix E

Exit Interview Questions
Exit Interview Questions

The first questions will be pertaining to the content of the journals. For example, if participants addressed management of anxiety in their journal, they would then be invited to talk further during the interview about their experience of anxiety throughout the practicum.

The next questions will address the process of writing and of being in this study, and will be explored in depth:

(1) What was the experience of this research like for you?
(2) Talk about your writing process. Do you feel that your journal is an accurate representation of your perceptions? In what ways?

Some topics that were discussed in the exit interview (based loosely on journal content)

Marta: illness, spirituality, September 11 tragedy, imposter phenomenon, family concerns, upcoming field practicum, discussion of her artwork in journal.
Connie: assertiveness, barriers to the journal, semester stresses, upcoming field practicum, male client, female client, supervision, ending her guidance job
Deb: client progress, supervision, examples of training environment stresses and supports, emotional aspects of practicum
Linda Chelsea: confrontation, client issues, extensive talk about the journaling process, discussion of topics that didn't emerge in journal, field practicum concerns.
Appendix F

Journal Writing Guidelines
Journal writing guidelines:
The journal is intended as a way for you to record your thoughts and feelings related to your development as a counselor. Guiding questions will be provided for you to think about as you write if you wish. However, you ultimately have the freedom to decide what to write.

Guiding questions: As you begin your journal, you are encouraged to reflect upon the initial interview, and to consider any ideas that come up in relation to the initial interview and to your practicum. After the initial interview has been transcribed, you will be provided with guiding questions based on content that was brought up in the initial interview. You are invited to use the guiding questions for exploration in your journal if it is helpful to you, but you are not required to do so.

Mailing entries: You are asked to mail the journal entries to the student investigator three times during the semester (we will discuss the dates), in the postage-paid envelopes provided. (The envelopes are addressed to the student investigator and the return address is that of the principal investigator in the CECP department as a means for protecting your confidentiality). Written feedback regarding the topics you address in your journal will be provided by the student investigator and returned to you via registered mail. You are free to use the feedback as you wish. Guided questions for future journal entries will be provided to you based on content that you explore in the journal. You may be invited to explore certain topics in greater depth or provided with more or less structure.

Length of entries: You are invited to write an average of two days per week and two pages per day, for approximately ten weeks. You are free to write more than that if you like.

Analysis of entry: At the end of each entry, you are encouraged to write an "analysis" section, in which you read over the written passage and reflect back on what you just wrote. It is anticipated that this will help you to gain a sense of the issues and themes that emerge.

Dating entries: You are asked to write the date on each page of the journal. If you write more than one entry per day, you are asked to notate in some way that they are separate entries, e.g. by writing the time or indicating that it is later in the day.

Writing/typing entries: Please write your entries legibly in ink. If you prefer, you may type your entries and insert them into your journal.

Use of pseudonym: You are asked to use your pseudonym in your journal so that your confidentiality will be protected. If you elect to write about your experiences with clients, you will need to change their names and any potentially identifying details.
about them so that their anonymity will be protected. You may not write about clients unless you are willing to do this.

Contact: You are free to contact me by phone or email if you have questions, concerns, or require additional feedback. I may also contact you if I have questions or concerns about how the process is going for you.
Appendix G

Summary of Journal Output
Summary of Journal Output

*Marta*—3 sets of journals, roughly 50 pages each, handwritten on lined 8 ½ X 11 paper. 154 pages total. I provided over 300 comments total. Marta also included some drawings.

*Linda Chelsea*—3 sets of journals, roughly 15 pages each, handwritten on lined 8 ½ X 11 paper, 42 pages total. I provided over 150 comments total.

*Deb*—2 sets of journals, 1st set 7 pages, 2nd set 3 pages, typewritten, single spaced, in 10-point font. I provided over 85 comments total.

*Connie*—1 set of journals, 16 pages, typewritten, double spaced. I provided over 60 comments total.
Appendix H

Consent Document for Pilot Study
I am invited to participate in the pilot study of a dissertation research project entitled, *The practice of journal writing in the master's counseling practicum*. This research is conducted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the student investigator's doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology, Western Michigan University.

This dissertation research intends to explore in-depth the experience of the professional development of counselors over the course of the CECP 612 Counseling Practicum or CECP 613 Field Practicum. This pilot study intends to demonstrate the effectiveness of some of the procedures in this study. The only conditions of participation are that I am enrolled in one of these courses and am willing to invest time in self-exploration of my development through two one-hour interviews and a one-hour journal writing experience.

Should I participate in this study, I will participate in an initial interview, write in a journal, and then participate in an exit interview. Both interviews will be audio taped, but they will not be transcribed. During the course of these interviews, I will be invited to share my perceptions and experiences of development as a counselor. The interviews will be conducted at a day and time, and location at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo or Western Michigan University in Grand Rapids that is mutually convenient for the student investigator and me.

I am invited to write in a journal during this pilot study. The journal will be related to my development as a counselor. I will be provided with some general guidelines for the journal (such as format, length, etc), but will ultimately have the freedom to decide what to write. My total commitment for all parts of the pilot study (journal writing and interviews) is anticipated to be three to four hours, which I may schedule all in one day or over a period of a few days.

