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# Advisor Loss in Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students: A Qualitative Perspective

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Advisor Loss in Counseling Psychology Doctoral Students: A Qualitative Perspective

by

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Abstract

The advisory relationship is a critical component of training in counseling psychology doctoral programs (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). The doctoral advisor performs various functions and is theorized to serve as a secure base from which the advisee can safely explore (Huber, Sauer, Mrdjenovich, & Gugiu, 2010). Research indicates that faculty mobility has become increasingly common and is often a component of professional advancement, resulting in high turnover rates and subsequent advisor loss (Aggarwal & Medury, 2012). The present study aimed to be the first to examine how advisees experience this loss. Utilizing Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 2005), the present study consisted of interviews with 10 counseling psychology doctoral advisees who had experienced the loss of their advisor during doctoral training. The seven domains that emerged from the data were: (1) relationship with original advisor prior to departure; (2) experience of advisor loss; (3) responses to advisor loss (self and others); (4) transition to new advisor; (5) relationship with new advisor; (6) current relationship with original advisor; and (7) views of advising relationship. Results indicated that although a majority of advisees described the initial experience of advisor loss negatively, numerous advisees adapted and made positive meaning of the experience. Experiences after the loss were important in advisees' ability to make meaning and in the loss's perceived impact on graduate training. Faculty and programmatic responses, research, professional development tasks, relationship with the new advisor, and navigation of the doctoral program were key areas discussed as either positively or negatively connected to the experience of advisor loss. Implications for doctoral programs are discussed, including how programs can appropriately respond when advisor loss occurs (e.g., ensuring faculty members meet with students who have lost an advisor) and how to address this issue in program materials (e.g., a

statement in the student handbook about who will follow up with the student after the loss occurs, the timeline in which this communication will take place, who the student can contact with any questions or concerns, and specific information on how a student should go about identifying a new advisor to work with, so as to help students gain a sense of control by knowing what steps would be taken if loss was to occur). Limitations and directions for future research are also discussed.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

The graduate advising relationship is an integral part of counseling psychology doctoral training (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). The doctoral advisor takes on a range of roles and aids the advisee in numerous areas of training ranging from research to professional development. The advisor is theorized to serve as an attachment figure, acting as a secure base from which the advisee can feel safe to explore and develop in different areas as a trainee (Huber, Sauer, Mrdjenovich, & Gugiu, 2010). Given the importance of the advising relationship and the advisor's role, any rupture or loss of this relationship could be significant in impacting the advisee's graduate work and overall experience within the program. Although a few studies have addressed the issue of rupture (e.g., interpersonal conflict) between advisor and advisee (Inman et al., 2011; Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill, 2006), to the author's knowledge, none have examined the experience of advisor loss. Advisor loss, as discussed in the present study, refers to an advisor leaving his or her program due to accepting a new job, program closure, job termination, or retirement. Because faculty mobility has become increasingly common in higher education, the issue of advisor loss is even more relevant (Aggarwal & Medury, 2012). Yet, we still do not know how students are affected by this loss and cope with it. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to fill this void in our knowledge about the experience of counseling psychology doctoral trainees who dealt with advisor loss.

The doctoral advisor, defined as "the faculty member who has the greatest responsibility for helping guide the advisee through the graduate program" (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, p. 158), has a multifaceted role. Advising responsibilities may include tasks such as funding research projects or assisting with professional development tasks. The doctoral advisor serves as the primary professional contact and gatekeeper in the student's quest for a doctoral degree (Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003). Despite the important role the advisory relationship is theorized to play, a surprising paucity of research exists on this topic.

One promising, nascent line of research on the advising relationship has focused on the advisory working alliance. The advisory alliance is defined as "the connection made between advisor and advisee as a result of the work done towards common goals" (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, p.158). Advisees' perspective of the advisory alliance is conceptualized in terms of three constructs. *Rapport* reflects the interpersonal connections of the advisor and the advisee, with a focus on the interpersonal warmth of the working alliance based on respect and encouragement. *Apprenticeship* reflects the advisee's role as an apprentice by means of professional development and growth pertaining to the tasks of the advisee. *Identification-Individuation* reflects the ways in which the advisee either hopes to identify with or individuate from his or her advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Research has indicated that a positive advisory alliance, as reported by the advisee, is linked to greater student research self-efficacy and more positive feelings towards research (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). In addition, more positive perceptions of the advisory alliance are linked to advisees' use of more effective coping strategies (Farrelly, 2007).

Although the working alliance is important, it does not capture every component of the relationship between advisor and advisee (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Past research has indicated the need to examine the advising relationship beyond the work done towards common tasks and goals (Schlosser et al., 2003). A qualitative study examining advisees' perceptions of the advising relationship found that advisees satisfied with their advisors typically met more often, chose their advisor, felt more comfortable with disclosure, and felt encouraged to participate in professional development activities (Schlosser et al., 2003). In addition, strong mentoring relationships were found to be positively associated with overall contact with program faculty and more connected and engaged students (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). In addition, students who reported having a mentor during graduate training demonstrated a greater number of publications, more grant funding, higher levels of productivity, and continued engagement with research after graduation (Dohm & Cummings, 2002; Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002).

Huber, Sauer, Mrdjenovich, & Gugiu. (2010) proposed that the advising relationship is an attachment relationship; advisors serve as a secure base from which the advisee can explore and develop during doctoral work. Attachment theory proposes that the attachment figure, who is viewed as supportive, wise, and emotionally strong, provides a *secure base* from which an individual can venture forth to safely explore (Bowlby, 1988). Bowlby (1969) theorized that attachment is important "from the cradle to the grave" (p. 208). Therefore, extensive research examines the role of attachment theory in adulthood (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Bowlby (1988) introduced the idea of the therapist as a secure base, supporting client growth and exploration. Empirical research has reinforced the idea of the therapist serving a secure base function (Farber, Lippert, & Nevas, 1995). Additionally, the supervisor has also been theorized to act as a secure base for the supervisee (Pistole & Watkins, 1995), serving protective, monitoring, and "freeing" functions (p. 169).

