

Phenomenological Research

Phenomenology is both a twentieth century school of philosophy associated with Husserl (1970) and a type of qualitative research. With its roots in philosophy and psychology, phenomenology focuses on the subjective experience of the individual. Although all qualitative research is phenomenological in the sense that there is a focus on people's experience, a phenomenological study seeks to understand the *essence* or *structure* of a phenomenon. This approach rejects the notion of a dichotomy between subject and object; that is, "the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual" (Creswell, 1998, p. 53). The person and his or her world are interrelated and interdependent. The researcher's focus is thus on neither the human subject nor the human world but on the essence of the meaning of this interaction. It is thus the researcher's task "to enter that dialogue, and eavesdrop, as it were; to listen in, and capture the essence of what is perceived by the subject" (van der Mescht, 1999, p. 3).

Phenomenological research addresses questions about common, everyday human experiences (for example, love), experiences believed to be important sociological or psychological phenomena of our time or typical of a group of people (for example, being a cancer patient), and transitions that are common or of contemporary interest (such as becoming a parent or changing gender roles) (Tesch, 1984). The defining characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the "essence" of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it.

Although documents can be a source of data, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection wherein one attempts to uncover the essence, the invariant structure, of the meaning of the experience. Prior to

interviewing others, phenomenological researchers usually explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to be, come aware of their own prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. These prejudices and assumptions are then bracketed, or set aside, so as not to influence the process. Bracketing is explained by Ashworth (1999):

The procedure has the purpose of allowing the life-world of the participant in the research to emerge in clarity so as to allow a study of some specific phenomenon within the life-world to be carried out. The researcher must suspend presuppositions in order to enter the life-world. . . . Two main categories of presuppositions should be bracketed: those to do with the temptation to impose on the investigation of the life-world claims emanating from objective science or other authoritative sources, and those to do with the imposition of criteria of validity arising outside the life-world itself. (pp. 708-709)

Bracketing, or the process of *epoché*, allows the experience of the phenomenon to be explained in terms of its own intrinsic system of meaning, not one imposed on it from without.

In addition to bracketing, when conducting a phenomenological study, one engages in phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and imaginative variation. *Phenomenological reduction* is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself. We focus on the phenomenon in order to comprehend its essence. *Horizontalization* is the process of laying out all the data and treating the data as having equal weight; that is, all aspects of data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage. Data are then clustered into themes, and repetitions statements are removed. Moustakas (1994, p. 96) explains that in horizontalization, "there is an interweaving of person, conscious experience, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived." *Imaginative variation* involves examining the data from divergent perspectives and varying frames of reference (Moustakas, 1994). The final step in a phenomenological study is to construct a synthesis of textual and structural descriptions (the *what* and *how*) of the phenomenon being studied.

The two articles in this section illustrate the nature of phenomenological research. Wolff's (1999) phenomenological study of in-church and televised worship employs semiotics, the analysis of language, in trying to capture the "lived experience" of both types of worship. Wolff employs most of the techniques of phenomenology listed above and provides an excellent description of their use in relation to the phenomenon of interest: worship. Worthen and McNeill's (1996) focus is on the experience of "good" supervision. In their description of procedures, they capture what a phenomenological study attempts to do. They ask, "What is absolutely essential for this experience of good psychotherapy supervision?" Their findings include a structural description of good supervision.

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A Phenomenological Study of In-Church and Televised Worship

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The importance of worship to the life of the believer is universally recognized. Both liturgical theologians and churchgoers alike note the importance of worshipping in church. While it is valuable to understand the theological reasons for the importance of worship, it is likewise important to understand the perspective of the worshippers themselves and to interpret how they describe the experience. The interpretation of first-hand descriptions of worship is a contribution that qualitative research in general and phenomenological research in particular may make to understanding the importance of worship. The interest of the present study is not only to understand the importance of worship from first-hand descriptions but also to consider how the experience of in-church worship compares to that of televised worship.

Televised worship programs have become a significant subgenre of religious television. From slick nationwide televised services to local services recorded on camcorders, television audiences and churchgoers have the opportunity to experience worship services via television. But does the medium make possible a true appreciation of worship experience? Existing studies of religious television shed light on various genres (such as religious news, talk, variety, children's, testimonial, and worship programs) from the perspectives of sociology, political science, psychology, behaviorism, statistical audience analysis, content analysis, cultural studies, and ethnography. All of these studies provide important insights into the phenomenon of religious television; yet studies using an existential phenomenological approach are needed. This study seeks to add to

the critical literature by using semiotic phenomenology to study one subgenre of religious television—televised worship.

Inasmuch as research studies using semiotic phenomenological methodology have burgeoned largely over the past decade, studies of in-church worship likewise are needed. How do people experience worship in church? In existential terms, why do worshippers value the experience? Finally, how does worshipping in church compare with experiencing televised worship, and are the differences significant? To answer these questions, this study develops a semiotic phenomenology of in-church worship and then compares the lived experience of in-church worship with televised worship.

Methodology and Research Design

Given my interest in researching lived experience, semiotic phenomenology is the research theory I used to guide my study (Lanigan, 1992, 1988). Phenomenology focuses on lived experience. It looks at people's everyday experiences of phenomena and how these experiences are structured, focusing the analysis on the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon. Phenomenology thus attends to how people experience phenomena existentially. The aim is to describe and interpret how the situated body makes sense of a phenomenon. People express their experience of phenomena in language. Semiotics focuses on language as a medium of expression and how meaning and experience are captured in signs. In semiotic phenomenology, lived-significance and speech-as-signification are intertwined; the meaning is the phenomenon, and the focus on language as signifier is intertwined with the significance of lived meaning; the two structures are reversible (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Semiotic phenomenology thus constitutes a methodology for analyzing conscious experience and the existential meaning revealed by speech in the description of a phenomenon (Lanigan, 1988, pp. 8-10, 144-52). (For the purposes of this research I make no esoteric distinctions among semiotic, existential, and hermeneutic phenomenology. Inasmuch as semiotic phenomenology posits that symbols and their meanings are inextricably bound with lived experience, semiotic phenomenology is existential; and inasmuch as the final phase of semiotic phenomenology involves an interpretation of the lived meaning of a phenomenon, the research is also hermeneutic.)

Using semiotic phenomenological procedure, a researcher may interpret persons' conscious experience of a phenomenon by using the methodological schema of description-reduction-interpretation (Lanigan, 1988, p. 148). Generally speaking, the initial procedure consists in the description (interviews), followed by reduction (thematizations) and interpretation (hermeneutic reflection). The description is the explication of conscious experience; that is, the basic signs. Here, the description is the transcribed interviews with respondents. Description is taken through phenomenological reduction—finding emergent themes in the descriptions of the phenomenon. For example, in each respondent's descriptions I look for clusters of statements that coalesce around a central theme, such as "Church

as Unity," and list these themes together with the research participant's comments, in this case church as "blending," "bringing together," an "experience of oneness." A similar procedure reveals themes across respondents' descriptions—that is, finding themes supported by comments from several participants.

Reduced elements are then interpreted to explicate what is signified, what the meaningful directedness points to (Lamigan, 1988, p. 148). This involves finding further thematizations, which bring together initial themes into more all-encompassing ones. For example, "Hierarchy" as a theme emerges from initial clusters concerning seeing and being seen; intersubjective relations among God, the pastor, congregation, and self; experiences of being controlled. In the interpretation, I explicate the structures of experience revealed in these thematizations and how they interrelate with each other.

This coalescence of themes into more encompassing themes leads to the discovery of one or two phrases that capture(s) the experience in a revealing manner. Such phrases may not at first seem particularly evocative of the phenomenal complexity of an experience until one examines how they express the essence of an experience in some revealing manner. These phrases will be densely layered with emergent themes and are therefore revelatory of persons' conscious experience of church. The interpretation involves an explication of how one or two phrases are so revelatory and the elucidation of a definition of the phenomenon which ties the themes together. Ultimately, I compare the structures of ecclesiastic and televsual experience, including televised worship.

In order to provide me with a description of the phenomena under study, I chose research participants from whom I could receive first-hand descriptions of ecclesiastic and televsual experience. The descriptions provided by these respondents reveal the lived meanings of the phenomena and provide a discursive means by which these experiences may be unravelled, examined, and understood in the coming phases of phenomenological procedure (Nelson, 1989b, p. 224). In all, I interviewed a dozen churchgoers and focused my analysis on the transcripts of the six most richly descriptive of these.

I used three strategies for selecting respondents. Since I was specifically seeking people who have experience with both television and in-church services I engaged in purposeful sampling, a technique which seeks information-rich cases (Patton, 1990, p. 169). In addition, I used homogeneous and typical case sampling (Patton, 1990, pp. 173–174). Homogeneous sampling provides focus and reduced variation while nonetheless encouraging descriptions from persons' unique perspectives. In keeping with this strategy, I interviewed members of a small, predominantly white Lutheran congregation in Athens, Ohio, who also meet the purposeful sampling criteria; just over half of those interviewed were female, and ages ranged from late twenties to late sixties. I also used typical case sampling, a strategy I chose to highlight experiences many people have in common. Notably, any selection strategy involves limitations, which are best recognized; for example, another study might look at devoted viewers of televised worship to compare their experiences with those chosen herein, or might look at members of church traditions which differ significantly from that used

in this study. Nonetheless, if one bears in mind the specific strategies used for any particular study one may understand its relevance in context and use this to provide ideas and comparisons for further research.

To conduct my conversations, I selected the interview guide approach (Patton, 1990, pp. 283–284). This interview type allows the researcher to select a general list of topics to be covered, without formalizing a specific sequence or wording of questions. To provide the framework for the discussions, I developed a topical protocol—a list of topics of interest which I hoped to cover in whatever sequence seemed appropriate in the given interview situation. The interviews were conducted as a discussion, and participants guided the discussion from point to point as befitted their situation. They spontaneously introduced whatever descriptions/interpretations they found appropriate. Flexibility, situational sensitivity, and open-ended responses are the features defining this interview type (Patton, 1990, pp. 283–284). The topical protocol I used for the interviews encouraged descriptions of a church, a worship service (in detail), God, congregation members, nonecclesiastic religious experience, and televised worship.

Once interviews were completed and transcribed I began the phenomenological reduction by looking for emergent themes, both of individual research participants (paradigmatic reduction) and across participants' responses (syntagmatic reduction). These thematic categories emerged from individual utterances of respondents, and I collected respondents' phrases under appropriate thematic headings. (Note: numbers appear parenthetically after quotations from the transcripts to identify which respondent offered that description.) For example, some emergent themes are Church as Dependable/Familiar ("you can depend on what's going to happen at what time," "everything is predictable," "it's very comforting to hear the same words") and Church as Public Acknowledgment ("it means something to say it, it means something to hear it," "even though you know all the words already, it's really good to hear them spoken," "I feel like I'm lending my presence in support of the prayers"). I continued the phenomenological reduction until I found three thematic categories which are the essential constituent elements of ecclesiastic experience. The essential thematic categories which emerged from this process are hierarchy, immersion, and freedom. These elements were themselves reduced in the phenomenological interpretation to a definition—a statement by which I attempt to explicate how these themes reveal the lived complexity of ecclesiastic experience.

Church and "Everyday" Experiences

Ecclesiastic experience consistently emerged among research participants' descriptions as a contrast to "everyday" experiences. A number of subthemes appear: these include church as distinct from work, everyday conflicts, and ordinary experiences of time. Church is experienced as distinct from everyday chaos: "you can go and be away from all the hubbub, and the phones, and the this and the that that goes on in your everyday life" (1). In contrast to such "hubbub," church provides a well-structured and peaceful environment: "The rest of the week is crazy. That's one point in time that's structured and peaceful and I look forward

to that, kind of a renewing time of the week" (2). The formality of church experience provides an ordered contrast to less-ordered weekday experiences; in church, "you can depend on what's going to happen at what time" (2).

