Video Journaling as a Method of Reflective Practice

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine seven school counseling students’ experiences of creating reflective video journals during their first internship course. Specifically, this study focused on capturing the essence of the experiences related to personal reactions, feelings, and thoughts about creating two video journal entries. Qualitative analysis revealed that reflection as a developmental process, authenticity, parallel process, and apprehension with the process were significant themes related to the video journaling experience. Implications for counselor education and training and directions for future research are presented.

Keywords: reflection, video technology, counselor education, counselor supervision

Reflection is a fundamental practice essential to many professions (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983, 1987; Walker, 2006), and counseling is no exception. Over the past 20 years, numerous scholars have identified the importance of engaging in reflective practices as a vital aspect of counselor development (Collins, Arthur, & Wong-Wylie, 2010; Hubbs & Brand, 2005; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998) and even as the cornerstone of personal development for counselors (Moon, 1999). Just as reflection has been discussed as a vital element of counselor development, reflection itself has been identified as a developmental process in which counselors increase the complexity of their understanding (Griffith & Frieden, 2000). The supervision process has often been described as important for nurturing the development of reflective practices (Granello, 2000; Studer, 2005). Roberts (2001) noted that reflection time with supervisors enhances supervisees’ professional decision making and skill development and that reflection should be intentionally modeled through interaction with supervisors to help supervisees develop a reflective stance (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Finally, Griffith and Frieden (2005) suggested that counselor educator research is needed “to know the most effective ways to educate reflective practitioners” (p. 92).
Conceptions of Reflection

Reflection has been described in numerous and nuanced ways; however, it has generally been conceptualized as a process in which learning is derived from experience. Reflective thought was defined early by Dewey (1933) as a means of transforming experiences that are obscure and doubtful to experiences that are more clear and coherent. Similarly, Boud (2001) described reflection as a process in which the unprocessed, raw material of experience is turned into learning. Freire (1974) elaborated more fully on this description by positing that reflection is the necessary mediating element to the ongoing tension that occurs between theory and practice. Schön (1983) added a service-oriented purpose behind reflection, in a model known as “reflective practitioner” (p. 345), by emphasizing the importance of practitioners becoming more reflective to better meet the needs of clients. Schön’s argument hinged on the notion that the idiosyncratic nature of both human services and clients sometimes renders ineffective the theories and techniques that guide the counseling practice.

Methods of Reflection

Many methods have been utilized to facilitate the development of reflective practices within other educational disciplines (Calandra, Gurvitch, & Lund, 2008; Moon, 1999; Wright, 2008), but among these, the use of reflective journal writing has been growing in prominence (Kaiser, 2004; Riley-Doucet & Wilson, 1997). Reflective journal writing is a method in which individuals intentionally reflect their experiences, thoughts, and feelings in writing (Greiman & Covington, 2007; Hubbs & Brand, 2005; Moon, 1999). The use of written reflective journals has been identified as enhancing the learning process, fostering creativity, increasing personal ownership of learning, and aiding self-development, among other positive outcomes (Moon, 1999).

Another innovative and promising method for encouraging and developing students’ reflective stance is the use of video for journaling. Although research has documented and explored the benefits of written reflective journals, the use of video for reflection is a relatively new approach and thus has less representation in professional literature, particularly research-oriented literature (Calandra et al., 2008; Wright, 2008; Yerrick, Ross, & Molebash, 2005). The literature that does exist has mostly emphasized and examined the viewing of video recordings of teaching experiences to determine whether the process can foster reflections (Calandra, Dias, & Dias, 2006; Romano & Schwartz, 2005; Yerrick et al., 2005), whether video could enable teacher candidates and practicing teachers to be more aware of what was occurring in their classrooms (Sherin & van Es, 2005), and whether using video can improve teacher performance (Wright, 2008).