This evidence suggests that attachment theory may provide a useful theoretical lens to understand the advising relationship (Huber et al., 2010). Given the stresses and strains inherent in doctoral study, a successful advisor may serve as a secure base from which the advisee can explore and grow.  Only two known empirical studies have explored the link between attachment style and the advisory relationship (Codos & Woodhouse, 2014; Huber et al., 2010).  Attachment in adults is typically conceptualized in terms of two dimensions: *attachment anxiety and avoidance.*  Attachment anxiety is defined by a fear of rejection and abandonment by others, whereas avoidance is the degree of discomfort with closeness, dependence, and intimacy.  Huber et al. (2010) found that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance of the advisee were both significantly and inversely related to advisee's ratings of the advisory working alliance.  Codos and Woodhouse (2014) examined both advisor and advisee attachment and found that the interaction of advisor avoidance and advisee avoidance was a significant predictor of the advisee perceptions of the advisory alliance. This study indicated a "birds of a feather flock together" pattern, in which advisor-advisee pairs matched in their level of avoidance yielded more positive advisee ratings of the advisory working alliance.  Therefore, advisees may be more comfortable with the advisory relationship when the advisor shares similar interpersonal tendencies and a comparable level of attachment avoidance.  Both studies suggest that a consideration of attachment helps to provide a meaningful perspective on the advisory relationship.

With theory and research indicating the importance of the advising relationship and the advisor's role (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001), along with evidence that attachment is important in the advisory relationship (Codos & Woodhouse, 2014; Huber et al., 2010), one would anticipate the loss of this relationship could be significant.  Although no existing research has examined this loss, research has examined the importance of advisor availability and frequency of meetings in predicting a positive advisory alliance (Schlosser et al., 2003).  It could therefore be presumed that a lack of availability or disruption in this relationship could be a difficult experience for an advisee.  Two qualitative studies have examined the advising relationship, one from the perspective of counseling psychology doctoral advisees (Schlosser et al., 2003) and one from the perspective of counseling psychology doctoral advisors (Knox et al., 2006). Both studies assessed the advising relationship in general, looking at factors that were linked to satisfactory and unsatisfactory advising relationships. Although both studies briefly discussed the experience of rupture within the advising relationship, only the study by Knox et al. explored the topic of advisor loss. The mention of advisor loss was brief, merely stating that one of the advising relationships identified as difficult was started after the advisee's original advisor left the doctoral program. In this instance, the advisor identified that this student may not have been someone that he or she would have chosen to work with. Therefore, advisor questions of perceived trainee competency and fit served as a hindrance in the new advisory relationship. The work by Knox et al. is the only known study to discuss the experience of advisor loss during doctoral training. To the author's knowledge, no studies have empirically explored the experience of losing one's advisor during the course of doctoral training.

This lack of research is surprising, particularly given that faculty mobility has become increasingly common and has resulted in high turnover rates (Aggarwal & Medury, 2012). Faculty departure is considered a normal component of professional advancement in academic careers and may be related to job satisfaction, tenure decisions, salary, and research opportunities (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). In addition, given that many professorial skills are transferrable across schools, the transition from one school to another is often not too challenging for faculty (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Consequently, a growing number of advisees are experiencing the loss of an advisor and the subsequent impact that such a loss can have on graduate training.

With the advisor theorized as an attachment figure, the loss of this secure base figure may be associated with doctoral student anxiety, anger, and despair similar to that present when a child or adult experiences the loss of an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1982). Bowlby (1980) theorized the loss of attachment figures as one of the most intensely painful experiences an individual can endure. He acknowledged that the primary goal of attachment behavior is to maintain close bonds, highlighting the protest behaviors (e.g., crying, angry outbursts) that occur if such a bond is threatened or lost. He also described the anxiety that persists when a loved one is temporarily absent and the pain and mourning that persists when a loved one is permanently absent (Bowlby, 1973). After experiencing loss, a grieving individual tends to move along a continuum between anxiety and despair. Some of the factors that may contribute to more significant or prolonged grief include sudden loss, multiple stressors, and the lack of social support (Bowlby, 1980). In addition, insecure attachment styles may play a role in the experience of mourning and loss. Bowlby (1980) clinically theorized that individuals with an anxious attachment style often experience *protracted grief,* characterized as consuming and long lasting. In contrast, individuals with an avoidant attachment style often utilize *defensive exclusion,* an adaptive strategy used to deactivate from feelings of distress and limit feelings of emotional pain (Fraley & Shaver, 1997). Those with a secure attachment style, possessing representational model of caregivers as available, responsive, and helpful (Bowlby, 1980), tend to cope with loss more effectively and are better equipped to seek out support and comfort from others.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) postulates that humans develop close emotional bonds that enable the growth and maintenance of cognitive representations of oneself and others. These representations are defined as "internal working models" that are developed through the relationship to the caregiver and are carried out in adult relationships. Bowlby (1980) conceptualized the cognitive reorganization process that the bereaved experiences after a loss. His theory indicated that after experiencing a loss, an individual enters a phase of reorganization. At this time, one must reshape internal representations of the individual that was lost and restructure cognitive representations to match the idea that this individual is gone. Eventually, new representational models will be created in alignment with this idea.

If the advising relationship is theorized as an attachment relationship, the loss of an advisor may elicit some components of this grief response. It is possible that students may undergo a process of cognitive or representation reorganization similar to the cognitive reorganization process that the bereaved experience. Yet, to the author's knowledge, no research has explored how students respond to the unexpected or premature loss due to their advisor leaving the program. Many different styles of advising exist; some advisors may choose to take a more hands-on and active approach while others may be less directly involved. Restructuring one's cognitive representations may include reshaping what one has always considered as an effective advisor or advising style. For example, an advisee who used to meet weekly with the original advisor may have to reshape expectations and beliefs about advising if his or her new advisor likes to meet less frequently. Similarly, an advisee accustomed to a more directive approach may have to adjust expectations if his or her new advisor takes a less active approach. Just as cognitive restructuring after death helps a grieving individual reconstruct life without their lost loved one (Berder, 2004-5), cognitive restructuring after advisor loss may serve a similar purpose; the advisee must reconstruct views of advising and their graduate experience.