The experience of church as apart from everyday conflict, nonetheless, has an important influence on the everyday; church experience renews congregants and makes their everyday experiences more bearable:

I have a lot of stress, a lot of goals to meet at work and a lot of pressure, and I'm the only one in my office, my division, so I don't have anyone else I can go give anything to, it's all on my shoulders, and that's probably why I feel like the whole world is against me, even though I have everything going for me. But if I've gone to church on Sunday I feel better about the week and I think God's gonna give me enough time to get what's necessary done, and if I do not always get everything done, so what. (6)

At work there are always going to be conflicts coming up, problems and worries of the day and the pacing, which the day goes through, and in church you don't usually have that. I can't say I ever go to work and get renewed, it's just a different emphasis. (1)

The rest of the week is crazy. That's one point in time that's structured and peaceful and I look forward to that, kind of a renewing time of the week. (2)

Church provides renewal for the week because of differing expectations: "At church I'm not expected to be a wonderful person, I'm expected to be a sinner who's going to be forgiven and somebody who's going to go out and try to be a better Christian and live out their faith in a better life, where at work you don't have that ability to necessarily fail and be readily forgiven, you're expected to do the best and not fail, and people don't necessarily forgive you if you do fail" (1).

The principal orientation is to past conflicts, although anxiety about the future is also present. One respondent notes that she experiences church as "peaceful" and "quiet" and in direct contrast to her everyday experience, particularly when her mind wanders in church and she starts thinking about everyday problems; she thinks of "something that's happened to me through the week that I haven't been able to shake off, or maybe even something I'm going to do" (3). Church emerges therefore as a temporal point of reference, a present experience from which worshippers reflect on the past and find renewal for the future.

The experience of church as a temporal point of reference emerges in all respondents' discussions. Church is experienced as either the end (orientation toward the past) or beginning (orientation toward the future) of a week:

It's the stopping point of the week for me. The rest of the week is crazy. That's one point in time that's structured and peaceful and I look forward to that, kind of a renewing time of the week. (2)

That's part of the letting down process, the end of the week syndrome, you know you race like crazy through the week then all of a sudden you're relaxed. (2)

[After church] I'm ready to face the week. (6)

I do a lot of bad things during the week, a lot of bad things, so I just feel a lot better when I've gone to church and it helps me start the week again, to try again. (6)

Now my sins are forgiven and now I can start another week. (6)

Then when you get to the communion part, it kind of completes the cleansing process and gives you added strength and food for going on in life and starting the week and doing things better this time. (1)

[The blessing] closes the service and begins my week right. (5)

I can touch base and go into the week. (4)

Although respondents report being aware of the passage of time during week-day experiences, time goes unnoticed at church: "This is one place where I don't pay much attention to time, at least during the service" (3); "I can't say that I'm aware of time passing or not as the case may be" (1); "It's sort of a suspension of time" (5); "I don't think I'm usually really aware" of the passage of time in a church service, "usually I don't notice" (4). Church is therefore distinguished from the everyday in that persons are not as aware of the passage of time during a worship service as they are during other experiences.

Ecclesiastical Modes of Corporeal Experience

While ecclesiastical experience involves a defocusing on the passage of time it also involves a heightened focus on sense. At different portions of a service, moreover, different senses are highlighted. Senses are "foregrounded" in relation to what is experienced as a neutral horizon forming the background. Thus, silence is the background against which speech is foregrounded; seatlessness is the visual background against which a person standing commands attention; nearness is the tangible background against which touching is foregrounded.

Hearing. A predominant element of the sensual ensemble involved in the ecclesiastical setting emerges among interviewees' descriptions of hearing/listening. What most distracts worshippers from engagement in worship is aberrant sound: children speaking or crying (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), people talking when they should not be (4, 5), sounds coming from other parts of the building (5). Aberrant sound is distracting because it diverts worshippers from the intentional directedness, which they experience as appropriate. For example, the prelude is described as a time to be quiet (all respondents), "ponder" (1), and "meditate" (3), particularly on one's self; music is appropriate; self-examination is appropriate; verbal communication is a distraction. The structure of the service begins with a quiet focus on self such that that which worshippers offer to the group (their selves) is foregrounded. Before immersing oneself in the group identity/expression, an awareness of what one is immersing—the self—is the appropriate focus. Quietness and self-focus are therefore intertwined.

By means of the auditory, group identity is quickly forged. Against this beginning background of silence/self-focus a speech/group-focus emerges. After a brief

order for confession and forgiveness (which participants report "frees them up" [1]), the congregation sings an opening hymn and acts as a whole: singing with other people is "a kind of a group expression and it's kind of like bringing everybody together and focused on one thing, and yeah, I think that does have meaning for me, 'cuz everybody has their own way of expressing that, but it comes into a whole" (4).

Hymn singing is a group expression in which voices intertwine or "blend" (3), forming an auditory unity. One's own voice blends with that of others such that shortcomings in one's vocal ability will be of no concern since individual voices get "drowned out" (6).

Throughout the descriptions of ecclesiastic experience, listening is the principal mode of engagement: listening to the sermon, prayers, Scripture readings, etc. It is implicit in many of the paradigmatic thematizations discussed above. For example, one research participant describes church as dependable, an experience which is intertwined with the auditory: "It's very comforting to hear the same words" (2). The intertwining is likewise present for another respondent, who explicates the auditory as central to her experience of church as public expression: "It means something to say it, it means something to hear it," and "sometimes it's really good to hear, even though you know all the words already, it's really good to hear them spoken" (5).

Seeing. Looking and listening is important in Scripture reading, yet "pure" listening is preferred for prayers. In the sensual ensemble of ecclesiastic experience, sight is at times experienced as a threat to what respondents experience as the more important intentional directness toward sound. Closing one's eyes during prayers is important, so that the visual will not distract one from the auditory. Participants explicate this intentional directness toward listening as "concentration": when bowing one's head and closing one's eyes in prayer, "you're not concentrating on anything else for one thing, it helps you to keep your thoughts on the prayers" (3); likewise, "I really don't open my eyes at all, I keep my eyes shut and concentrate" (6). Note that respondents say that their concentration comes about by a conscious effort to be intentionally directed toward sound, the voice of one reading the prayers, and by bracketing the visual by not looking at the printed word, the reader, or other congregants.

The disengagement of the visual seems most often experienced during directness toward God. How does one direct oneself "toward" something that is "around us and with us" (3)? Toward God, whom "no one's seen" (6)? While God's presence is symbolically visualized (3), attempts to address God necessitate disengaging from a visual orientation in order to be directed toward an auditory one. In the in-church setting, God is experienced as an essentially auditory phenomenon.

Touching. This discussion leads to the matter of tactility and bodily presence in church. There is a sense in which worshippers experience God as concretely present and touchable. After going to church, one respondent says, "I feel bet-

ter that I'm back in touch with God" (6). This suggests Godly contact is lost during everyday activity and is restored in church. Sensing God's presence is connected to sensing the presence of other worshippers:

I feel God's presence in the communion with the congregation, the caring and the friendly open feeling of the congregation to me speaks to God's presence, because you can be in another gathering for other reasons and the feeling of the group is totally different, so I think that you can feel God's presence in the mood, in the feeling of the people worshipping with you. (1)

I think sometimes I just have to remind myself that He's there, and other times, I think that it helps me to remember by my relationships with this community. And there I can know that there's a presence, just because there's all these presences. . . . I guess it's different when I'm aware of God's presence because then I'm aware of the connection, and I can feel more connected, grounded. . . . [connected] to God, or to, that somehow I'm connected to what's kind of underneath it all that gives it meaning and substance. . . . just all, I guess it all, the universe. (4)

The presence of others directing their awareness to what connects them all serves metonymically to connect all things and all people. Central to this awareness is physical proximity and tangibility, as captured in the phrase, "you can get a feel for people" (1), which suggests a "feel" for others' moods and persons, and an actual tangible "feel" of others' corporeal presence: "I think that I tend to like closeness. . . . I think that you can feel probably the mood of people" (1). Going to church to "make" this contact is important; one participant notes that this contact is lost during everyday experiences when he "loses touch" with "the things that are important to me within the church service and also within my own emotional and spiritual ramblings" (4). The physical presence of others is necessary to "make" contact: "I feel better that I'm back in touch with God, that obviously I can't make it on my own" (6).

The necessity of physical presence and the ability to touch other worshippers for authentic ecclesiastic experience emerges most clearly when this is contrasted with watching a televised church service. TV worship lacks an essential physical presence and touchability:

I wouldn't get that feeling. I might bow my head for the Lord's Prayer. . . . but it wouldn't be the same. A church to me is a fellowship with the believers, it's a fellowship. (3)

The TV cuts me off too much. I don't feel like I'm a member or that I'm belonging to the congregation that's in the TV service, I'd rather be a part of the congregation. (1)

It felt like you were just a spectator. (4)

I'm not really feeling the elements and stuff, I don't know, it just seems like I am on the outside looking in. (3)

With in-church experience, respondents explicate the body as being "in" an experience, one that is separate from the everyday, as when a congregant notes

that participating in church is "kind of like you're there in that sacred moment, and then you take that and then you can go on out into the world again. Into your life" (4). This comment makes explicit a separation of planes which may be "in" the church and the everyday, adding that although the churchly plane is apart from the everyday it affects life "in" the everyday.

Ecclesiastic Modalities of Intersubjective Awareness

Consecrated (Congregants and Pastor). At times the service opens to a mutual, interactive dialogue in which some congregants are active. For example, portions of the service are flexible, explicitly designed to be contextually sensitive to contemporary time and concerns. Participants say these points occur when congregants other than themselves (consecrated) are actively engaged in creating a personal expression for the ritual, such as writing one's own prayers or a sermon. These portions of the service are expressly capable of incorporating concerns relevant to a particular time and community. Such portions of the service are described as involving a passive stance by congregants, yet also yield a sense of being more personally addressed as during the pastor's sermon:

On a personal level, she's a real warm and supportive person, and she's a very good pastor on a personal level. But when she goes up, to preach her sermon, then she's on a, it's as though she's stepped up to another level, and she's got something a little bit different to say to us. It's related to what she says to us any other time of the week that we see her, but it's got a different kind of significance somehow. It's coming from a different direction." (4)

I guess I kind of think of her as a very good friend, and when she's preaching the sermon, I'm trying to be very receptive and open to a friend to see what they have to say to me. . . . Yeah, it's different probably because at other times of the week when I am with her it's more of a relationship of just another person, a good friend, where during a service and a sermon, she's acting more as a spokesperson for God. (1)

The pastor's everyday interaction with congregants forms a background, which contrasts with her role in the worship service, but which also influences congregants' relationships with her during a service. During this time, congregants describe themselves as more passive in their relationship with the pastor, but also confident that her interactions with them during the week make her sensitive to their needs during the service. Her role in the liturgy is to embody a site of interaction among herself, her congregational consecrated, and various others: between congregants and biblical predecessors (whose lives and writings she is expected to make relevant to congregants today); between congregants and the institutionalized other—the service itself (whose institutionalized voice needs her embodiment to be present); and between congregants and God (for whom she is serving as "spokesperson").