With the emergence of more readily available video technology, particularly digital video, some researchers have also discussed and examined the use of video as a medium for reflective practices and the advantages video may have over the written word (Clarke, 2009).
Some advantages of video might be rooted in student concerns about their writing ability or their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings on paper as well as the time required for journal writing. Greiman and Covington (2007) identified student concerns regarding the time required to reflect through written journals. Using a survey research design along with content analysis of responses to open-ended questions in a study of 44 student teachers, Greiman and Covington found that when given the choice, more than half of the participants preferred to reflect verbally with someone, whereas written reflection was the least preferred modality. Notably, Greiman and Covington’s study did not explore the reasons why participants preferred verbal reflections but did explore the barriers participants identified for written reflections. The primary barrier participants perceived was the lack of time to adequately complete the written reflective journals. In contrast, a study by Clarke (2009) identified time efficiency as a perceived strength of video journaling. Through a simple questionnaire administered to five teacher education students who had opted to use video rather than written journals, participants identified that their use of video journals not only was more time efficient but also produced more honest responses and allowed better conveyance of emotion and complexity than they believed written journals would have (Clarke, 2009). There is no current literature directly exploring the use of video journaling as a method of developing student reflective practice in counselor education.

Methods of Reflection in Counselor Education

Within counselor education, there is a gap in the literature between recognition of the importance of reflection for counselors and both research and didactic scholarship related to the development of counselor skill and capacity for reflection (Wong-Wylie, 2006). There has been counselor education scholarship that provides suggested methods of reflection. For instance, journal writing was occasionally cited as a useful method of reflection for counselor development (Burnett & Meachem, 2002; Stickel & Waltman, 1994; Studer, 2005). Journal writing was also included in Griffith and Frieden’s (2000) description of four strategies for facilitating reflective thinking, with the other three being Socratic questioning, interpersonal process recall, and reflecting teams. In their description of journal writing, Griffith and Frieden noted that students often move from simple descriptions of experiences toward more complex understandings of the relationships and patterns inherent in them. Collins et al. (2010) described their 13-step cultural auditing model that provides a reflective process for improving multicultural aspects of counseling. The model includes questions that guide reflective practice with particular attention to culture. Across each of these methods proposed by the aforementioned scholars is the suggestion that these innovative methods can build student reflective practices while at the same time inviting greater levels of student engagement in their learning and development. Although each of these works provides clear descriptions of compelling
and promising methods of reflection, they are conceptual in nature. There remains a dearth of published research literature regarding counselor reflection and the methods used to facilitate reflection in addition to the absence of literature exploring the use of video journaling as a method of developing student reflective practice in counselor education.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences school counseling students had when creating two reflective video journals during their first internship course. This phenomenological method was selected as the best method to capture the essence of the experiences related to personal reactions, feelings, and thoughts about creating video journal entries. A constructivist orientation guided this study as the participants’ experiences were described during the interviews. The results of this study may also offer counselor educators another effective method of reflection that can be utilized to process a variety of experiences, such as practica and internships, multicultural issues, and building theoretical orientation.

**Reflective Video Journals**

During a 15-week internship experience, 20 internship students were asked to create two reflective video journals. The first reflective video journal was created at midterm, and the second reflective video journal was created at the close of the semester. The purpose of the video journals was to allow students to verbally reflect on their feelings and personal reactions regarding their school counselor training working with economically disadvantaged students in urban schools. Although the students were given prompts to respond to, they were also encouraged to share thoughts, feelings, and reactions that were beyond the specific prompts. A general guideline for the videos was to keep the time limit to about 10 minutes. Students were not penalized for going above or below that limit. The videos were then discussed during individual supervision. Some students, however, volunteered to share their video during group supervision.

Open-ended questions were used to gather initial evaluative data from all the internship students \((N = 20)\) regarding the reflective video journaling experience. Students responded to the questions anonymously, thus encouraging honest responses. The open-ended questions included the following: (a) How comfortable were you with the idea of creating a video journal prior to starting the experience? (b) Did video journaling change or influence your reflection process? If so, how? (c) Would you prefer journal writing or video journaling as a means of reflection and why? (d) How authentic did you feel your responses were during the reflection process?