All of the information collected from me will be confidential. A pseudonym will be used to protect my identity. My real name will not be recorded at any time. All forms, audiotapes, transcripts of interviews, and journals, be it in printed form or in the form of diskettes, will be secured in a file cabinet in the locked office of the student investigator during data collection and analysis. After that, it will be retained for at least three years at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University in a secure, locked file. If publication of
all or portions of the dissertation occurs, data will remain stored in a secure, locked
file at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology for a
period of 5 years after publication, in accordance with American Psychological
Association practices. Following this time, all data will be destroyed.

I may benefit from this research project by becoming more aware of the factors
involved in my development as a counselor. By sharing my experience, I may help to
provide knowledge and raise awareness of the process of counselor development,
which may be helpful to training programs, supervisors, and educators. Because the
study involves my reflections upon my thoughts, feelings, and development as
counselor, there is the potential for disclosure of sensitive information in the
interviews and journals. I am free to choose what information I feel comfortable
revealing to the student investigator in my journals and in the interviews.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participants. If an accidental
injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no
compensation or additional treatment will be made available to me except as
otherwise stated in this consent form. The anticipated risks due to participation in this
study are expected to be minimal. The only anticipated risk is the effect of expressing
personal perceptions and experiences to the researchers. If emotional distress should
during the course of participating in this research, the student investigator will refer
me to Western Michigan
University’s University Counseling and Testing Center, where services can be
provided at no cost to me. Referrals can also be made to other appropriate counseling
agencies. In these latter instances, I would be responsible for the cost of counseling if
I choose to seek it.

This consent document has been approved for use for 1 year by the Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the
board chair in the upper right hand corner of all three pages. I should not participate in
this project if the corner does not have a stamped date and signature.

Because participation is voluntary, I may withdraw from this research at any time
without prejudice or penalty. If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I
may contact either Jean Germain (the Student Investigator) at (716) 275-2361 or Dr.
Mary Z. Anderson (the Principal Investigator) at (616) 387-5113. I may also contact
the chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (616) 387-8293 or the
Vice President for Research at (616) 387-8298 with any concerns that I have.

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<td>Student Investigator’s Signature</td>
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Appendix I

Participant Phone Script 2
This is Jean Germain. How are you? Well, if this is a good time I would like to talk with you for five minutes about my dissertation results (if yes, then proceed, if not, let them come up with a plan that will work for them). It's been over a year since we spoke, and I hope it has been a good one for you personally and professionally. I have been so appreciative of your time and energy as a participant in my dissertation project, and I am nearing the end of what has turned out to be a lengthier analysis of the interviews and journals than I imagined it would be. As you may remember, after the interviews, I provided you with a written transcript so that you could verify its accuracy or let me know about corrections, and in our final interview I gave you a summary of my understanding of the themes that emerged in the interviews and journals, and you provided feedback to me about whether or not that sounded right to you. During the final interview, you had expressed an interest in the results. I would like to invite you to read the parts of the results chapter that pertain to you (roughly 20 pages). This is your lived experience and so I view you as a co-author—this is part of your story of development as a counselor, so I would like to give you the opportunity to read it and to see if it feels like an accurate depiction of your experience. If parts of what I have written do not feel accurate to you, that feedback will help a great deal in revisions because it is important for your accurate experience to be revealed in this narrative. Reading the parts of the result section that pertain to you, which is a roughly 20 page document, and thinking about whether it feels accurate to you I estimate will take no more than an hour of your time, and likely less time. Discussing with me or writing down any feedback that you might have for me in terms of additions or changes that you would recommend is anticipated to take no more than one hour of your time, though that also may take less time. You are free to spend more time on it if you wish to do so. I want to stress that this reading of the results section is totally your choice. I am inviting you to do so, but if you would prefer not to read it due to time constraints or any other reason, I will honor that decision. You do not need to provide any explanation.

I would like to hear any thoughts, questions, or response you might have to this invitation (allow them time to ask questions, etc.). If they say they need to think about it, I will arrange to follow up with them.

If they say no, I will say, "Thank you so much again for the valuable contribution you have made to my dissertation and for giving so generously of your time. I wish you the very best."

If they say yes, I will say, "Thank you for agreeing to read the parts of the results section that pertain to your experience. I will send it to you via postal mail or via email attachment, whichever you prefer, and your pseudonym will appear on it, so there will be no risk of your identity being revealed. We can come up with a time frame that works for you in terms of your reading and thinking about the results and sharing any feedback that you might have. I value your input as a co-author in this study and will look forward to working on this with you. If you at any time change your mind or decide you would prefer not to do it, I will honor that decision. Let's talk about a possible time frame that will work for your schedule and address any concerns that you might have" (concerns and schedule will then be addressed).
Appendix J

Human Subjects Institutional Review
Board Approval Letter
Date: 1 August 2001

To: Mary Anderson, Principal Investigator
   Jean Germain, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 01-07-11

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “The Process of Development in the Master’s Practicum: A Multiple-case, Narrative Study” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 1 August 2002
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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