Self. In the context of the ecclesiastic setting, the self emerges as the site of entwined modes of intersubjective awareness. In a process of transformation during a worship service, respondents describe the self as willingly separated from

itself: "With a church service I hope that I'm a different person when I come out, because I've been forgiven, I've been renewed, and I am ready to start out again." (1). The self is renewed, and is different from the self who entered the service: the "bad" (6), "weak person" (3) who entered is a different person by the end of the service, one who is good and strong. The service transforms congregants from what they were into what they now are—until they will need renewal once again. The self therefore emerges as in continual reestablishment, the site where one is both transformed and stabilized; one must constantly be changed into another—perhaps more accurately, changed into a continuing sequence of others. One may look back, then, to the old self, or forward to the self that one will become by the end of the worship service. The "I" serves as a constant—that which holds despite being transformed into a different person: "With a church service I hope that I'm a different person when I come out, because I've been forgiven, I've been renewed, and I am ready to start out again" (1).

Contemporaries. Those capable of being transformed are not only those present at the same time and place of the worship service, but also others intended by worshippers to experience transformation even though they are in a different place at the time of the service. Contemporaries are those on whom one may have some potential influence, or be influenced by, should one be able to establish contact (Schutz, 1967, pp. 176–177). Contemporaries are incorporated into the service by congregants' hearing their names spoken or by thinking about them quietly. Contemporaries are most often intended during the more flexible and contextually sensitive portions of the service. One congregant often thinks of others during sermons and "wishes so and so could be hearing this too" because the pastor is addressing "something they've been questioning" (3). In a similar manner, all respondents think of contemporaries during the prayers, both family and friends, and others with whom they have never had contact (such as people of other countries). The means which establish the possibility of influence on these others are the congregation, the prayer, and God: "I'm thinking about each and every one we're praying for, there's some I don't know, but I assume God knows and I just hope that we're sending up these things, that God can really hear us and in some little way, you know, it's touching me" (3). Thus, others living in the world at the same time as congregants, but not present in the church, may also be influenced by the intentional directedness of the congregation to their contemporaries' needs.

God. God is in one sense apart from congregants and, in another, always together with them. The divine and human planes are layered, in one way distinguishable, in another entirely interrelated. Thus, God is exclusive of congregants: "It's kind of an intonation for God to acknowledge that we're here. . . asking Him to pay attention to us" (1). Nonetheless, God is also present, and in a way that interconnects congregants with each other, predecessors, the world—everything.

One research participant, who experiences God as "out there," also experiences God as present in other congregants: "I can know that there's a presence, just because there's all these presences. . . that's another time when we're singing

and going back and forth... that's the part where I really... start to recognize and going back and forth... that's the part where I really... start to recognize that God is there" (4). God is "always out there" but also present in this respondent's relationship with other congregants. A similar expression is made by another respondent, for whom God is both "around us and with us" (3). Likewise, another research participant says that God is "personally involved every minute of the day" and yet is someone that she must get "back in touch with" on Sunday mornings (6).

God is both separate and connected. God, in fact, is that which provides the means for a connection of all things to each other. God is unity. In prayer to God one may "touch" others, present or not (3). Listening to God's role in the lives of one's predecessors one finds God's relevance to oneself today. In God, one anticipates the reuniting of oneself with the dead (3). This experience of God is summarized well by a respondent who notes that at those times when he is most aware of God, "it's different... because then I'm aware of the connection, and I can feel more connected, grounded, to God, or to... that somehow I'm connected to what's kind of underneath it all that gives it meaning and substance; just all, I guess it all, the universe" (4).

This sense of unity is hard to express, as anything that would unite "the universe" is hard to conceive, let alone articulate. God thus emerges as necessarily ambiguous: respondents do not have a particular image of God and resist attempts to resolve Godly ambiguity by trying to find an image:

I [God] defies description. I think that if you tried to make a picture of it, you never it in words that it shouldn't be, because you tend to put some kind of sex on it, in our thinking, my thinking, you can't put a body, if you're going to put a body on somebody, you can't put a body on somebody without making it some form of sex because even if you claim it's sexless, you still have to have some kind of face and hair and things, and that itself is going to speak to one sex or the other, and I think that's dangerous. (1)

God remains imageless (exclusive), so that all images (inclusive) may be experienced as God; hence when one respondent "recognizes" congregants around her during the greeting, what she recognizes is God's presence, and the unity of all persons established in their relation to God (2). God and these others are reversible structures ("By the congregation showing that it cares about one another we're showing that we care about God" [2]). God is thus both concrete and particular, ambiguous and limitless.

Thematizing Ecclesiastic Experience: Hierarchy, Immersion, and Freedom

Hierarchy. In ecclesiastic experience, hierarchical relationships present themselves in a number of ways: between God and humanity, pastor and congregation, old self and new self, church time and everyday time. Hierarchy presupposes heterogeneity—elements must be separate and different enough to allow a valuing of some elements over others. In a religious context, the experience of hierarchical relationships is essential, since the intentional orientation in worship assumes an

orientation that sets apart that which worships from that which is worshipped. The intentional orientation of a worshipper, then, entails something worthy of her or his worship; something that she or he values as more powerful than the self. In the context of the church service, these hierarchical relations are explicit. As one respondent says about going to church, "it puts things in better perspective" (6). The visual metaphor here is instructive, as it is sign that allows for the perception of separation and distance. Visual metaphors reveal an experience of containment and, as such, define boundaries. Sight emphasizes separation and heterogeneity (Strauss, 1966, p. 7); thus, in "putting things in better perspective," one becomes more aware of differences and relative value than one is during the week. During the week, respondents "lose sight" of what is important to them (4). In "putting things in better perspective" the relative valuing of things is placed in sharper focus so that one becomes aware of what one values more as distinct from what one values less.

One phenomenon that is put in better perspective is temporal field relations. Ecclesiastic time is experienced as a temporal point of demarcation, a time which sets apart that which came before from that which comes after. This temporal positioning affords church a value over the everyday. Church is the ending of one week and the beginning of another, and the experience of the service occasions this temporal transformation. The significance of church time is determined by its relationship with nonchurch time, which comes before and after. Respondents "look forward to" church, and on leaving church "begin" their week "right" (5). This "looking forward" sets an orientation, one which sets apart and values ecclesiastic time for its powers of renewal. Church is a time wherein time's ordinary way of passing is bracketed ("it's sort of a suspension of time" [2]), thus differentiating this time from others. Church time is positioned hierarchically to everyday time. It is valued expressly in relation to the everyday for the powers it has—church is "taking special time out" (1).

Within the context of church, the pastor is hierarchically positioned over congregants. This, too, involves an emphasis on visual relationship. During a service, the pastor "steps up to another level" (4): "She's got something a little bit different to say to us, it's related to what she says to us any other time of the week that we see her, but it's got a different kind of significance somehow, it's coming from a different direction."

Recognizing the distinction between the localization of sound (it surrounds persons, making them its center) and the localization of a sound's source (which entails a more visual relationship [Strauss, 1966, p. 5]) bespeaks of a visual spatiality, one which orients this respondent differently in church from during the week. What the pastor says comes from "another level." In church, the pastor is valued in relation to the congregation, which faces her. The pastor does things the congregation does not—for example, she stands while they sit for the sermon. Her body posture is a reflection of the congregation's. For example, she and the congregation face each other when she says prayers or exchanges petitions with the congregation. When she walks into the midst of the congregation to read the Gospel, the congregation alters its bodily orientation in order to remain facing her.

"We stand and turn and face the pastor when she goes down in the middle or the other [higher] level" (4). The congregation's gestures in relation to her are accordingly respectful—turning to face her, remaining quiet when she addresses them. She "leads" them in prayer and provides a mutually shared point of visual orientation for all congregants: the opening exchange is a time "for her to lead us in like a prayer, and also to get us on track, this is where we're going" (4).

Ultimately congregants are going away from the old self, the self of the past week, toward the new self, the self that will emerge from the service. The new self is valued over the old. The old self is that which has "lost touch" with God and must be renewed by "getting back in touch with God" (6). God is experienced as separate from and connected to congregants. The sense of separation from God involves a particularly visual spatiality, the visual emphasizing separation. What affords God ultimate power and authority is God's formlessness, invisibility, and exclusiveness. Congregants refuse to picture God with any particular features or constant form. God's high status is "protected through invisibility" (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 67), an invisibility which makes a person unable to see God, but to be seen by God every moment of every day. God is "out there," is "other" (4), is that other that is "all around" (3). Since God is that other that is all around, God's hierarchical relation with respondents is particularly powerful: God is that outside power that frees the new self from bad things.

Immersion. In a church service, persons become explicitly aware of their separation from God, others, the everyday, and self. Visual metaphors reveal this in particular, foremost among these being that the service "puts things in perspective." This separation, however, is the background against which immersion becomes foreground. Against the backgrounds of separation, exclusivity, and hierarchy emerge experiences of immersion, inclusion, and equality. The self as isolated disappears and is freed from its limitedness by an immersion in community. It is no small matter that respondents use "I" most often when describing the beginning and ending of a service, and "we" and "us" when describing the central portions. After "I" reflect on the self in the act of confession and forgiveness at the beginning of a service, "we" sing a hymn, "we" exchange a greeting with the pastor, "we" listen and recite and stand and ask. This new community stands finally in relation to the hierarchic structures, particularly God and God's spokesperson, the pastor.

The emergence of community coincides with an intentional shift from the visual to the auditory. Whereas the visual emphasizes separation, difference, and hierarchy, the auditory emphasizes a bringing together, a filling of gaps, a homogenization (Strauss, 1966, p. 7). Sound surrounds and is present to all persons in

a way that makes each of them its center. Sound binds (Ong, 1967, p. 125), filling space between persons, thereby unifying all within its invisible presence (Ihde, 1973, p. 44). The auditory unifies congregants into a community, and they experience a belonging to the sound that surrounds and enfolds them, and to the community. Congregants may not see things from the same perspective but they are all immersed in the same sounds—the speaking of the prayers, which "links us up" (4), the singing of hymns in which individual voices get "drowned out" (6) and "blend" together (3).

At other times, when the congregation is less active as a group, such as when sitting and listening to the sermon, the gaze of others is perceived as a distraction. In the absence of any active community gesture (such as standing, speaking, or singing), the community identity is more easily broken by the gaze of another. It is then that the visual may overpower the auditory and suddenly reestablish an awareness of isolation and distance among congregants. At such moments, another's gaze reestablishes intentional awareness of separation by reinforcing the visual intentionality of distance. Looking at another both distances the congregants involved and breaks the community's common gesture. Without such distracting behavior the sense of community is maintained and congregants gain an identity beyond that of the self in isolation. The community is "isolated together" (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 56). A church service is an in-between period between old self and new self wherein a communal self is established, particularly in relation to hearing the spoken word.

At a point in the service immersion is taken a step further, and group identity becomes a tangible unity, an interwoven corporality. The transformation is from immersion to coextension, a sense of connection. Church experience has this potential throughout: "You can get a feel for people" (1). But at some point, the potential ("can") is actualized. Nearness is transformed to coextension. This is not only when congregants touch others—the greeting and the communion—but also during the prayers. The prayer "links up" (4) the needs of the person, community, world—all things, and brings them to God in the word spoken in communal gesture: "[In church] I can know that there's a presence, just because there's all these presences. . . . I guess it's different when I'm aware [of God's presence] because then I'm aware of the connection, and I can feel more connected, grounded. . . . connected to God, or to, that somehow I'm connected to what's kind of underneath it all that gives it meaning and substance. . . . just all, I guess it all, the universe" (4).