Using the students’ responses to the evaluative questions, the first and second authors utilized the interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) to formulate a list of questions to gain deeper insight into participants’ experiences creating reflective video journals. This approach allowed us to gather data from multiple participants while maintaining a systematic approach. According to Patton (2002), the strengths of
this approach include allowing for participants’ insights to emerge and allowing the interviewer to ask more questions related to the topic. The interview guide included questions related to participants’ (a) initial thoughts and feelings about creating reflective video journals, (b) descriptions of challenges creating video journals, (c) descriptions of how they felt when creating the video journals, and (d) perspectives of how video journaling affected their reflective process and development. A demographic questionnaire was also created to gather information on participants’ age, gender, ethnicity, and experience in education before entering the graduate program.

**Method**

**Procedure**

After receiving approval from the institutional review board, we used criterion sampling because all of the participants in the study are a representation of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the phenomenon is the experience creating reflective video journals. As the participants’ supervisors, we sent e-mail invitations to the 20 internship students to volunteer for the study. Seven students volunteered to participate in one interview that took place at the end of the internship course. The interviews lasted on average about 45 minutes. The participants’ responses were audio recorded, coded under pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, and transcribed by the third author, a graduate assistant. The participants in this study were not known to the graduate student transcriber. After all data were transcribed, the first and second authors, experienced in qualitative research, began the process of data analysis.

**Participants**

Participants consisted of seven master’s-level students in a school counseling program who were completing their first internship experience in an urban professional development high school. There were three men and four women. Participants in this study ranged in age from 24 to 39 years ($M = 29.5$ years). Prior to entering the graduate program, participants had a range of experience in teaching from 0 to 9 years ($M = 4$ years). Three of the participants self-identified as Caucasian, two self-identified as African American, one self-identified as Asian, and one self-identified as biracial.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2007) described phenomenological research as focusing on the deeper meaning of experiences. Therefore, this research study examined the processes and experiences of creating a reflective video journal. First, we independently highlighted significant statements in the transcriptions through horizontalization (Creswell, 2007). Horizontalization allowed for the data to be spread out and treated equally (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Second, we met in person and discussed the significant statements. We then
related themes from the significant statements through the process of developing clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2007). Finally, after comparing and coming to a consensus on the data, we compiled the statements into themes. We resolved disagreements by openly discussing perspectives and views about the data. We tried to stay true to what the participants experienced rather than what we believed or valued (Creswell, 2007). Through this process, the essence of participants’ perceptions regarding the video journaling process was captured.

**Trustworthiness of the Data**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered that trust in qualitative research should be established through credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. In the present research study, we used two measures, peer debriefing and member checking (Creswell, 2007), to determine the credibility of our conclusions about the data. Next, to establish confirmability, we independently highlighted the significant statements to avoid any biases that may have been a result of first discussing the data. Then, to establish dependability, we met in person and came to a consensus on the codes and emerging themes. Finally, to establish transferability, we included thick descriptions of the reflective journaling experience through the use of participant interview data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In an effort to reduce bias, Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers clarify biases, prejudices, and past experiences. In the present study, the first and second authors conducted the analysis. Having multiple analysts can reduce bias because it provides consistency of the data analysis (Patton, 2002). The first two authors are counselor educators who work in a midsized southeastern university and have prior experience conducting qualitative research. Additionally, it is important to note that both authors were each responsible for supervising a section of the internship experience. As internship supervisors, we created the reflective video journaling assignment with the intention of facilitating the development of reflective practices of the school counselors-in-training. Therefore, we did have the expectation that the video journaling would be a facilitative method of reflection. Given that we created the assignment that served as the basis of the research, it was important that the participants agreed on the transcriptions and identified themes through the process of member checking. Specifically, we e-mailed the findings to participants, who in turn provided their views about the accuracy of the themes that we identified from the data. This method accounted for what participants experienced rather than what we perceived those experiences to be (Creswell, 2007). On the basis of the feedback, the data seemed to account for what the participants experienced. The data were also compared with the initial evaluative data that were gathered from all of the internship students. This process provided consistency of data obtained from two phases of the process (Patton, 2002).
Results