The reshaping of advising expectations speaks to some of the practical considerations that come with losing one's advisor. In one study, advisees satisfied with the advising relationship discussed their research as a primary focus of the advising relationship (Schlosser et al., 2003). Losing one's advisor may interrupt current research, forcing the trainee to change established research interests to better match the new advisor. This disruption in research may also be linked to the trainee's timeline in the program and create some logistical constraints in getting research requirements completed on time. Schlosser et al. (2003) also found that satisfied advisees identified career guidance as a focus of their advising relationship. Having to find a new advisor after one has left the program may halt such guidance at a critical point in doctoral training. This may disrupt engagement in professional development tasks and interrupt or halt career-related activities. Although a lack of prior research in this area makes it challenging to speculate about all of the possible practical concerns associated with advisor loss, it is expected that such a loss could also be linked to the following: (a) professional development concerns; (b) a lack of comfort or belonging in the program; (c) issues related to finding a new advisor; (d) issues of fit with the new advisor; and (e) practical program considerations. These concerns, coupled with the challenging emotions and cognitive restructuring typical in experiencing loss (Bowlby, 1980), qualify advisor loss as an important area of research worth exploring further.

**The Present Study**

The aim of the present study was to describe counseling psychology doctoral students' experiences of losing their advisor. To the author's knowledge, the present study was the first to examine counseling psychology doctoral student experiences of a disruption in the advising relationship due to loss of the advisor. Such research is both relevant and important; increased faculty mobility and high turnover rates suggest that a growing number of advisees may be experiencing advisor loss throughout graduate training (Aggarwal & Medury, 2012). Yet, little is known about the experiences of these students and how their graduate training is affected by such a loss. Given the importance of the advisory relationship (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000), such a loss could be significant. Much more information is needed regarding the loss of what is theorized to be one of the most critical relationships in doctoral training (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Given the scarcity of empirical research on advising relationships and the lack of research on advisor loss, a consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) methodology was used. This inductive method involved a structured interview approach with follow up probes to allow for a robust exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions. A strength of CQR is its use of multiple researchers and an auditor to limit bias and gain consensus. This methodology allows for the unique and nuanced experiences of each advisee to be heard, in addition to recognizing the overarching themes across advisees. As a result, the study aimed to elucidate how advisees experienced advisor loss, capturing both common themes, as well as idiosyncratic experiences. More specifically, key areas of the present study focused on whether this experience was identified as a loss by advisees, the emotional experience related to the loss of an advisor, and the nature of any cognitive restructuring that occurred as a result. The study also assessed the advisees' research, academics, and professional engagement before the experience of the advisor loss and after the experience. This helped the researcher gain an understanding of any changes, developments, or challenges in these areas. Further, it also helped clarify advisor and advisee characteristics that may have played a role in the experience of advisor loss.

## Chapter II

## Literature Review

### The Advising Relationship

An advisor is defined as “the faculty member who has the greatest responsibility for helping guide the advisee through the graduate program” (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, p. 158). Theory and empirical research alike have pointed to the advisor as a critical figure, facilitating student growth and development throughout the training program (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Before delving into the research on this critical relationship, there is a distinction that must be made between an *advisor* and a *mentor*. Although some researchers have used the words interchangeably (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001), others have drawn a clear distinction (Schlosser et al., 2003). Buyukgoze-Kavas, Taylor, Neimeyer, and Guneri (2010) defined the term mentor as “a more experienced individual who addresses both the psychosocial and career development of a lesser experienced individual by guiding, training, and supporting (p.388).” By definition, advising can refer to either a positive or negative relationship, whereas *mentoring* refers exclusively to a positive and ideal faculty-student relationship (Inman et al., 2011). Although recent theory has indicated that advising is the gateway to mentoring, not all advisors serve as mentors (Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson, 2010a). In fact, although Schlosser & Gelso (2001) found that 100% of graduate student participants indicated that they had an advisor, Cronan-Hillix, Gensheimer, Cronan-Hillix, & Davidson (1986) found that only 53% of graduate psychology students indicated that they had a mentor. The present study focuses on the more inclusive construct, the advisory relationship, rather than limiting attention to relationships described as mentoring. The term advisor is used throughout to ensure clarity of definition to avoid the positive bias associated with the term mentor, allowing advisees to describe any potentially negative experiences, as well as positive ones, associated with their advising relationship (Schlosser et al., 2003).

Gelso (1979) was one of the first researchers to highlight the advisor-advisee relationship. In his paper outlining key issues within counseling psychology, he theorized about the importance of this relationship in creating greater student engagement and interest in research. Empirical research has supported theoretical assertions about the importance of the advising relationship in students' doctoral training and professional development (Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser et al., 2003). In a qualitative study looking at incomplete doctorates, approximately 44% of doctoral candidates who identified as "All But Dissertation," reported a poor advisory relationship as a reason for not completing their degree. This, along with financial difficulties, was the most cited reason for not completing the dissertation and obtaining the Ph.D. (Jacks, Chubin, Porter, & Connolly, 1983).

Gelso and Lent (2000) emphasized the importance of the advising relationship and called for more research on this critical component of graduate training. The advisory working alliance has been conceptualized in terms of three underlying dimensions from an advisee perspective: *Rapport* (i.e., the interpersonal connections of the advisor and advisee with a focus on interpersonal warmth based on respect and encouragement), *Apprenticeship* (i.e., the advisee's role as an apprentice by means of professional development and growth pertaining to tasks of the advisee), and *Identification-individuation* (i.e., the ways in which the advisee either hopes to identify with or individuate from his or her advisor, with higher levels of identification linked to higher advisory alliance scores)(Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). The three underlying dimensions of advisee perspectives on the advisory working alliance were supported by factor analytic work (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Schlosser and Gelso (2001) found that total scores of the AWAI were positively correlated to research self-efficacy, attitudes towards research, and perceived expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness of the advisor.