What "gives it meaning" is God, the interconnection of all things. Connection to the transcendent relates people to everything and affords all a sense of the whole in which each entity participates. Congregants go to church specifically to "make that connection" (4, 6) with all things, since the liturgy "covers most everything" (2). One needs the presence of others to "make" a connection to all things and to God, something which is not possible to make alone: "I feel better that I'm back in touch with God, that obviously I can't make it on my own" (6). In church, one is immersed in community through which eventually one feels connected to all things, and this connection is experienced as freeing

freedom. Respondents experience immersion as freedom from their ordinary experience of self, time, world. They are freed from that which is limiting and are able to experience that which is all encompassing. Coming into the service the self is experienced as limited and this sets the background for freedom—that from which one seeks to be freed. Consequently, that which one is freed to is the situation one finds at a service's end. At a service's beginning the self is limited by everyday conflict: "[Church is] a definite need in my life. It helps me get through life. It helps me to leave things that I don't need to hold onto any more and move on with my life, to realize when there are conflicts that I can be freed of them" (1). Explicit discussion of freedom emerges particularly in discussing the confession (the service's beginning) and the communion (the service's end), and the hierarchical experience that values new self over old is also most explicit when discussing these points in the service.

At the beginning (confession) respondents focus on self, since no sense of community has yet emerged. Description of the confession is noteworthy for the changes it reveals in temporal intentionality, which shift among past, present, and future:

[I'm thinking over things that happened in the past week that I'm either not happy with, or things that I wish could be different, and really get ready to get rid of those things and let them go. And that's looking forward to the confession, which is what we usually start our service with, and that's really a big point for me because it really does free me up and let me move on and try to do things again and do them better, or at least not waste my time over wishful things that can't happen anymore. . . . [The confession] frees me from continuing to feel bad about things that I haven't done in the way I wished I could have done them. . . . I can say, well this is the way it is, this is the way it happened, and that with the help of God who forgives me for making mistakes, I can move on and say, now we're going to try harder and do things better this week. (1)]

The movement is from an intentionality of anxiety—where one "continually reopens the past, translates it into possibility [future], and keeps alive its disturbing relevance for the present"—to an intentionality of hope where "the present is freed in light of what the future might bring. In the deepest depths of despair hope can be nourished and kept alive through the enmeshment of the transcending and redeeming power of the future" (Schrag, 1969, p. 97). This shift separates and values the new week, to which respondents look forward in hope, from the old, to which respondents look back upon in despair and anxiety.

If the confessional part of the service "frees" worshippers, and the communion/benediction defines when the new week starts, what of the time between? The church service seems to render an ambiguous experience of time, one free from both old and new weeks. The time therein is different from respondents' ordinary experience of time: congregants look back in anxiety, and forward in hope, from a center which draws these intentional structures together, and from which these structures radiate. Church involves "special time out" (1), a "suspension of time" (5). It is also a time during which identity is transformed from "I" to

"we." The immersion in group, sound, and meaning is intertwined with the experience of connecting to all and "that seems to be the main focus of being there, is to make that connection" (4).

Hermeneutic Reflection. The themes of hierarchy, freedom, and immersion must now be further reduced to a phenomenological definition of in-church worship, and this definition is explicitly related to one or two of the participants' phrases that help reveal the complexities of this experience. Just as the previous reductions have encompassed themes that emerged from the participants' full-length descriptions, so too the definition now is a final reduction that brings together the bulk of the themes which have preceded. Explicating how previous themes relate to this phenomenological definition of in-church experience is the final stage of the process.

As discussed, in-church experience orients participants to hierarchical value relations, where a new time, world, and self are valued more than the old. Participants come to church to bring about the transformation of old to new. In order to achieve this renewal, participants are freed from the normal restraints of time (which is "suspended") and of an individuated experience of self. They become one expressive body, a body sharing one center which is stronger than any individual self because the whole stands in relation to God. By immersing themselves in group expression and identity, they become one communally expressive self, conforming their actions with that of the group; further, by their connection with God, the ground of all being, participants are made one with everything—they are one form with the world.

Ecclesiastic experience thus involves a conformation (making one form, conforming with a group expression) and concentration (making one center, making stronger) involved in an act of transformation (of self, time, world). This meaning is captured in the revelatory phrases, church is a "suspension of time" which "puts things in better perspective." In church, persons assent to what is expected of them, to what is appropriate; hence, they conform. Persons also are united with others in a single communal expression—one form (con-form) becoming one expressive body. Church also "puts things in better perspective," so that once one is freed from ordinary restraints, such as when time is "suspended," one may be oriented differently, immersed in an identity beyond that of the limited self in order to be aware of what holds all things together. One is therefore made stronger by ecclesiastic experience, a strengthening which is captured in the word "concentration" (to make stronger). This strengthening emerges in part from immersing oneself in the auditory, particularly listening to God, which both makes congregants the center (of sound) and stronger (interconnected with others and God).

In sum, what emerges from ecclesiastic experience is a self valued more than the self that entered and a time valued more than the time that ended at the service's beginning. Both time and self are renewed by their connection with God, since God is what holds all things, all meaning together. God is the center of all existence, from which all things radiate. Ecclesiastic experience is similarly at

the center of experience, as time and self flow into and emerge from church. Church brings about the transformation of self and time by means of contemplation and conversation.

Comparing Ecclesiastic and Televisual Experience

Participants in the present study note that their experience of televised worship is significantly different from their experience of in-church worship, and that the different structures of the two experiences make worshipping by television less satisfying. The final segment of this study compares the structures of the two experiences in order to explicate how they are different and specifically why these participants find in-church worship more satisfying. To accomplish the comparison, this section relies on comments about televised worship made by the research participants, as well as existing phenomenological studies of televisual experience itself, since it is the structure of televisual experience that makes possible the experience of anything by television, including worship.

To begin, televisual experience is in many ways a contrast with in-church religious experience. Whereas church is apart from the everyday, televisual experience is integrated into everyday life: physically, TV is located in the home, temporally, it is watched daily. In addition, church is experienced as an opportunity to remember conflicts with others and personal failings that occurred during the week so that a person may be renewed for the following week. Church is transformative. Television, on the other hand, is revealed as a "divergence" that helps a person "to forget temporarily about stressful situations over which she or he has little control" (Nelson, 1989a, p. 394). TV as divergence is a temporary escape from thinking about one's problems; church as transformative is an experience which transfigures the person who enters church into another self. In a similar manner, television as divergence implies a temporary activity which disrupts a course of action. It is a momentary stepping aside between some beginning and some ending point. Perhaps this is why watching television often elicits guilt (Nelson, 1989a, p. 395), as diverting persons from accomplishing other tasks. Church, however, often induces guilt if one does not go (4, 6). The ecclesiastic is experienced as a more valued activity than the televisual, one that is not a diversion but a transformation.

Typically, televisual experience is not engaged exclusively, but combined with other activities: sewing, cooking, reading, eating. This is part of how TV is integrated into daily life and often results in a lack of intentional focus on the television. How and when one will focus on the television or other things is given to a number of factors: whether other persons are present in the room, whether one is engaged in other activities, and so on. These factors tend to occur randomly in the everyday home environment; that is, typically there is not a predictable pattern to when one will turn one's attention to what. In church, however, there are patterns of intentional directedness that are predictable. These patterns were set by predecessors and exist as the institutional other which controls the

congregants. One defines one's focus in relation to what is considered appropriate for a given point in a service. Thus, even if one is distracted, one knows on what one should be focusing. In its patterning, church is predictable, what one should be focusing on is experienced as a familiar, dependable other.

The church service is experienced as a familiar, dependable other, one which makes congregants feel "secure" (3). Television does not make respondents feel secure (3). This contrast applies not only to the form of televisual and ecclesiastic experience (unpatterned/controllable versus patterned/controlled) but also to their content. This is clear from comparing how respondents speak about stories involved in each setting: "The stories that we hear in church are the ones basically that teach us a lesson, that have some sort of moral value behind them, where the stories you hear on soaps are one story after the other of persons doing the wrong thing and messing up their lives. . . . I mean, how can you do all those things and not end up in utter despair? If—and TV might be responsible for some of the young persons totally destroying themselves, relationships-wise" (2). Whereas church provides security, television is perceived as dangerous.

Some participants note feeling embarrassed when watching worship programs on TV. In describing his response to one program, a respondent notes: "Sometimes I was almost embarrassed about it. . . . It was kind of like opening to the world feelings that I felt should be private" (4). Other respondents also note feeling embarrassed watching televised worship. The distinction between public and private feelings in the above respondent's remark may help explicate the reason for this embarrassment. As Meyrowitz (1985, p. 287) explains: "Television takes already public events and makes them more public. Perhaps we should distinguish between 'private-public' events and 'public-public' events. By 'private-public,' I mean those events that involve public actions, but are still isolated in a particular time-space frame, and, therefore, are largely inaccessible to those not physically present. By 'public-public,' I mean those events that are carried beyond the time-space frame by electronic media, and therefore are accessible to almost everyone."

The respondent's comment suggests that he perceives ecclesiastic experience as best kept as a "private-public" event, such as when he is in church with a congregation. The televising of worship makes that which should be "private-public" "public-public." Thus, in opening to the world what he feels should be private, he gets embarrassed.

The presence of others in both televisual and ecclesiastic settings may at times be disruptive. In church, babies crying and people staring are distracting; in TV viewing, other persons' presence, movements, or comments may disturb the intentional directedness toward the television. In ecclesiastic experience, however, intersubjective awareness is at times specifically engaged, and perceived as essential. In televisual experience, persons often "turn to television in order to withdraw from being with other people" (Nelson, 1989a, p. 394). While watching television, one feels uncomfortable in the presence of another person who may monitor and critically assess one's responses. In televisual experience, viewers interact with the television as other, by talking back, crying, laughing, etc. When one does so alone, one is free to make whatever gestures occur naturally; if other persons are present, one monitors oneself (Nelson, 1989a).

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Self-Reflection: An Essential Quality for Phenomenological Researchers

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Phenomenological research emphasizes the lived experience not only of the research participants but also that of the researcher. For the research participants, the lived experience is that of the phenomenon being studied—in this case of my study, ecclesiastic experience. For the researcher, the lived experience is the process of phenomenological procedure itself—the methodological movement among description, reduction, and interpretation. This, I believe, is one of the thickest aspects of semiotic-phenomenological research for beginning researchers to master—I know it was for me. It involves fully comprehending and practicing the ways in which phenomenological methodology is an embodied process.

For example, one practical matter concerns knowing how many interviews to complete. First-time phenomenological researchers may be uncertain as to how many interviews should be conducted before "beginning" the thematizations. In phenomenological terms, at what point does the description end and reduction begin? The answer lies not in some externally sanctioned number, but inside the one who embodies the research process. If there were an ideal number, knowing when to stop would be easy. Since there is not, this creates an uneasy, problematic situation for phenomenological researchers—particularly for first-timers. I found that one must have sensitivity, self-awareness, and confidence. Since phenomenological methodology is an embodied process, the researcher must engage in self-reflection to understand how the process is unfolding. The operative distinction is between *decision* and *recognition*. A researcher comes to understand that one does not "decide" when the description is over and the reduction is about to begin; rather, one *recognizes* that the reduction *has already begun* and that the description is in the process of ending.

In conducting my interviews on the lived experience of in-church and televised worship, I found myself looking for some officially sanctioned number of interviews that would be approved by current mentors and future critics. This was a mistake. The proper place to look was at the process I was embodying. Thus, after conducting several interviews with research participants, I found myself awash in description. After a few more, I recognized some themes emerging in my own reflections. Finally, when I found myself less awash in description and more awash in emerging themes, I knew the reduction had begun, and that I ought to conduct the remaining interviews I had scheduled and begin formally to analyze the interview transcripts. In the case of my study of worshippers' experience, I perceived that the reduction had begun after about eight discussions with research participants; ultimately I completed a dozen interviews.