Four significant themes were identified through qualitative analysis: reflection as a developmental process, authenticity, parallel process, and apprehension with the process. These themes along with supporting quotations are presented in the following sections.

Developmental Process

All of the participants stated that the initial process of creating reflective video journals was challenging. Participants described an initial concern they felt regarding the use of technology required by the reflective video journal assignment and whether they had the right equipment to complete it. They also expressed feeling unsure about the actual process of reflecting on video because they lacked experience doing so; this sense of uncertainty led some of them to make notes prior to reflecting on video. Some participants stated that they felt self-conscious about seeing and hearing themselves on video. Despite the aforementioned concerns, four participants noted that when they engaged in the practice of video reflections, they began to understand the process and saw how it positively facilitated their development and growth.

The initial concern about the technical challenges related to the technology involved in creating reflective video journals was expressed by Beth, who stated,

There were the technical challenges, like I said, I filmed it on one thing that wouldn’t convert to my computer so I couldn’t play it. So I had to find another thing to record it on and I didn’t have enough memory.

Similarly, Arthur reported, “I had some problems getting everything to work. I thought it was going to be simple, put the camera in front of me, press play and go.”

All of the participants also expressed concern about the actual process of reflecting on video. Although participants had prompts to respond to when creating their journals, many still made notes to guide themselves throughout the process. Four participants also said they found themselves divulging more information than they had initially planned. Sometimes this led the four participants to speak beyond the related topic or prompt. For example, Arthur stated, “When you’re making a video journal, even though you can plan everything out with some kind of a flashcard as far as going into the real details of it, you actually wind up giving more details than you planned.”

Maria shared similar concerns about focusing responses to a particular question and trying to provide pertinent details to support those responses. She said,

One of the challenges that comes to mind is when you have a set question and then trying to answer that question and then you’re thinking about supporting details, and then when you’re talking you can get away from the topic quite quickly.
Although participants expressed initial challenges related to the process of creating a reflective video journal, five of the participants also recognized that they experienced increased self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment after creating the second video journal. For example, Jane mentioned, “It was a scary experience at first, but I think by the end I was very proud that I did it.” Likewise, Beth also shared, “I was very proud of myself from that, like there I said it. I was nervous about it, but I felt more accomplishment.” Similarly, Maria said, “It’s a really nice sense of accomplishment. I mean, I know I have a lot more to learn but I have a lot more confidence in my abilities.”

Four participants stated that when they went through the actual process of reflecting on video and taking the time to view themselves on video, they recognized their own growth. For example, Giorgio mentioned, “Every once in a while I’ll watch the reflections. It’s amazing how much I’ve grown from the first semester until now.” He further explained,

If I had a video journal that first day of class and was able to compare it to one of my classes now I would be able to see the change and I think that would be very powerful for someone to actually understand, “Yes, I went through a change and I can see it and it’s proof—it’s right here.”

Maria also shared how reflecting on video versus reflecting on paper allowed her to actually see her own professional growth. She stated, “I think you can see growth more through video journaling than on paper. Paper is so black and white. I don’t think you’d see growth through that versus seeing your emotions on screen.”

**Authenticity**

Authenticity was the second theme identified. All of the participants reported that the video journaling experience affected their levels of authenticity in their responses. Participants mentioned that the use of video made it difficult to hide their true thoughts and feelings about what they were experiencing in the internship. Participants noted that, compared with the benefits of written journals, video journaling allowed for greater levels of authentic reflection.