Although most studies have focused on the advisee perspective (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser & Kahn, 2007; Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003), work has also been done to examine the Advisory alliance from the perspective of the advisor (Knox et al., 2003; Schlosser & Gelso, 2005; Schlosser & Kahn, 2007). The advisor's perspective on the working alliance is conceptualized in terms of three dimensions. The *rapport* and *apprenticeship* dimensions are parallel to the similarly named dimensions of the advisee's perspective of the advisory working alliance (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). A third dimension of the advisor's perspective on the alliance, *task focus,* is defined as the capacity of the advisor to help the advisee with his or her tasks during graduate training, as well as the degree to which the advisor and advisee stay on task as they complete their work together (Schlosser & Gelso, 2005). Research has indicated that advisor ratings of the advisory working alliance are linked to advisor reports of greater perceived benefits of advising and more positive beliefs about advisees' research abilities (Schlosser & Kahn, 2007). Advisors that identified a positive advising relationship typically spoke of their advisee's positive characteristics, identified mutual respect and open communication, and reported feeling effective in their advising (Knox et al., 2003). Moderate agreement was found between advisee and advisor ratings (Schlosser & Kahn, 2007).

**Factors associated with the advisory alliance.** Once the AWAI (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) was constructed, the number of studies examining the relationship between advisor and advisee increased. Research has shown that the advisory alliance is linked to several key research-related outcomes, such as advisee research self-efficacy (Morrison & Lent, 2014; Schlosser & Kahn, 2007), positive attitudes towards research held by the advisee (Schlosser &

Gelso, 2001), and research productivity (Kahn & Schlosser, 2010). For international students, a positive working alliance was associated with academic success and an overall easier adjustment to the United States (Rice et al., 2009), as well as less perceived overall levels of stress, acculturative stress, and psychological distress (Wei, Tsai, Chao, Du, & Lin, 2012). Positive gains identified by students satisfied with their advising alliance included help in navigating their doctoral programs, increased networking opportunities, and growth as a researcher (Schlosser et al., 2003). It is therefore no surprise that weaker advisory alliances, as reported by psychology doctoral students, were found to be predictive of advisee nondisclosures and a fear of being viewed as unprofessional by the advisor (Inman et al., 2011). The nature of such nondisclosures included content related to unclear advisor expectations, problems with the doctoral program, and the advisee's personal issues.

Particular advisor characteristics and behaviors have been linked to a positive relationship with the advisee. A qualitative study by Schlosser et al. (2003) found that counseling psychology doctoral students that were satisfied with their advising relationship described their advisor as supportive, friendly, collegial, and respectful. A significant link was found between a strong advisory alliance and the perceived expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness of the advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). A qualitative study conducted by Bloom, Propst Cuevas, Hall, and Evans (2007) found that advisors that were accessible, served as role models both professionally and personally, provided individually tailored guidance, and helped integrate students into the profession were viewed to be the most helpful by M.D.-Ph.D. students. A study of women in STEM graduate programs indicated that instrumental support and psychosocial support were important in predicting a strong advisory alliance (Prime, Bernstein, Wilkins, & Bekki, 2014). In contrast, unclear advisor expectations, lack of support, and unavailability of the advisor were related to advisees' feeling dissatisfied with their advisory relationship (Inman et al., 2011). Assignment to an advisor, as opposed to selection by the student, was also linked to the student feeling unsatisfied with his or her advising relationship (Schlosser et al., 2003). Schlosser et al. (2003) also found that the focus of the advising relationship may be important; a focus on research, program requirements, and professional development tasks (e.g. conference presentations) were linked to satisfactory advising relationships.

Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, & Johnson (2011b) identified the importance of considering how cultural identity variables may be linked to the advising relationship. Although such research is still limited, a few studies have emerged to explore how various multicultural factors may be influential in predicting aspects of the advising relationship. Rice et al. (2009) examined international graduate students and found that ratings of some subscales of the advisory alliance (e.g., *rapport, identification-individuation)* were lower for the international graduate population than they were for the US-born graduate students. The researchers hypothesized that this could be partly related to cultural differences in role expectations, interpersonal functioning, and behaviors. A follow-up qualitative study conducted by Knox et al. (2013) looked exclusively at international counseling psychology doctoral students. Findings indicated that the participants generally felt positive about their advising relationships and identified their advising relationships as mostly positive. Yet, negative aspects of the relationship discussed (e.g., advisors not being supportive or accessible) were in accordance with the findings of Rice et al. Sbaratta, Tirpak, and Schlosser (2015) theorized that a male-male advisory dyad would be advantageous given a perceived congruence in communication and socialization style, optimizing the effects of role modeling within the relationship. Thus, the few studies that have examined the link between cultural identity factors and the advisory alliance indicate that such factors may play a role in predicting advisory relationship outcomes. In sum, research findings that highlight the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship during graduate training underscore the interpersonal nature of this relationship and suggest that attention to cultural factors is important.

**A gap in the literature.** Although we have evidence for the importance of the advisory alliance in student outcomes (e.g., Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Schlosser et al., 2003) and we have some understanding of the factors linked to a positive alliance, much remains to be learned about the advisor-advisee relationship. A key gap in our knowledge is the nature of students' experience when the advisory alliance is disrupted or prematurely terminated due to advisor loss. If the advising relationship is as important as theory and research indicates, it would be expected that the loss of the advisor would be linked to an advisee's experience in some way. Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap in the literature by taking an in-depth look at advisor loss. Given the importance of student outcomes (e.g., research, advisory alliance), the current study will focus on the advisee perspective. This perspective will help to clarify how the disruption related to the loss of one's advisor may impact the student and his or her overall training experience.