Another challenge for the beginning researcher is to know how to conduct the research interviews. Where does one draw the line between emphasizing one's own topical protocol and allowing the participants themselves to guide the discussion? Also, which items will receive the most attention in the interview? Will the researcher try to spend equal time on all items on the protocol or emphasize particular items? Here once again I learned to balance sensitivity and self-assurance. During my first formal interview, I realized how much one should be guided by one's research participants. Proceeding through the items on my protocol, I came to the request for the churchgoer to describe a worship service. I was unprepared for two things: how much time this first interviewee devoted to describing every aspect of a worship service, and how essential gaining this rich, detailed description was going to be to my study. I learned how important it is to come prepared and open-minded for the first few interviews. The way these early discussions emerge gives the researcher insight into how best to conduct subsequent interviews.

Finally, I learned to accept that all research has its limitations, and that one should be ready to accept critical responses to one's research while also using that criticism to strengthen further research. One limitation of my study, for example, is that it reflects the lived experience of a particular kind of churchgoer. How might the experience of a worshipper in the free-church tradition, or the Baptist tradition, or the Catholic tradition differ in their descriptions of ecclesiastic experience? What insight would be gained by comparing these experiences? How might studies of churchgoers in these traditions unveil areas of my interpretation that are unique to the experience and description provided by members of the predominantly white Lutheran church I interviewed? Even more fascinating would be an awareness of which aspects of the interpretation would *not* change.

For example, one interesting revelation occurred to me while interviewing one member of a church tradition outside of Lutheranism. Curious about potential differences, I conducted one interview with a woman from a predominantly African-American Baptist congregation. When she described her church experience, she emphasized the free-form call-and-response style of interaction, where the congregation members vocalize their responses to the worship leaders. I realized how her experience differed from that of those in my study, where silence

and conformity were more the model of behavior. I then realized that although the descriptions/experiences of these congregants were different, the interpretation would remain the same. The churchgoers in my study emphasized how conformity to the group expression was an important aspect of their patterned responses and periods of silence—those not remaining silent were a distraction. The Baptist woman I interviewed noted that all members of her congregation felt inspired and compelled to respond to the preacher, and that those not responding were not full participants in the group expression—those remaining silent were a distraction. I realized then that although the descriptions of these worship experiences differed (silence-as-conformity to group expression and speech-as-conformity with group expression), the interpretations of the experiences were the same—one's own actions needed to correspond with those of others so that a group expression and identity could emerge. Pursuing the limitations of my initial study revealed exciting areas for further investigation and insight. Hence, I realized how criticism helps a researcher achieve new insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Above all, during my research I found it comforting to note that qualitative research values self-reflection. I knew that any concerns that arose as I conducted my research would be welcomed, and expected, by other qualitative researchers, that sharing my concerns was part of the process and helpful; and that some uncertainty as one proceeds through the phenomenological research process is healthy and is in fact an indication that one is experiencing the necessary ambiguities inherent in conducting qualitative research.

A Phenomenological Investigation of "Good" Supervision Events

Vaughn E. Worthen, Brian W. McNeill

The learning and acquisition of counseling skills and the formation of a professional counselor identity are two of the most important functions of graduate training in counseling psychology, and psychotherapy supervision plays a central role in this learning. Although much effort is devoted to counseling and supervision activities, and theory building is in progress, little in the way of research has been conducted that examines the experience of "good" psychotherapy supervision events from the perspective of supervisees. What does the experience of good supervision consist of for supervisees? Are there any central factors that must be present for good supervision experiences to occur? Supervisees' experience of good psychotherapy supervision is essentially a question of personal meaning, and the phenomenological research method lends itself well to the investigation of personal meaning.

Phenomenological inquiry is very similar to the interviewing techniques central to the training of counseling psychologists. Thus, inquiry into the experience of good supervision events is a natural methodological extension of researchers' previous training experiences. Also, most supervisees have a very personal investment in supervision and developing their therapeutic skills. Therefore, they are apt to participate actively in describing their supervision experiences. The interview "dialogue" offers the opportunity for immediate clarification and further elaboration and probing. As new findings emerge, researchers can pursue those lines of inquiry, because the goal of the investigation is to understand the experience

of the phenomenon as fully as possible. Knowledge is arrived at through an inductive process, leading from specific observations to the identification of general patterns (Patton, 1990). The essence of discovery-oriented research is the ability to see the depth and intricacies of the phenomenon within individual cases.

Past research has spent little time examining the experience of good psychotherapy supervision, in part because of the design characteristics of traditional research methodologies, which are not devised to ask questions about personal meaning. What has been lacking is the application of discovery-oriented research methodologies in the examination and description of supervision phenomena as a means of both testing the soundness of theory and discovering salient supervision components and processes that might contribute to theory building and effective practice (Borders, 1989; Holloway & Hoston, 1983; Stokenberg, McNeill, & Creather, 1994). An in-depth understanding of what events constitute good psychotherapy supervision, as experienced by supervisees, is necessary if one is to fully comprehend the relevant and crucial aspects of supervision that contribute to the acquisition of counseling skills and the development of a professional identity.

Research on Good Psychotherapy Supervision

Past investigations have focused on the question of satisfaction with supervision, providing some indications that what constitutes good supervision varies according to the developmental level of trainees. Two general factors have been identified for positive supervision experiences: a good supervisory relationship and attention to the task of developing counseling skills. Good supervisory relationships consist of warmth, acceptance, respect, understanding, and trust (Hart, Scott, & King, 1983; Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987; Miller & Oetting, 1986), particularly for beginning trainees (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984). Good supervisors self-disclose (Black, 1988) and create an atmosphere of experimentation and allowance for mistakes (Allen, Szollos, & Williams, 1986; Hunt et al., 1983; Nelson, 1978). Beginning trainees prefer more attention devoted to developing intake skills (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984), didactic training in counseling (Worthington & Roehlke, 1979), and more time spent on developing self-awareness (Nelson, 1978). Intermediate trainees desire assistance with developing alternative conceptualization skills (for example, Heppner and Roehlke, 1984), more emphasis on personal development than technical skills, working within a cohesive theory, and clear communication about expectations (Allen et al., 1986). Advanced trainees prefer to examine more complex issues of personal development, transference-countertransference, parallel processes, and client and counselor resistance and defensiveness (McNeill & Worthen, 1989).

Supervision environment factors are also viewed as important in contributing to positive perceptions of supervision. Environmental disinclinations of quality include longer duration of training, more weekly contact time, more frequent contacts per week, and the occurrence of good supervision experiences later in

the training sequence (Allen et al., 1986). Nelson (1978) also found that trainees preferred supervisors who showed interest in supervision, had experience as a therapist, were conducting regular therapy, and possessed technical or theoretical knowledge.

What is apparent from the supervision literature is that few studies have specifically examined what is perceived as good supervision by supervisees beyond characteristics associated with general dependent measures of satisfaction with supervision determined on an a priori basis. Thus, the purpose of this investigation was to further explore the phenomenological experience of what elements or events constitute good supervision for trainees.

Method

Participants

Four women and four men of European American ethnicity were interviewed for this study. To ensure some variation in training experiences, we solicited and selected participants from three counseling psychology doctoral programs approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) and three APA-approved counseling center internship sites in the Midwest. Trainees ranged in age from twenty-three to fifty-four years, were in their third to seventh year of graduate education, had completed two to seventeen semesters of counseling experience, and had completed two to eight semesters of supervision resulting in levels of training that may be conceptualized as intermediate to advanced. Their supervisors were four men and four women with one to ten years of supervisory experience. Criteria for participant selection included willingness to participate in a follow-up recorded interview and availability and willingness to participate in a follow-up interview if necessary, use of English as primary language, ability to articulate the experience of good supervision, and current counseling supervision in the practicum or internship. Participants were volunteers and were not paid for any part of their involvement in the research. All trainees who were invited to participate accepted the invitation.

Researchers

At the time of this investigation, Vaughn Worthen, a European-American, had completed his doctoral course work in counseling psychology, which included both didactic and experiential training in developmental conceptualizations of the supervision process, and was supervising doctoral trainees during his predoctoral internship. His current work includes ongoing provision of clinical services, as well as training and supervision of graduate students. He views supervision as consisting of the belief that supervisee needs vary as supervisees gain experience and that supervisory roles must be adjusted if both the supervision tasks and the supervisory relationship are to contribute to good supervision. Supervision helps a trainee become a better counselor; more broadly, it helps trainees form a counselor identity, and trust and anxiety are mitigating factors in good supervision.

Brian W. McNeill is of mixed Mexican American and European American ethnicity and has ten years of postdoctoral experience as a therapist, supervisor, and researcher investigating developmental models of clinical supervision.

Procedure

All interviews were conducted by Vaughn Worthen in person. Practicum-level trainees were interviewed approximately three-fourths of the way through their second supervised doctoral practicum experience. Two interns were interviewed in the middle of their second semester, and the other two were interviewed toward the end of the second semester, thus allowing trainees time to establish a supervisory relationship. Each participant was asked to read and sign an informed-consent form before being interviewed.

A research question was formulated to guide the interview. The initial statement made to participants was as follows: "Please describe for me as completely, clearly, and concretely as you can, an experience during this semester when you felt you received good psychotherapy supervision." The participant was then invited to elaborate on that comment, and the interviewer's role was to help facilitate the articulation of the good supervision description.

Adequate time was allowed so that interviews would not be constrained by an imposed time limit. No interview was more than an hour in length, and most averaged between forty-five and fifty minutes. Each interview was recorded with two tape recorders to ensure that the interview was taped adequately, thus avoiding lost data.

Participants were asked to clarify and elaborate phrases and words the researcher did not understand or in case of ambiguity or lack of clarity. The researcher attempted to maintain a focus on understanding the experience as it was being related by the participant. Examples of the interviewer's prompts for clarification and elaboration included, "Can you describe what you felt like?" "Can you recall what it was like for you as you came into that supervisory session and were getting ready to play this tape?" "And how did he show that understanding?" "How did you move to that broader level?" A strong attempt was made to make sure questions did not lead the interviewees toward specific or predetermined conclusions but, rather, led them to clarify and elaborate.

When the interviewer perceived that the experience had been fully articulated, the following question was asked: "Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't already addressed?" Any further descriptions were explored, and the interview was concluded.

Transcription. Tapes were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy by a second individual.

Transcript Analysis. Analysis of the transcribed interviews followed a modified pattern outlined by Giorgi (1985, 1989) and demonstrated by Wertz (1983, 1985). The essence of this pattern is to break down transcribed interviews into units that can be more easily analyzed. These units are called *meaning units*.

Each analysis consisted of examining the descriptions until patterns of good supervision could be discerned. After each individual experience had been analyzed, all individual experiences were examined to ascertain the essence of good supervision for all of the supervisees. Analysis of individual good supervision experiences followed a seven-step procedure. After completion of this phase of analysis, group analyses of the general meaning structure for supervisees were conducted in a four-step procedure. All analyses were performed by Vaughn Worthen until the immediate supervision of Brian W. McNeill. In addition, because the investigation was part of Vaughn Worthen's dissertation, input was provided by four other committee members, three of whom possessed extensive experience as supervisors and clinicians and one whose primary research focus is the application of qualitative research methods in education. In addition, a review of the analyses and interpretation of the results was provided by an external auditor well versed in both supervision and qualitative research. Any disagreements regarding analyses and interpretation were resolved through discussion and consensus between the two authors.

Individual Interviews.

Developing a Situated Meaning Structure

Step 1: Obtaining a Sense of the Whole. Before the analysis was conducted, it was important to get a sense for the entire interview within its context. Each interview was listened to and read three or four times before analysis commenced.