Six of the participants mentioned that video journaling allowed the supervisors to see nonverbal behavior that would not be accessed through writing. For example, Arthur said, “Facial expressions and body language say a lot and you can’t see that through paper.” Maria amplified this sentiment when she commented,

I think sometimes when you’re worried about how things look, as far as the words you’re using or sometimes when you’re writing, you want to put what looks good on paper and those are things that you can’t really hide when you’re doing a video journal.

Participants reported that writing influenced the authenticity of journaling in a negative way because of the formalities of writing, whereas video journals allowed them to be in the moment and talk
about more immediate thoughts and feelings rather than being overly concerned about punctuation and grammar. The relative authenticity of video journaling was supported by Giorgio, who observed, “When I write something, I feel as though it’s a task. I didn’t feel as though the video journaling video was a task.” Other participants also noted that video journaling did not provide the same opportunities to revise their reflections in a way that they perceived constrained the authenticity of their responses. Valerie stated, “If I type something out, it allows me to go back and then I start looking at grammar and the sentence construction instead of just putting it out there and being genuine.” The idea that written journals can be edited and revised to offer responses that will be viewed more favorably by supervisors was shared by Giorgio, who said, “It’s definitely a time when you’re writing, I feel like I know what I want to do to make myself kind of sound good.”

Participants shared that the use of reflective video journals eliminated the possibility of being critiqued on their writing and word usage rather than the actual content of their reflections, thus influencing their genuineness of their responses. Maria stated,

When you write a paper, you’re thinking about verbiage. Are they going to critique my writing? But when you’re video journaling, it’s your thoughts. Even though I knew someone was going to see it, they weren’t going to maybe have a pen in their hand making comments here. They were actually going to listen to me.

Similar thoughts were shared by Valerie, who said,

When I see papers, you think more, well, I have to get concrete evidence. You still want it to look good on paper. But with the video journal it’s more like, “Here I am. This is what I think and these are my thoughts,” as opposed to putting it on paper to be scrutinized.

Parallel Process

All participants in this study discussed parallels that they recognized between their processes of constructing their reflective journals and practices they believed they will be engaging in as school counselors. Although the participants each expressed unique insights into how their use of reflective journals seemed to mirror school counselor practices that they viewed as being helpful, there were two distinct and common parallels to counselor practices that each shared. Specifically, participants stated they believed the process of recording and reviewing their reflective video journals aided their awareness of the significance of engaging in reflection as school counselors and the importance of communicating with students with clarity.

Jane described the parallel she recognized between her use of reflective video journals and the importance of reflection during her future role as a school counselor. She related that the reflective video journal process served to highlight the notion that reflection is necessary to both assess and improve her work as a school counselor. She stated, “We can continue to evaluate our own actions where, you know, nothing is ever
There's always more to it—either more research or another way to do something. The process never stops.” The need to mediate school counseling practice with reflection as well as how that need was shown through the use of reflective video journals was echoed by Maria, who said, “It allowed me to listen to my thoughts and analyze them a little bit more because there was no one there doing that but me, listening to my feelings and listening to my thoughts.” Maria further discussed this parallel to her future practices by adding that many school counselors, possibly including herself, sometimes work in or across schools without another school counselor colleague to readily consult with, thus making their own individual reflective processes even more vital.

Although the participants each discussed parallels between their reflective processes involved in both reflective video journals and their future work as school counselors, two participants discussed how their use of reflective video journals influenced how they reflected. Chet illustrated this cognitive shift from reflecting on his behaviors and practices to the act of reflecting itself. He stated,

> I started to really focus on exploring how I thought about what was occurring with the students I'm working with. Am I just coming at it from the same angle each time, or am I open to examining my work in fresh ways?

The emphasis on reflecting beyond the effectiveness of one's school counseling practices to how one's reflection is occurring was also embedded within Giorgio's comments. He related that reflective video journaling “had me doing a lot of metaprocessing, like processing my processing.” Giorgio continued by adding,

> I would look back and hear what I would say and I would kind of disagree with that or rethink what I'd been thinking before. I had to reflect on what was happening in my process that allowed me to think about things differently.