## Attachment and the Advisory Relationship

Attachment theory can provide a useful theoretical lens through which to understand the advising relationship. Bowlby (1969/1982) emphasized the use of a *secure base,* a supportive, wise, and kind attachment figure, as a home base from which one can go out and safely explore and return to for emotional support if needed. Although originally intended to explain an infant's relationship to a secure base figure (Bowlby, 1969/1982), attachment theory is now used to explain behavior in many different adult interpersonal relationships. Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) identified two dimensions of adult attachment, *attachment anxiety* and *attachment avoidance.* Attachment anxiety is characterized by a fear of abandonment and rejection by others. Conversely, attachment avoidance is defined by a discomfort with closeness and intimacy with others.

Within their extensive review on adult attachment, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) highlighted research on the links between adult attachment styles and a variety of aspects of interpersonal relationships, including interpersonal behaviors, perceptions of relationships, and the quality of relationships. Based on their review, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) argued that data support the notion of the attachment system as an interpersonal regulatory system in which individuals observe, learn, and alter behavior in an attempt to gain support from an attachment figure when needed. There has been some debate as to whether attachment, as measured by the ECR, is a stable, enduring construct or a state-dependent characteristic. Research has found evidence for a prototype model, which assumes a stable factor underlying some temporary variations (Fraley, Vicary, Brumbaugh, & Roisman, 2011). Thus, although variations across time are possible, the ECR assumes attachment style as a more stable and trait-like characteristic (Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011). When attachment needs go unmet, two regulatory strategies, *hyperactivation* and *deactivation,* may be utilized (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). Hyperactivation of the attachment system is most commonly used by individuals high in attachment anxiety and results from a fear of abandonment and rejection by attachment figures. Examples of such hyperactivating strategies may include clinging and controlling, proximity seeking for protection, and hypersensitivity to perceived rejection or abandonment. On the contrary, individuals high in attachment avoidance tend to deactivate their attachment system and use deactivating strategies to minimize the degree to which they feel they need comfort and support from attachment figures. Individuals using such mechanisms often feel discomfort with closeness and intimacy; as a result, deactivating strategies help to maximize autonomy and increase distance from interpersonal relationships.

Attachment theory emphasizes the role of a secure base figure used for support, protection, and reassurance. Given the stresses inherent within doctoral studies and the nature of the advisor's role, a successful advisor may serve as a secure base from which the advisee can explore and grow. Therefore, the advisory relationship can be theorized as an attachment relationship. Research supports the idea that adult attachment can play a role in perceptions of the advisory relationship, suggesting that attachment can provide a useful lens for better understanding advising. Huber et al. (2010) were the first researchers to empirically explore the relationship between attachment and the advisor-advisee relationship. Participants included 109 Counseling Psychology doctoral advisees in APA-accredited programs. The study found that advisee attachment anxiety and advisee attachment avoidance were significantly and inversely related to advisee ratings of the advisory working alliance. Codos and Woodhouse (2014) recruited 46 advisor-advisee pairs from APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral programs and examined attachment style of both the advisor and the advisee. Results indicated that advisees rated their advisory relationship more positively if advisees and advisors were matched in their level of attachment avoidance than when they were mismatched in level of attachment avoidance. These findings, like those of Huber et al. (2010), emphasize the integral role of attachment theory in better understanding the advisory relationship. These studies also suggest that attachment dynamics can be at play interpersonally within the advisory relationship.

Theory has expanded to identify both the therapeutic relationship and the supervisory relationship as types of attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1988; Pistole & Watkins, 1995). Theory and research indicate that the therapist and supervisor both serve a secure base function; the client and supervisee can feel free to explore and grow with a safe place to return for support and encouragement (Bowlby, 1988; Farber, Lippert, & Nevas, 1995; Pistole & Watkins, 1995). Therefore, attachment research has been integral in understanding how adults seek out and make use of a secure base in other professional relationships as well.

**Attachment and loss.** Attachment theory is useful in conceptualizing the secure base function of the advisor for the advisee and for understanding interpersonal tendencies in the advising relationship (Codos & Woodhouse, 2014; Huber et al., 2010). Attachment theory can also serve as a useful theoretical framework in understanding the advisee's loss of the secure base provided by the advisor. In *Loss* (1980), Bowlby discussed how the loss of an attachment figure is experienced. He not only described such loss within the context of the child's relationship with the parent, but also within adult relationships, such as between spouses or family members (p. 81). He recognized that the primary goal of the attachment system is to maintain close interpersonal bonds as a means of joy, comfort, and security (p. 40). Bowlby emphasized that if the danger of losing an attachment figure is present, powerful forms of attachment behaviors may become evident as a means to prevent the loss. These behaviors can include protest behaviors (e.g., angry coercion, clinging) that are aimed at the attachment figure and indicate emotional distress regarding the threatened loss (p. 42). In *Separation* (1973), Bowlby highlighted the continuum between anxiety and despair that an individual commonly moves through during extended separations; anxiety is present due to temporary absence and despair is present due to a more permanent absence.

Once the loss is experienced, an individual must enter a phase of cognitive reorganization of the individual's *internal working models* (i.e., cognitive representation of oneself and others). In his earlier work, Bowlby (1969/1982) theorized that these internal working models develop based on experiences with the attachment figure. Once an attachment figure is lost, the grieving individual enters a phase of reorganization; he or she must discard old patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting and consider how to adjust to the new situation without the secure base figure. This reorganization often includes a redefinition of oneself, as well as the current situation (p. 94).

**Advisor Loss**

Given the importance of the advisory relationship in doctoral student outcomes (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000), the loss of a secure base figure (i.e., the advisor) may be linked to a significant sense of loss for the student. Yet, no research was found that explores advisees' experience of advisor loss. Knox et al. (2006) was the only study identified that mentioned the topic of advisor loss, although the mention was brief and was focused on the advisors' experiences. Knox et al. used a qualitative methodology to examine factors linked to advisor-advisee relationships described as "good" by advisors, as well as those described as "difficult" by advisors. One of the "difficult" advising relationships described by a participating advisor was started after the advisee's original advisor left the program. Because of the departure, the advisee's current advisor was assigned to work with this student. This advisor reported that the advisee was not someone he would have admitted into the program or chosen to work with. This lack of fit described by the current advisor was the primary reason this relationship was characterized as "difficult."