Step 2: Identifying Meaning Units. This step consisted of identifying meaning units by listening to and reading the transcribed interview and identifying experienced shifts in meaning. Each shift in meaning was marked by a slash on the transcribed manuscript.

Step 3: Defining Relevant and Psychologically Explicit Meaning Units. At this point, meaning units were examined for relevancy to the investigation of good psychotherapy supervision. Irrelevant meaning units were discarded, as were some of the redundant meaning units that could be identified at this point. Each meaning unit was grammatically rephrased, if necessary, to more directly express the supervisee's meaning.

Step 4: Integration of Meaning Units. An important element of the analysis was to understand the temporal sequence of the events described in the interview, as suggested by Wertz (1983, 1985). Because an interview does not typically proceed along a linear thought process, it was important to organize interview data within a logical and contextual relationship. Meaning units were placed into a first-person narrative retelling of the good supervision experience.

Step 5: Articulating the Meaning Units. This step consisted of translating the participants' naive (that is, unanalyzed) description of their experience into psychologically relevant meanings bearing on their experience of good supervision. Thus, participant responses were examined with the intent of understanding ex-

pressed and implied meanings. These meanings were put into terminology that expressed the meanings in more direct psychological language. This process consisted of moving back and forth from data to meanings. Derived meanings were, in essence, tested against the raw interview data to determine whether they were supported by the data. This movement from concrete data to abstraction of meaning produced the articulate meanings.

Step 6: The Situated Meaning Structure. From the articulated meaning units arrived at through Step 5, derived meanings were integrated in a third-person narrative retelling of the events as expressed in more psychologically explicit language. The result was a meaningful description of the experience of good supervision for the individual supervisee. The term *situated* refers to meaning derived from the context of a specific situation or experience.

Step 7: The Essence of the Experience of Good Supervision. A final step in the individual analyses of the transcribed interviews consisted of refining the description into its most distilled and concise form. This was accomplished in the form of the following question: "What is absolutely essential for this experience of good psychotherapy supervision, for which if it were missing this would not represent the experience of good supervision?" This step in the analysis distilled the findings a bit from the context of the specific experience so as to distill the essential components of the experience. An example from one of our findings illustrates this final step:

Dave experiences a sense of discomfort with his personally defined therapeutic role. He then provides an implicit and ambiguous invitation to his supervisor in an effort to solicit understanding and assistance and avoid perceived criticism. He experiences genuine support, empathy, and validation from his supervisor, which facilitates a nondefensive perspective regarding experienced "unacceptable" feelings and the consequent development of a metaperspective. The relieving of discomfort and tension allows for new learning. This metaperspective is experienced as freeing and reintegrates interest in original motivations for helping others but newly endows those original motivations with greater complexity. The horizon of therapeutic possibilities is expanded as Dave becomes forward looking with positive anticipation and planning for the next therapeutic contact with his client. The line between client responsibility and counselor facilitation is then redefined.

Group Analyses

After the individual interviews had been analyzed, an analysis and comparison of commonalities and differences between each of the interviews was performed. This procedure allowed general findings to emerge regarding the experiences of supervision for the supervisees. The analysis was conducted in four steps.

Step 1: Individual Events of Good Supervision. Step 1 consisted of examining all individual participant findings (Steps 6 and 7 of the preceding section) and then creating an inclusive list of events of each participant's meaning structure

with his or her name beside the good supervision events. Thus, an exhaustive list of good supervision events was developed.

Step 2: Common Events of Good Supervision. Step 2 consisted of identifying and compiling a list of inclusive good supervision events shared in common by two or more participants with the participants' names identified for each event.

Step 3: Collective Events of Good Supervision. At this point, only those good supervision events held collectively by six or more of the participants were retained.

Step 4: General Meaning Structure for the Experience of Good Supervision. Those events that remained after Step 3 were used to generate a full narrative description of the general experience of good supervision for supervisees. A sequence of themes constituting good supervision events was then identified, and these themes were tied together in a temporal order of appearance.

Results

Good Supervision General Meaning Structure for Trainees

Good psychotherapy supervision unfolds from a level of confidence ranging from fluctuating to basic groundedness with an aversion to overt evaluation. There is at least an implied, and sometimes overtly expressed, desire for rewarding supervision from those who have a reported history of dissatisfaction with supervision. The therapeutic process is viewed on a continuum from some disillusionment to a fundamental sense of efficacy. With these elements in place, the supervisee experiences a disruption in the "usual" self-as-professional operation, with the consequent feeling of anxiety-induced emotional arousal and an often opaque perceived "neediness." This is experienced as a state of inadequacy that is repeated to form a level of global examination of therapeutic self-functioning up to a domain-specific problem focus. This state of disruption is pivotally addressed within a discernibly nonjudgmental, empathizing, supporting, and validating supervisory stance that acts to normalize the struggle. As a result, the supervisee feels a "freeing" that facilitates reduced self-protectiveness and increased receptivity to supervisory input. This sense of freeing allows for increased participation in supervision and fosters a nondefensive analysis of self and situation, as well as subsequent reexamination of therapeutic and professional assumptions enabling the acquisition of a metaperspective from which a more comprehensive therapeutic pattern is revealed. Self-confidence is strengthened and endowed with greater complexity and stability. Consequently, the range of therapeutic conceptualizing and intervening is expanded. Positive anticipatory planning follows new awareness and incorporates new understandings, with an excitement to reengage actively again in the previous struggle. The supervisory alliance is energized and strengthened with an experienced invigoration and impetus for continued professional development.

Phases and Themes of Good Supervision Events

On the basis of the group analyses resulting in the general meaning structure for all of the trainees, the themes of good supervision events were viewed initially as involving four sequentially connected phases. The first phase was the *existential baseline*, or the context from which the events of good supervision emerged. Setting the stage was seen as a second phase, in which events leading up to good supervision were experienced. The third phase was labeled the *good supervision experience*. This was the pivotal phase in which the influence of supervisor and supervisee factors interacted to create within the supervisee a sense that something positive and eventual had occurred within supervision. The final phase was designated *outcomes of good supervision*. The effects of the good supervision experiences were manifested in this phase. Themes reflecting events identified in the general meaning structure for trainees during these four phases are depicted in Table 6.1 and discussed, along with illustrative examples, in more detail in the sections to follow.

Summary of Good Psychotherapy Supervision Events

Existential Baseline. A general sense of confidence for trainees prevailed, although more experienced supervisees appeared to have a greater grounding in their confidence. This confidence level is reflected in a statement by Kevin (all names are pseudonyms): "I was feeling like when I came out of my doctoral program, that I had a pretty good sense of how my theoretical orientation was working at the time with clients, basic attending skills, those types of things I was feeling pretty good with. But I felt like I was ready to move into a new realm, more in therapy and in supervision." Rebecca, another intern, expressed it this way: "I felt fairly competent in this situation but wanted to expand my view of what might be effective in this particular case."

Interestingly, three of the four practicum-level students made comments indicating some sense of demoralization or disillusionment with conducting therapy, as illustrated in the following comments: "I wasn't real happy, even my clients seemed all the same and I just wasn't really that into it" (Drew) and "My interaction with the faculty kind of made me feel, um, just really lost. I think, as a student and kind of lost about my abilities and the things I think are my strengths" (Collette). Interns, on the other hand, displayed no sense of demoralization or disillusionment and demonstrated a basic sense of efficacy in the counseling process.

Participants also reported an aversion to an overt evaluative stance by their supervisors. Moreover, most participants made reference to previous unrewarding supervision experiences. In relation to these experiences, there was also a significant desire for a qualitatively different supervisory relationship.

Themes for supervisees in the existential baseline phase directly influenced the way the following themes played themselves out in the other phases. It appears that the existential baseline acted as the ground on which the figure of later good supervision experiences emerged.

Table 5.1. Four Phases of a Good Supervisor's Experience for Advanced Supervisees:
The Supervisor's Perspective

Phase	Description
Existential baseline	Fluctuating to grounded level of confidence; aversion to overt evaluation; desire for rewarding supervision; previous unrewarding supervision; disillusionment to sense of efficacy with therapeutic process
Setting the stage	Sensed inadequacy consisting of disruption in the usual, anxiety-induced emotional arousal, and perceived needing: global to domain-specific response to sensed inadequacy
Good supervision experience	Supervisory relationship experienced as empathic, nonjudgmental, and validating, with encouragement to explore and experiment; struggle normalized; sense of freeing consisting of reduced self-protectiveness and receptivity to supervisory input; nondefensive analysis; reexamination of assumptions; acquisition of a metaperspective
Outcomes of good supervision	Strengthened confidence; refined professional identity; increased therapeutic perception; expanded ability to conceptualize and intervene; positive anticipation to reengage in the struggle; strengthened supervisory alliance

Setting the Stage. If it can be said that the existential baseline was the ground, then the next major theme, a sensed inadequacy, acted to separate the figure and ground and provide a focus for supervision. This theme was composed of and ground and provide a focus for supervision. This theme was composed of three interrelated events consisting of disruption in the usual, anxiety-induced emotional arousal, and a perceived needing.

Disruption in the usual can be viewed as an event or experience that initiates and provokes a disorder in what was the taken-for-granted operation of therapeutic or professional activities. This disruption acted as a focusing agent on an area of concern. The area of concern can be quite broad, consisting of such elements as a perceived deficit, a normal developmental professional task, a concern with the supervisory relationship, or enhancement or development of a new skill. An example of this disruption in the usual was demonstrated in the following comment by Dave: "It was just totally out of the realm of any kind of client experience I'd ever had before. Sometimes I'd been frustrated, or this or that, but it was in a working context. This I wanted to be over with. I didn't want this client."

Perhaps as a result of an observed difference in the level of groundedness in confidence or the sense of demoralization and disillusionment between practicum and intern participants, it appeared that three of the four practicum students made global responses to their sense of inadequacy. These global attributions included global questioning of their sense of efficacy as therapists. Interns, on the other hand, made more domain-specific responses to their sense of inadequacy. This domain-specific disruption in the usual is illustrated in the following two intern passages:

There was some kind of block in therapy. We reached a point where I felt like I was offering those things that were really necessary for us to move on and to continue a good working relationship, but she wasn't. I don't think making my desire for her to experience that or to receive that. It was the first time I had ever worked with [a client] that had experienced incest. [George]
I had a sense of connecting with this person immediately, but not knowing whether the things that I normally do with a client were going to be as effective with this client or not, because I was not feeling sure of the culture or background. [Rebecca]

Perhaps the motivation to address this disruption of the usual would be minimal unless the other two elements of sensed inadequacy—*anxiety-induced emotional arousal* and a *perceived needing*—were in attendance. Trainees reported feeling distress about the disruption, which activated and made them aware of a need that was sometimes experienced only opaquely. For example, Dave stated that "I went into supervision and I was disturbed by the reaction I'd had [emotional arousal]." He then elaborated: "And I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't have any kind of immediate answer or solution to it with what I was going to do with my anger and what would I do with my client, what kind of process should go on, what changes should be made or anything. I was just really stuck with it [perceived needing]."

It appears that these three identified elements of sensed inadequacy need to be activated to set the stage for openness to supervisory input and new learning to occur. It also appears that these elements can be activated by actually occurring events within the counseling or supervisory relationship or by the supervisor's strategic interventions. What is clear from this study is that this sensed inadequacy preceded the good supervision experience. It appears that interns are better able to direct the focus of supervision to address their sensed inadequacy and that they typically perceive this inadequacy as domain specific, particular and that they feel a more global impact on their sense of inadequacy.