Although Chet and Giorgio seemed to use reflective video journaling to also examine their reflective processes, all of the participants recognized the inherent professional value of reflection. This was perhaps most clearly expressed by Maria, who noted that “reflection is critical to the processing of information.”

Participants also identified parallels between their use of reflective video journals and the importance of clear and effective verbal and nonverbal communication with students. Once again, each of the participants drew these parallels; however, some focused on the nonverbal aspects of communication whereas others focused on the verbal aspects.

Five of the participants discussed the parallels they perceived between their use of reflective video journals and the importance of attending to their nonverbal communication with students. Beth related this importance when she noted,

> I can see that there’d be parallels in the counseling process by watching and viewing [the reflective video journals]. You're attending to yourself the way you would attend to a client and like I said, you can’t script facial expressions and physical gestures.
The importance of attending to nonverbal expressions was further echoed by Arthur, who said the use of reflective video journals “lets us look at each other in another light because we’re not used to looking in the mirror and talking to ourselves so we’re not aware about how we are with our facial expressions and stuff like that.”

Two of the participants noted that using reflective video journals provided them with a tool through which they could think more critically about the effectiveness of their verbal communication with students. Chet summarized this point when he stated, “When you watch yourself on tape, you kind of see the things you did well, the things you did poorly, and then hopefully with counseling you can use those skills and become a better listener.” The use of reflective video journals to support the basic counseling skill of communicating with clarity was also identified by Maria, who said, “The video reflection allows us as counselors to even go back and watch it and process what we’re thinking at the moment and see—is that what we really want to express, or did it just come out?” Chet further emphasized the helpfulness of video reflections to support the development of more effective communication. He explained how sharing his video journals with his instructor during supervision enabled him to improve his communication skills:

To be able to reflect and be able to watch yourself on film and actually have someone who’s an expert or someone who knows what they’re saying say, “This is a good part, let’s work on that,” and to tweak it because I’m sure there’s a ton of things I can do better. I know I’m going to make a ton of mistakes but I hope I can just learn from myself.

Apprehension With the Process

Although participants in this study described what they viewed as benefits to the use of reflective video journals, all but one participant also described apprehension they felt while constructing them. Each of the participants had previous experiences writing reflective journals examining his or her work with students, but the introduction of video as a means to reflect seemed to introduce elements of apprehension. This apprehension centered around three main concerns: anxiety about seeing themselves in video, unease over how the content of their journals would be perceived by their supervisors or classmates, and feelings of insecurity regarding the use of technology required in recording the journals.

Five of the participants related the anxiety they experienced watching themselves on video. Jane said, “I was rather apprehensive. I almost feel embarrassed watching myself.” The anxiety around viewing oneself on video was further noted by Beth, who related that “I’ve never been a big fan of seeing myself or listening to myself.” Similarly, Giorgio said, “It was just the discomfort for me to see myself, to hear my voice on tape, and it’s just kind of the point of watching myself that’s uncomfortable.”

The apprehension that most of the participants experienced seemed to be rooted somewhat in the discomfort they felt having their supervi-
Sor or classmates view their video journals. Some of the participants shared concerns that video reflections might limit their ability to accurately express their feelings and thoughts on their school counseling training. Beth seemed to summarize this point by saying that although she felt her expressions were more “real,” she worried about whether she lost some coherence in her video reflections. She said, “I almost like writing more because I feel my responses are more calculated and they’re more measured and I’m more in control of what goes in there.”

Still other participants traced the discomfort in having an audience for the journals to feelings of vulnerability expressing negative emotions associated with working as a school counselor. Giorgio expressed this vulnerability when he said, “In my video reflection you could definitely see times when I was frustrated with students.”