Although the study by Knox et al. (2006) served as a nice introduction into some of the problems that may arise due to advisor loss, the authors did not explore the other aspects or consequences of the advisor loss and did not gain the advisee's perspective on this experience. Therefore, there is still much that is unknown about the experience of losing one's advisor. It would be beneficial to understand more about what it is like to learn the advisor is leaving the program (e.g., initial thoughts, feelings, and behaviors), what it is like after the advisor leaves the program (e.g., peer and faculty support received), the transition to the new advisor and relationship with this advisor, and any changes resulting from the advisor leaving the program (e.g., research, academics). The lack of research on this topic is particularly surprising given what we know about the high rate of faculty mobility and the resulting number of students who are experiencing advisor loss.

**Faculty mobility.** Studies have continued to emphasize the increasing mobility and high turnover rates among doctoral faculty (Aggarwal & Medbury, 2012; Cohoon, Schwalb, & Chen, 2003). A study of 210 computer science departments within the United States found that 41% of faculty were dissatisfied and had considered or were currently considering leaving their institution (Cohoon et al., 2003). Kaminski and Geisler (2012) conducted the first known longitudinal study looking at faculty retention. Participants included 2,966 assistant professors in science and engineering at 14 different American universities. This study found that faculty of both genders stay at a university for a median of 11 years. Results of this study also indicated that the chance a given faculty member will be retained over time is less than 50%. Although these statistics focus on fields outside of counseling psychology, they suggest that faculty departure is now considered a somewhat normal component of professional advancement in academia. The reasons faculty cite for choosing to leave their institutions are mixed but include factors related to salary, job satisfaction, research opportunities, and overall lower levels of organizational and career satisfaction (Brown, 1967; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Smart, 1990).

Dissatisfaction with salary is a commonly reported experience by faculty within higher education (Aggarwal & Medbury, 2012). Such dissatisfaction, along with the immense variation in salary structure of private institutions (Tang, Luna-Arocas, Sutarso, & Tang, 2004), may lead faculty members to seek higher-paid opportunities at other institutions. The transition is often aided by the fact that many professorial skills are transferrable across schools (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Therefore, increasing numbers of advisees are experiencing the loss of an advisor and may also be experiencing some level of impact on their graduate experience.

**Reorganization after advisor loss.** The advising relationship is clearly not the familial relationship discussed by Bowlby (1980) in his volume exploring the implications of the loss of a loved one. Yet given that the advisor has been theorized as a secure base figure (Huber et al., 2010), there may be similarities in the experience of loss. The process of cognitive reorganization that Bowlby (1980) discussed may share some similarities with what is experienced upon an advisee losing his or her advisor. The advisee may restructure representational models about the self, the original advisor, and the program. When the advisee is transferred to a new advisor, the new advisor's interpersonal style and method of conducting work may be very different from that of the original advisor. Therefore, the advisee may be forced to restructure general ideas about what advising looks like and what makes an effective advisor. The experience of loss can be affected by a multitude of factors, including the suddenness of the loss, existing outside stressors, or level of social support (Bowlby, 1980, Chapter 10). This may be relevant when considering advisor loss; the loss of an advisor may often feel sudden for the student and multiple stressors will inevitably be present when enrolled in a rigorous doctoral program. In addition, students who are away from primary social supports may experience the loss in a more significant or prolonged fashion. Insecure attachment styles (e.g., attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance) may also be connected to an individual's experience of loss. Bowlby (1980) identified the *protracted grief* (i.e., persistent and consuming grief) often experienced by those with attachment anxiety, as well as the *defensive exclusion* (i.e., adaptive means of disconnecting from feelings of distress and emotional pain) often demonstrated by those with attachment avoidance.

Limited research exists to examine the loss of a secure base within a professional, as opposed to familial, relationship. The limited research on the topic of loss within professional relationships has examined clients' and therapists' experiences of therapists' premature termination with a client in psychotherapy. Such therapist-initiated forced terminations (i.e., therapy is ended due to the therapist's moving, retiring, or trainee completion of a particular placement) often involves a quick process in which the therapist does not attend to important termination issues. Studies found that in these situations, therapists were more likely to experience negative feelings and report feeling unsatisfied with the termination, feeling as though the clients were not ready for the termination (De Bosset & Styrsky, 1986; Fair & Bressler, 1992; Zuckerman & Mitchell, 2004). Therapist-initiated forced terminations resulting in the need to refer the client to a different therapist were found to elicit negative responses from both therapists and clients, including clients dropping out of therapy and counselors feeling unprepared to handle the termination (De Bosset & Styrksky, 1986; Tantam & Klerman, 1979; Zuckerman & Mitchell, 2004).

An experience in which a client is losing his or her therapist and is being forced to transfer to another therapist is expected to share some similarities to the loss of an advisor. Both a therapist and advisor have been theorized to serve a secure base function (Bowlby, 1988; Huber et al., 2010). In both cases, a relationship with a supportive, wise, and (hopefully) kind individual who serves as a home base in times of need is disrupted. Thus, given that the research indicates that the loss of a therapist and transfer to a new therapist brings uncertainty and anxiety (De Bosset & Styrsky, 1986; Zuckerman & Mitchell, 2004), it would be expected that the loss of an advisor and transfer to a new advisor might bring similar feelings.

Although clear similarities exist between these two situations, there are also notable differences. After losing an advisor, the advisor may choose to maintain contact with the advisee in some cases, which would never be the case in a forced therapeutic termination. Another difference is the role that termination plays in both relationships. Termination is an expected part of the psychotherapy process (Holmes, 2010), which is not the case in the advisory relationship. Even after the advisory relationship ends as expected (i.e., when the advisee graduates), the relationship is not always terminated and instead often switches to a more collegial one. Although the advisor-advisee relationship may no longer exist, there may still be contact in which the individuals see each other at conferences, collaborate on research, or maintain some type of professional contact. Therefore, termination is not something thought of as a typical or expected part of the advising relationship as it is in the therapeutic relationship. Although the similarities between forced therapeutic termination and advisor loss should not be overstated, the research on therapist-initiated forced termination may be important to consider when examining how advisor loss may influence advisees.