Good Supervision Experience. The most pivotal and crucial component of good supervision experiences that was clearly evident in every case studied was the quality of the supervisory relationship. All trainees described the supervisors as conveying an attitude that manifested empathy, a nonjudgmental stance toward them, a sense of validation or affirmation, and encouragement to explore and experiment. The sensed inadequacy discussed earlier set the stage for a learning

experience. However, without a positive supervisory relationship that invited openness to learning, it is likely that learning from this anxiety-arousing experience would have been minimized. Supervisory relationship events and dynamics contributed to this supervision learning experience. According to Dave, "She kind of, empathized with, and said that she'd also felt some strong feelings towards her [the client] and could see why I had these emotions and why she did, too."

That's comment was similar: "Once I realized that he agreed with me, okay, or he showed that he could understand why I felt like I was giving Band-Aids. So he showed understanding." Colette's comments reflected similar relationship dynamics: "And what was so great, was that my supervisor was really affirming and validating of my ability to speak clearly, I felt very much understood by her and I felt also like she appreciated those abilities that I had taken pride in the past and which I had felt, I just hadn't felt were being recognized at all, at any level."

It is likely that this kind of relationship can be developed only when concern about self and performance are minimized and anxiety is diminished, as the following comments by Jan illustrate: "Mary was just really great at kind of somehow calming me down," and "She just really gave me permission to think about things without pressuring me to do anything." Rebecca reported that "rather than launching into what I could do, I was first given that kind of step up by the supervisor and reassurance and it seemed to take off from there."

In many of the cases, it was hinted at or hypothesized that without this type of relationship being present, the supervisees would likely have undergone a different kind of experience. For example, Dave declared: "But if she'd given me a look of kind of like, 'you're angry,' I would have wanted to put the file away, I don't want to have that client. I would have had to, like I did the week before, not think about it." And Kevin stated: "When I talk about that process, when we play with these process pieces or when we would stop the tape at whatever times, that couldn't have happened, I don't think, if it didn't feel like a real collegial relationship, if I didn't feel like I was respected at a level that, I guess, I wanted to be respected at, or if I was going to move on as a professional."

These findings also suggest that the desire and need for a supportive supervisory relationship are ever present in supervision. Although all supervisees value and benefit from a supportive supervisory environment, this need is not necessarily expressed directly (Black, 1988).

Thalies believed that their supervisors helped normalize their "struggle." This was often accomplished by a personal self-disclosure from their supervisor. In this study, self-disclosure of the supervisor played a significant role in helping supervisees, especially those with less experience, reduce negative attributions of their behavior and decrease anxiety by allowing them to "see" into the supervisor's behavior and thinking, thus normalizing and tacitly relabeling "mistakes" as learning experiences. Dave's supervisor shared her reaction to his client, which was similar to Dave's own reaction, as well as disclosing a similar experience from her own training: "I think two things happened. The first, my supervisor helped me normalize what I was feeling and that it was OK as a

therapist to be having [anxiety feelings]... And she also disclosed her own experience of, I'm not sure whether she was in practicum or intern, where she had some countertransference."

Jan also described her supervisor as providing a normalizing experience: "I guess that was normalizing in a way, like this is OK, you're going to get through this. This is how it works, you know."

Participants also experienced a freeing, the next significant theme. Jan felt freed from her self-imposed restrictions, which were brought on by anxiety and fear, and felt a renewed energy to engage in the previously feared and burdensome tasks of completing a dissertation and beginning a job search. Kevin described the experience of freeing as helping him move beyond some of his self-imposed constraints regarding therapy. He reported being able to develop a deeper level of perception and understanding. In his words: "And working through this process with him, I experienced [a better understanding of what was going on in therapy]. And the way I experienced that, was that it was freeing, it was like I can move up now to the next level or a deeper level."

Dave also felt freed from his assumptions of overresponsibility for his client and thus could see how to intervene with his client differently: "I remember it was kind of freeing at the end. It was like, I'm going to throw this back on your lap, if you don't want to do it, that's OK."

The theme of freeing comprises two separate but related events. Reduced self-protectiveness was evident as supervisees felt supported and came to see the supervisor's benevolent interest in promoting learning and development. As supervisees perceived less need for self-protectiveness, they concurrently experienced the second important element of the freeing experience, an increased receptivity to supervisory input. These findings are similar to Black's (1988) conclusion that reduced defensiveness and a strong learning alliance contribute to supervisees' perceptions of supervision effectiveness. A statement made by Dave illustrates these two themes at work: "What changed was, as soon as she like said 'Oh my lord, let me have, it was like, now we can deal with it and talk about it.' He further stated, 'It kind of took the heat off, you know, is this my individual reaction? ... So it really let me have this issue in supervision, I felt like it was OK to be talking about them.' Mike showed a clear pattern of high self-protectiveness to begin with, followed by an increased responsiveness to his supervisor. Mike's initial guardedness is reflected by the following statement: 'I felt a little bit vulnerable, that's probably due to it being my first quarter. I didn't know how supervision was going to go or if I was going to get picked apart... I felt like I needed to defend my orientation.' As Mike's supervisor responded to this expression of defensiveness from him with a nondefensive acceptance, Mike felt a greater openness to listen and possibly learn from his supervisor: "Maybe that modeled something for me, I don't know, maybe his being willing to hear what I had to say, maybe it modeled, maybe I should consider what he has to say." Suffice it to say that when supervisees felt a sense of safety and support, there was increased ability to participate actively in supervision and responsiveness to supervisory input.

The preceding themes set the stage for the next three related themes: non-defensive analysis, reexamination of assumptions, and acquisition of a meta-perspective. Because supervision is concerned with the acquisition of skills and the development of a professional identity, it is important that supervisees be able to examine themselves as honestly as possible. As long as the supervisee feels a need to protect or defend himself or herself, the likelihood of honest introspection and examination of therapeutic activities and beliefs is minimized.

Nondefensive analysis occurred as supervisees felt safe in exploring and experimenting. Colette, a practicum trainee, originally felt an intense self-referent threat in her encounter with a faculty member. She felt misunderstood and invalidated. This intense self-referent, emotionally charged confusion dissipated as she experienced congruence between her self-perception and the understanding expressed by her supervisor. The experience became detached from its prior self-referent threat as it was given the status of "chalk it up to experience." In Kevin's case, he was able to examine his feelings more "objectively": "I could sense that I was wrestling with it in session, but, in a sense what we did was, we kind of put it in a box and I stepped back from it and I could just look at those feelings and experiences by stepping away from it and analyze it more objectively."

One trainee discussed this process as developing an "internal supervisor." This internal supervisor is reminiscent of the advanced stage of self-supervisor described by Litrell, Lee-Borden, and Lorenz (1979).

Outcomes of Good Supervision. There were six identifiable themes that constituted this phase. In each of the individual cases, there were many expressions regarding the effects of good supervision, but the six outlined subsequently were those consistently identified among the supervisees in this study.

Supervisees experienced both a strengthening and affirming of their confidence. Colette, who was questioning her ability to communicate effectively, remarked, "I would say the main thing for me is just that it really instilled self-confidence once again." And according to Rebecca: "What then developed in the session was, I felt like I relaxed, because I was being affirmed for what I had done so far was very natural and I was being given a reassurance that I was competent and that I had done a good job, and that then allowed me to kind of open the blinds a little bit more... It was even more of an opening to the experience by me, by being given that kind of underlying of feeling like I was competent."

In each of the cases, it appeared that there was an increased ability to see greater complexity in the issues being faced. The flip side of this theme was that, along with an increased ability to see complexity, there was a corresponding ability to make what was complex and confusing more coherent. It would be expected that a natural outcome of supervisees being able to develop a meta-perspective would be the ability to perceive therapeutic activities with an increased comprehensiveness and sophistication. Dave stated it this way: "I think that part of that was that I was still being manipulated. I hadn't been able to step back and look at what do I want to do, really what's my role. How do I fit into this picture to where I'm comfortable?"

Similarly, Mike reported: "It made me start thinking about what I was doing instead of just doing it. It's like each time I do something, now I'm assessing whether that was effective, how was the timing on it and not only what is that person feeling, it's a much more complex process than beginning counselor, when you're just trying to figure how to respond to the affect and you don't see anything else or hear anything, you're just nervous."

The heart of psychotherapy supervision is the attempt to increase the supervisee's ability to work effectively with clients. Thus, the ability to conceptualize clients more fully, as well as to intervene successfully, is central to the task of supervision (that is, an expanded ability for therapeutic conceptualizing and intervening). What was interesting about this study was that participants did not focus on specific tangible skills. Predominantly, attention was centered on developing new, more refined abilities in conceptualizing clients or dealing with professional development situations. Although therapy outcome was not examined in this study, it appears that supervisees felt an increased ability to conceptualize client issues and intervene with a greater sense of efficacy. An excerpt from Kevin's transcript is illustrative: "And so I walked out of there with what I felt were a handful of things to try out and a real good sense that I'd had a valuable experience, that my repertoire was expanded. My understanding of myself, my understanding of therapy was broadened just a bit, in a real tangible way... It really turned on lights."

With a new sense of understanding for either a therapeutic or a professional development issue, the participants acquired a positive anticipation to reengage in their previous struggle. Dave spoke of developing a "game plan" to return to his client to implement his new understanding. That same phrase was used by Bruce: "That's basically how we wound up that session, with a game plan." Both Kevin and Rebecca expressed an eagerness to return to their clients with their new understanding.

I think for me I was really excited to get back and work with the client. I felt like I had picked up a lot of good information about myself, about what I thought with the client, certainly my relationship with her. I was just ready to get into the next session and continue this. (Kevin)

And in a sense I was looking forward to going back into that counseling situation and seeing what I then could do, feeling freed up regarding the situation and dealing with the client. (Rebecca)

Although the focus was on professional development rather than therapy skills, there was still a planning to reengage in the struggle. Some of the language used to describe the feelings of reengaging in the struggle suggested that trainees felt energized, focused, and ready to try out new strategies in dealing with what was previously believed to be challenging or difficult.

The good supervision events also had the effect of strengthening the supervisory alliance. Many of the trainees talked of other constructive experiences that transpired later in supervision because of the trust that had developed through this positive experience. One intern suggested that her good experience had been

a lack of test of the supervisory relationship and preparatory for discussion of other more intense issues later.

The final theme was increased impetus for continued professional identity development. This theme was concerned with the supervisees' motivation. In this light, Dave made the following comment: "I basically said, 'Cool, now let's turn on my psychological thinking which brought me into this field, what I love to do.'" For Jan, this event included breaking through some of the "rigidity" that she had developed. As for Kevin, he related that this had the effect of opening up a whole new part of the therapeutic process: "It was kind of like adding an entirely new dimension and such an important dimension. And that was what was happening, just the general process of what was occurring between the client and I, and I don't think I really focused on that much before." Finally, as trainees perceived a need and desire for honing their professional identity, they experienced an increase in their commitment to supervision.

Discussion

The results of this phenomenological investigation provide an in-depth, detailed, and intricate picture of the experience of good supervision events from the perspective of the trainee that is often missing in investigations of the supervisory process obtained by more traditional quantitative methodologies. The finding of a distinct structure of good supervision comprising the salient themes and events occurring within the phases of an existential baseline, setting the stage, a good supervision experience, and the outcomes of good supervision help clarify the context of supervision as well as the anatomy of good supervision experiences. This particular structure of supervision has not been noted elsewhere in the literature to date and therefore adds significantly to an understanding regarding the process of good supervision.

Within this structure, many of the themes and events are also generally consistent with previous quantitative studies in terms of what constitutes good supervision. For example, events reflected positive aspects of the supervisory relationship, which include supervisor self-disclosure (Black, 1988) as experienced by participants in this study as a technique helpful in normalizing the struggle, a supervisory environment of experimentation and acceptance of mistakes and failures (for example, Allen et al., 1986; Hutt et al., 1983), task orientations specific to developmental level (Allen et al., 1986; Heppner and Roehlke, 1984), and expression of warmth, respect, support, acceptance, trust, and understanding by supervisors (Hutt et al., 1983; Martin et al., 1987).