Finally, all but one participant expressed initial feelings of insecurity using the technology required to construct video journals. Arthur expressed this initial insecurity when he said, “I was kind of nervous because I felt like it would be very difficult for me. But then after trying out different programs that are out there it made me feel less nervous and more comfortable.” Beth expressed similar feelings of initial anxiety, “I thought it was going to be simple. I learned a lot. But I also learned that it really isn’t that hard. Even though I had some challenges, I was able to figure it out.” Notably, for each participant who expressed anxiety over converting the video journal to a digital file, he or she also noted eventually experiencing skill development in using new technology. Chet perhaps best expressed this growing comfort and appreciation using newer technologies for his video journals by stating, “I’d be less apprehensive next time we do something like this because so many people now know how to use it. It’s kind of cool.”

**Discussion and Implications**

This study revealed that the use of video journals provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on and make meaning from what they experienced and, in turn, how these reflections and emergent understandings could influence their practices. Participants in this study reflected on the two video journals they created during the middle and end of their first internship experience as well as the experience discussing these journals during either individual or group supervision. The video journaling process provided students with opportunities to reflect on the internship experiences that presented problems of practice with greater immediacy than what would have been possible from the delayed review of those experiences that generally occurs when students meet with their supervisors at a later date. Participants indicated that the reflective video journals supported their development by providing them with opportunities to discuss their perceived growth as evidenced by their video journals. Given that the reflective process is thought to support counselor development (Griffith & Frieden, 2000), we discuss the findings and implications for counselor training.
The results of this qualitative study suggest that reflective video journaling shows promise as a method that supports counselor development, particularly around reflective practices. Preliminary findings also indicated that although participants experienced initial apprehension with the video journaling process, their initial apprehension was replaced by an enhanced sense of confidence, growth, and the belief that they were reflecting with greater authenticity than they had experienced through written journals. Additionally, this study added to the existing literature in counselor education on reflective practices by not only describing a new method of reflection but also examining the perspectives of student participants who engaged in the video journaling method and process. Given that the literature on counselor reflection has been mostly conceptual, emphasizing its importance as well as descriptions of useful methods and approaches, this study contributes to that literature by moving the conversation toward the exploration of which reflective methods more effectively allow students to share more genuine thoughts and feelings while offering them opportunities to enhance their learning experience and develop as practitioners (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Hubbs & Brand, 2005).

The findings of this research study support Moon’s (1999) notion that reflective journaling fosters self-development and allows individuals to take responsibility over their own learning. Specifically, we found that participants were able to recognize their own growth and development as counselors through their video reflections. The video journaling process offered participants the opportunity to go back and view their videos to examine their professional growth. One aspect of this growth was exemplified by participants’ initial reports of apprehension while creating video journals but then feeling pride and a sense of accomplishment once they finished. These examples indicate an increased level of engagement that participants had in their own learning and development, a finding similar to the conjectures counselor education scholars made regarding previous descriptions of other methods of reflection (Allen, Folger, & Pehrsson, 2007; Collins et al., 2010; Griffith & Frieden, 2000).

Notably, participants reported that they preferred video journaling to a written reflective journal. Participants shared that because they were not concerned with being graded on their grammar or writing skills, they felt their reflective processes were more genuine. This finding is supported by Greiman and Covington’s (2007) findings that student teachers preferred to reflect verbally rather than through written journals because of their concerns about their writing ability. Although participants initially had to overcome issues with technology and staying focused while reflecting, they related that the video journaling process of reflection was more authentic. Participants’ perception that video journaling allowed more authentic reflections is supported by Clarke’s (2009) findings that the teacher candidate participants in that study believed video journals produced more honest explorations of complex emotions experienced in the field.