## The Current Study

**A qualitative approach.** Although attachment theory provides a lens for addressing questions of loss, there is still much about the unique experience of advisor loss that is unknown. To the author’s knowledge, no research has examined this occurrence in counseling psychology or any other field of study. The current study aimed to fill the gap in the literature by being the first study to explore advisees' experience of advisor loss during graduate training in counseling psychology. In doing so, the present study utilized a qualitative approach. A qualitative methodology was deemed to be most appropriate given that no research had previously been conducted on this topic. Hoyt and Bhati (2007) noted that qualitative methods might be relevant to the study of rarely researched populations or areas. Similarly, Hill et al. (1997) identified qualitative approaches as useful for conducting research in an area that has not yet been explored.

The event of advisor loss is a relatively low frequency event that has unique elements for each individual advisee. Given that the focus of inquiry in qualitative research is on the rich and unique experiences of a small number of individuals, this idiographic approach seemed like the best way to attain a deep understanding of the advisees interviewed as part of the study. In contrast, the nomothetic focus of quantitative research was a less appropriate fit, as this methodology places greater salience on participants' representativeness of a given population than on participants' unique experiences (Hoyt & Bhati, 2007). Further, qualitative methodologies do not begin with predetermined hypotheses, thereby allowing researchers to be more open to discover concepts and relationships among the constructs (Hill et al., 1997). This is helpful in developing a deep and rich understanding of the data without limiting responses. Such a methodology enables themes to emerge from the data and for these themes to evolve throughout the data collection procedure (Hill et al., 1997). This allows for theory to be built from the data instead of using theory to test predetermined hypotheses. Finally, the current study explored the personal meaning advisees associated with the loss of their doctoral advisor. Hoshmand (1989) postulated that quantitative methods are not as suitable for studying some areas of human experience, such as personal meaning associated with certain life events. Thus, the aims and purpose of the current study better align with a qualitative methodology.

**Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).** The qualitative method of Consensual Qualitative Research, or CQR (Hill et al., 1997), fits with the purpose and goals of the present study. CQR is an inductive method that utilizes an open-ended interview approach. Multiple researchers are used and importance is placed on reaching consensus among the researchers. A considerable strength of the CQR method is that it involves explicit instructions on how to easily learn, use, and replicate the methodology (Hill et al., 1997). This emphasis on reaching consensus and ensuring replicability increases the trustworthiness of the research (Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research also emphasizes the importance of participants as the experts on their own experience. This is important in considering the topic of the current study and the unique and often sensitive experiences and emotions that may be involved in losing an advisor.

The CQR method (Hill et al., 1997) not only considers the unique experience of each case, but also looks for representativeness across cases. The categorization of themes based on frequency is a unique element of the CQR method, as other qualitative methods do not provide this information. This permits a range of themes, extending from common to idiosyncratic, to emerge. CQR balances nomothetic and ideographic approaches. Nomothetic approaches, which have their roots in postpositivism, are interested in common themes across individuals. Such approaches place importance on trustworthiness and rigor in seeking to predict and explain phenomenon. On the contrary, ideographic approaches place great importance on understanding the complex and unique experiences of the individual (Ponterotto, 2005). With multiple researchers, the use of an auditor, and a replicable method, CQR emphasizes trustworthiness and has elements of a nomothetic approach. Yet, the focus on obtaining an in-depth view of each participant's experience gives CQR elements of an ideographic approach as well. Thus, CQR takes elements from both approaches and provides a nice balance between the two.

Just as it is important to consider *why* CQR was chosen for use in the current study, it is also important to consider why other qualitative methodologies were *not* chosen. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is a method that is similar to CQR in its iterative approach, in which comparisons are made across data and categories until a core idea is created. Yet, the focus of grounded theory is on the development of new theories. The focus of the present study is not on the development of a new theory, but rather on a rich description of the phenomenon being explored. In addition, grounded theory presents findings as a hierarchical theory of one core category, whereas CQR describes findings across domains in a non-sequential way. This is more appropriate given that the aim of the present research is to describe advisor loss and the complex experiences associated with it.

As opposed to grounded theory, the phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 1970) is more focused on gaining an in-depth idiographic view, focusing solely on individual experiences instead of looking at broader themes. Although understanding individual experiences is important in the present study, broader themes characterizing the experience of advisor loss are as of much interest as are more unique participant experiences. The creators of the phenomenological approach thought that the creation of clearly defined steps would limit the creativity of the researcher (Burns & Grove, 1988, p. 82). Therefore, this method has steps that are less defined and less structured than is the case in the CQR approach, making results more up to the researcher's interpretation and subsequently more difficult to replicate.

In sum, CQR provides for a balanced approach between a purely nomothetic approach and a purely ideographic approach. As opposed to the grounded theory approach (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967) that focuses on building theory from general overarching themes, or the phenomenological approach (Giorgi, 1970) that places priority on unique individual phenomena, CQR is a perfect "middle ground." The CQR methodology aims to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's individual experience while simultaneously assessing common themes across participants (Hill et al., 2005).

**Purpose of the current study.** The current study aimed to investigate the experience of advisees who have dealt with the loss of an advisor during graduate training. Bowlby (1980) highlighted multiple factors that may contribute to prolonged grief. Some of these factors seem relevant in better understanding advisees' experience of advisor loss, namely the presence of multiple stressors, a lack of social support, and a sudden and unexpected loss. Attachment style of the advisee is another factor that may also be linked to the experience of advisor loss. The advisory relationship has been identified as an attachment relationship in which the advisor serves a secure base function (Huber et al., 2010). With research linking advisee attachment and advisory alliance outcomes (Huber et al., 2010), as well as theory indicating that one's attachment style is related to the experience of loss (Bowlby, 1980), it seems that attachment style of the advisee should be considered in better understanding the experience of advisor loss.