In each of the eight transcripts examined, participants referred to the quality of the supervisory relationship as crucial and pivotal. Perhaps over the course of an entire semester of supervision, the supervisory relationship, although a significant factor in supervision, would not always play a predominant part in each session, and other issues might become more focal. However, it is likely that, in the course of addressing the variety of supervision issues, the supervisory relationship would

continue to serve as the base of all good therapeutic and professional training, thus suggesting that the learning and acquisition of professional skills and identity may be delayed, hampered, or not fully developed outside the context of an effective supervisory relationship. Indeed, previous investigators have concluded that "didactic and structural aspects of supervision were not nearly as influential determinants of quality as clear communication and respect" (Allen et al., 1986, p. 95). In addition, Black (1988) has stated that "the largest and most structurally similar factor found in both effective and ineffective [supervision] was that of the supervisory relationship" (p. 167), describing such differences between supervisory relationships and supervision as correspondingly responsive and supportive versus insensitive and judgmental. It is perhaps these components that let Loganbill, Hardy, and Delworth (1982) to suggest that the supervisory relationship is essential in supervision in much the same manner as the counseling relationship is in psychotherapy. Thus, a more central role and examination of the supervisory relationship in theory building may be warranted.

However, a surprising aspect of this study was that six of the eight participants, in expressing a desire for a qualitatively different supervisory relationship, indicated that they had experienced some previous supervisory relationships as less than fulfilling. This result, along with Galante's (1988) finding that 47 percent of trainees reported that they had experienced at least one ineffective supervisory relationship, provides support for the notion that supervisors may need much more extensive training in supervisory models and processes exclusive of therapeutic training and experience to increase their effectiveness. However, future research needs to determine whether the nature of the supervisory relationship is such that supervisees have been genuinely disappointed or whether the developmental perspective of supervisees influences their retrospective view of supervision such that past supervision is seen as negligent when in fact, at the time it was received, it was viewed to be adequate. It is also possible that retrospective evaluations of previous supervision experiences may be biased by viewing present needs as being inadequately met in previous supervision relationships, especially in cases in which current supervision needs are being adequately attended to.

We found it particularly interesting that a disruption in the usual, with its attendant anxiety and perceived needing, operates so as to set the stage of good supervision and that this often overlooked event can provide some guidance in structuring supervisory interventions. For example, we may be poised to intervene more strategically as supervisors if we understand that when supervisees experience a disruption in the usual, it is a possible opening for new learning to occur and a positive supervisory experience to unfold. When it is determined that a supervisee is entrenched prematurely in certain therapeutic thinking patterns or activities, strategically evoking a disruption in the usual could be productive by providing a new challenge. "Catalytic" interventions (as described by Loganbill et al., 1982) designed to promote change and "get things moving" may evoke the disruption in the usual. In addition, those supervisees experiencing natural disruptions in the usual could be assisted to see the possibility for new and expanded learning opportunities arising from the disruption. However, it is possible that if

the usual becomes disrupted too frequently and the experience with counseling and supervision lacks sufficient continuity, a supervisee might not develop a coherent pattern to his or her therapeutic thinking and interventions.

The results of the present investigation are best viewed in the context of the developmental training level of the participants, which ranged from intermediate practicum level to the second semester of internship. In fact, some observed differences based on the trainees' general level of experience are consistent with developmental models of supervision (for example, Littrell et al., 1979; Loggani et al., 1982; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987). These included differences between the practicum and intern trainees in levels of confidence, a respective disillusionment to a sense of efficacy with the counseling process, and a global versus specific response to sensed inadequacy. However, as noted by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987), general experience level only roughly equates with developmental level. Indeed, in this investigation, a number of events of good supervision experienced by all trainees appeared to encompass aspects of both Level 2 and Level 3 supervisee issues as hypothesized in Stoltenberg and Delworth's integrated developmental model, and perhaps reflect the transition between these levels. Because these findings were not derived via hypotheses and dependent measures determined a priori, they complement and expand the growing quantitative literature supportive of developmental conceptualizations of the supervision process (Stoltenberg et al., 1994).

This investigation focused on the examination of an experience of good supervision from the perspective of supervisees. A different vision of good supervision might emerge if supervisors' perspectives were also investigated; differences in perceptions between supervisees and supervisors have been found in previous studies (Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; Krause & Allen, 1988; Worthington & Roehlke, 1979; Worthington & Stern, 1985). For example, what supervisors may view as a challenging, growth-producing intervention constituting good supervision (for example, a disruption of the usual) may be negatively viewed initially by trainees. It is also natural to assume that how supervisees perceive supervision will affect how they develop and function as emerging professionals. Therefore, it will be important in future studies to examine the link between the phenomenological experience of supervision for supervisees and the therapeutic process and outcomes that are related to those phenomenological experiences. In other words, when supervisees experience what they believe is good about supervision, do they become more effective in facilitating better therapy outcomes in their clients?

Readers may question the generalizability of the sample of participants in terms of lack of representativeness or small size. Thus, it is important to reaffirm that the intent of this phenomenological investigation was to describe and uncover the structures of personal meaning regarding good supervision events from the perspective of the participants. As a result, the structure of good supervision themes and events derived from the eight interviews is best understood as applying to the recalled experiences of the eight participants and may be used to view experiences of other supervisees. However, this structure is not necessarily generalizable to or predictive of all good experiences of supervision and

may not be inclusive of all important events or elements of what may be considered good supervision.

Thus, in this study, we discovered components of good supervision that appeared to be uniform between the participants and constituted a "structure" of good supervision. It is evident that even though commonalities were found, each trainee had a unique experience that varied in some degree from those of other trainees. It is also evident that there is a richness to each individual's experience of good supervision that is difficult to capture through collective descriptions and identification of themes and events. These results suggest that there is no uniform formula that can be applied in supervision to ensure a good experience. Rather, it is important that supervisors demonstrate certain interpersonal qualities that will accompany their theoretical knowledge, practical interventions, and experience base. With the creation of a facilitative supervisory relationship, a supervisor will be attuned to opportunities to intervene strategically with trainees to meet their unique supervisory needs.

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Phenomenological Research and the Making of Meaning

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I was one of the first ever in our department to conduct a qualitative study, and the first to use a phenomenological method. I believe there were several key ingredients that helped me in my role as a novice investigator. First, I found a topic of interest that I had some personal investment in (I had experienced supervision, both good and bad), which sustained my curiosity during what turned out to be a long and challenging process. Second, I had a dissertation chair who provided encouragement, support, challenge, and ultimately faith in me and in the process. Third, I searched for and found a methodology that worked for me and would help me explore an experience that I wanted to understand better; I had to believe in the philosophy of science behind that methodology. Fourth, I had to identify appropriate co-investigators (subjects) who would be able effectively to articulate their experience and be representative of the experience I wanted to understand. Fifth, I needed a question that would keep me, the interviewee, and the analysis focused. Sixth, I needed to believe in both the process and myself as being effective vehicles for eliciting and organizing the data. I had to allow time to immerse myself in the data and trust that the data would speak to me. I had to believe, especially in the early stages, that the parts would begin to come together into a meaningful whole. Seventh, I had to find a way to communicate and represent what I was finding to others and open myself to the critiques and questions that would invariably come.

I would now like to share a few critical issues from my experience as a phenomenological qualitative researcher.

Although qualitative research is well designed to examine "soft" data such as human experience, the methodology needs rigor. I spent quite a bit of time searching for a methodology that made sense for me, a methodology whose philosophy

of science was consistent with my own view of human nature. I also wanted a methodology that would help me understand how to move from raw interviews to final knowledge statement in systematic transformations of the data. I found Giorgi's (1989) methodology did that for me.

Another critical element was preparation for conducting effective interviews, the source of the data. I read quite a lot about qualitative interviewing and found Kvale's (1983) article very helpful. Although I did not practice interviewing with someone, which in hindsight might have been helpful, I participated in mental preparation through imaginative rehearsal, picturing how to question and prompt co-investigators effectively. I also was very conscious of the problem of asking leading questions, which might bias the data, and prepared so that I might avoid these kinds of questions. I was acutely aware (in fact probably put off longer than necessary this phase of the research for fear of not conducting the interviews effectively) that whatever data were generated were dependent on the quality of the interviews I conducted. As I began the interviews, I experienced them as very interesting and quite rewarding.

The quality of the interview is determined by the relationship we establish with our co-investigators. (I should point out my use of the term co-investigator is purposeful, since I viewed us as both having interest and some investment in understanding this experience better.) This is a departure from quantitative methods. Objectivity is a highly valued stance in traditional quantitative research, since you do not want to bias the findings. In phenomenological research you are striving to access the experience within individuals. A trusting relationship, where both are committed to better understanding the experience being explored, allows for greater access to the richness of their experience. Some of my co-investigators reported that the interview was "enjoyable," "rewarding," "insightful," and "almost therapeutic."

The analysis was very time consuming and plain hard work. It was hard to do the analysis in small doses. I found I was more productive when I would work in longer periods. I was filled at alternating times with confusion, doubt, illumination, and exhilaration. I found that my doubt diminished as I would take my initial findings and go back to the data to check or verify that the data supported the findings. Often I would end up reworking or revising my ideas to better fit the data. Language became a vital concern. I found myself spending time exploring the thesaurus and dictionary to try and capture the right kind of language to convey the concepts that were emerging. I attempted to avoid language that might have the baggage of other meanings. On reflection, I think I was only partially successful in that endeavor.

Validity was a big concern. You do not have the luxury of falling back on statistical numbers to back up your findings. You do not have an established significance level to tell you when you have found something meaningful. You look for meaning in the data and for its repetition and redundancy across cases. You see whether there are patterns to the data, and whether you can match the data with the emerging meaning and take the meaning and impose it back on the data to see whether it holds up. In phenomenological analysis you do not necessarily rely

on the consensus of others who are looking at the same data, because you acknowledge that each might bring a legitimate but different perspective to the data. Thus, you may feel alone with your findings, since you are the ultimate authority on your perspective on the data. You demonstrate validity by showing that you collected your data in a thorough and authentic manner, were rigorous in your analysis, can explain alternative competing meanings, and can show through your steps of data transformation the path you took to develop your knowledge statement or findings. In some qualitative methods this is called an audit trail. It others can see the integrity of the process and the ability to explain competing findings you have demonstrated validity from a phenomenological perspective. Polkinghorne (1989) stated that the phenomenological use of the term *validity* is applied more as a general principle, that is, "as a conclusion that inspires confidence because the argument in support of it has been persuasive" (p. 57). For those who have had similar experiences, your findings should resonate with their own experience as a way of personal validation. In conjunction with this, I expected my greatest critics would be those steeped in quantitative methodologies, who would be looking for traditional measures of internal and external validity. Those I experienced as sometimes the harshest critics were other qualitative researchers who came from a different theoretical underpinning and believed that I had not conducted the analysis in the right way. In fairness, they also made some of the most significant contributions to strengthening the research.

Phenomenological methods can provide a useful tool for understanding human experience and meaning. There are other legitimate and useful research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. Phenomenological methods require a commitment to rigor and openness to learning, a respect for those who will participate as your co-investigators, and a sense of humility about the whole process. Enjoy the process as much as possible; develop a sense of wonder and awe for the phenomena you are investigating. Don't set out to change the world, just try to understand better the experience you are exploring. This method of inquiry can be very exhausting and hugely rewarding, ultimately adding meaningful understanding to the experience we call life.

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