The use of video journals as a reflective strategy also illustrated the parallels between the process of video journaling and school counsel-
ing practices. As the results of our study indicated, video journaling seemed to provide counselor trainees the opportunity to understand how expressing one’s thoughts, feelings, and reactions can increase self-understanding and foster professional growth. Specifically, this study found that reflective video journals provided counselor trainees with a mechanism to examine how their reflections affect their practice, for them to understand the need to attend to clients and pay attention to their own nonverbals and communicate with focus and clarity. This supports Griffith and Freiden’s (2000) assertion that counselor competence and development are related to self-awareness and self-evaluation.

Given that participants in this study initially felt discomfort with the video reflections, there are some implications for counselor educators who utilize this method as part of their counselor preparation programs. First, ethical concerns regarding self-growth experiences in counselor education programs as defined in the American Counseling Association (2005) Code of Ethics state that evaluations of experiential training should be based on academic performance and not on self-disclosure. Thus, counselor educators need to inform their students of the parameters of reflective video journals (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). Students can be given the choice whether to share their videos with anyone other than their supervisors (e.g., their classmates). Measures to protect client–student and graduate student confidentiality are necessary for either option. A second consideration is related to how student video journals are assessed. There seems to be a natural tension between the nature of reflection and the social conventions of assessment. Reflection involves focusing on elements of uncertainty, confusing events, and cognitive and affective explorations that do not necessarily lead to answers. However, conventions of traditional assessment maintain that students and supervisees submit their best work. Counselor educators need to provide students clear standards for assessment of video journals, much like the supervision process. The primary purpose of the reflective video journaling process is to provide students a mechanism in which they may explore and reflect at a deeper level. Thus, the level of reflection should be the focus of assessment for these video journals rather than the specific experiences and practices that are the objects of the reflection, unless there is a disclosure of harmful, unethical, or illegal practices.

As noted earlier, reflective video journaling is a developmental process (Griffith & Frieden, 2000). This notion is illustrated by participants in this study, who moved from initial feelings of vulnerability, lack of confidence, and apprehension with the process to feelings of heightened engagement, accomplishment, and professional growth. Therefore, counselor educators might begin with written journals so that students can become comfortable with the process of reflecting, begin to feel safe with their supervisor, and gain confidence in expressing themselves. Finally, given the developmental nature of reflection, it may be appropriate for counselor educators to consider providing suitable topics for reflection to create more structure for students at the earlier stages of counselor development.
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the results of this study indicate that video journaling may foster learner development and provide a means for more authentic reflection, there are some limitations. First, the participants in this study were from one school counseling program. Results may have differed if participants were from other counselor education programs and other concentrations in the counseling profession. Additionally, all of the participants in this study were in their first internship experience, and the results may have also been different with students at other developmental levels. Consequently, transferability to other settings and developmental levels may be limited. Second, participants were supervised during their internship by the first and second authors. These relationships could have influenced participants’ responses because of social desirability bias and the reality that in some cases their internship performance was being evaluated by the researchers. Hence, in the future, researchers could conduct another qualitative investigation that includes a larger and more diverse sample with participants from other counselor education programs.

Given that this qualitative study was an initial examination of video journaling as a method of reflective practice, future studies could examine the quality and depth of student reflections through the video journaling process by examining responses through the conceptual framework of a preexisting model of reflection. Researchers might also compare other methods of reflection described in counselor education literature (e.g., written journals, Socratic questioning, interpersonal process recall) for the specific variables that could influence counselor development, professional and personal development, as well as authenticity and the quality of reflections facilitated by them. Future scholarship might also explore how technology can be used to further support innovative counselor preparation and development, particularly regarding reflective practices. Lastly, the counseling professions would benefit from future studies designed to examine the impact of reflection on counselor practices and client–student outcomes.

Reflective practice can provide counseling students with opportunities to increase self-understanding and engage in professional growth. Counselor education programs might use video journaling during supervision as a method to help better prepare students to reflect on their development and practices. As we found in this initial study, the process of reflecting on video can support more authentic reflections, can parallel the counseling process, and can promote engagement in self-development and professional growth.

References