There are also numerous practical implications that must be considered as a part of experiencing such a loss. Such implications include professional development concerns, a lack of comfort or belonging in the program, issues around finding a new advisor, issues related to fit with the new advisor, and practical program considerations (e.g., ensuring the completion of program requirements on time). The representational reorganization that is theorized to occur after the loss of an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1980, p 120) is also an important facet of this experience that must be explored. Understanding the reorganization that occurs after the loss of an advisor will help clarify how advisees reshape internal representational models of themselves, their original and new advisors, and their overall doctoral experience. This will also help clarify if the restructuring process involves the advisee taking on new roles or mastering new skills as a means to adjust. The loss of an advisor is unique and complex, as there may be a grief component in addition to multiple practical considerations that must be addressed so that the student's course in the program is not further disrupted. Although some of what the advisee experiences may mirror loss in other relationships, there is much that is unique about this occurrence. Therefore, the present study aimed to better understand some of these nuances and be the first study to explore how the loss of an advisor is experienced by an advisee during doctoral training. The experience of advisor loss was explored through the following research questions:

1. How do advisees experience advisor loss? In particular, what are the emotional experiences, cognitive experiences, and behavioral responses related to advisor loss?
2. Does the nature of the relationship with the original advisor and/or elements of the original advising relationship influence the experience of advisor loss?
    a. What were the tasks of advising with the original advisor?
    b. What was the interpersonal connection to the original advisor like?
    c. Was this relationship seen as positive or negative by the advisee?
3. How are key aspects of student life (e.g., overall experience in the doctoral program, research, feelings about the self, feelings about peers or faculty in the program, academic work, career-related and professional-development tasks) experienced in the face of advisor loss?

4. How do advisees readjust after experiencing the loss of their advisor?
    a. What is the experience of obtaining the new advisor and transitioning to working with this advisor like?
    b. What is the nature of the relationship with this new advisor?
    c. What factors (e.g. attachment style, support network, other identifiable stressors) make the experience of the loss either easier or more difficult for the advisee?

Chapter III

Method

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experience of advisor loss as perceived by doctoral trainees in counseling psychology. The following section highlights the use of this method in the present study, outlining the participants, measures, procedure, and analysis that were employed.

**Participants**

**Trainees.** A sample of 10 participants were recruited. This sample size followed the recommendation by Hill et al. (1997) that suggested approximately 8-15 participants. Participants were all counseling psychology doctoral trainees who were enrolled in a counseling psychology doctoral program accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA) at the time of participation. All participants were from traditional counseling psychology programs that utilized a scientist-practitioner model. No participants from Psy.D. programs were included in this study, as the component of advising was expected to be different in such programs. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 37 ($M$=28.9, $SD$ = 3.9). Nine out of the 10 participants identified their current gender identity as female, and one participant identified their current gender identity as male. Participant race/ethnicity was as follows: 30% White/European American, 10% Black/African American, 10% Latino(a)/Hispanic, 20% Asian/Pacific Islander, 10% Middle Eastern/Arabic, and 20% both Latino(a)/Hispanic and White/European American. Trainees ranged in their level of academic training from 1$^{st}$ year to 9$^{th}$ year in their respective programs ($M$= 4.0, $SD$ = 2.1), as well as in the semesters of clinical practicum training completed from 2 semesters to 14 semesters ($M$ = 6.8, $SD$ = 3.6). The length of time the trainee spent working with his or her “original advisor” prior to departure ranged as follows: 60% spent

6 months to 1 year working with the original advisor, 20% spent 1 year to 2 years, and 20% spent 2 years to 3 years.  At the time of the interview, the length of time it had been since the trainee's original advisor had left the program ranged, with 30% having left 6 month to 1 year prior, 30% leaving 1 to 2 years prior, 20% leaving 2 to 3 years prior, 10% leaving 3 years to 4 years prior, and 10% leaving more than 5 years prior.  When it came to assignment to the "new advisor," 9 out of 10 participants chose their new advisor and only 1 participant was assigned to their new advisor by program faculty.  The length of time the trainee had spent working with his or her new advisor at the time of participation ranged as follows: 50% were working 6 months to 1 year, 10% were working 1 year to 2 years, 20% were working 2 years to 3 years, 10% were working 3 years to 4 years, and 10% were working with their new advisor for more than 5 years.

To participate in the study, trainees must have experienced the loss of an advisor at some point during doctoral training.  This loss must have resulted from the advisor leaving the program (i.e., due to a job change, program closure or retirement).  For the purposes of the current study, advisor loss due to death was not included.  Advisees who experience advisor loss due to death may be greatly affected by the finality of this loss and experience a more profound sense of grief and mourning.  Therefore, this experience may be distinct from other circumstances of advisee loss and will therefore not be examined in the present study.  In addition, those who obtained a new advisor without the initial advisor leaving the program (i.e., due to a rupture or change in research interest) were not included.  Given the low-frequency nature of this event, no limitations were placed on participant's year in the doctoral program.  No two advisees with the same original advisor were interviewed.  If more than one advisee from a given advisor expressed interest in the study, the first individual to express interest was interviewed. Similarly, no two advisees who ended up with the same subsequent advisor were included in the present study. Each participant received a 20-dollar Amazon gift card as compensation for their interview to thank them for their time and contribution.

**Interviewer and judges.** The interviewer and principal investigator is a sixth-year doctoral student in a counseling psychology program. Only having one interviewer helped to ensure consistency across interviews (Hill et al., 1997). The research team was comprised of three doctoral students in counseling psychology, including the principal investigator, a White female, and two other doctoral students, a White female and South Asian Indian female who all served as judges. An Associate Professor who is a faculty member in counseling psychology with prior experience conducting the CQR protocol served as an auditor in the study. The auditor's role was to check consensus developed by the research team and ensure that all important data were considered. The use of an auditor allowed for the perspective of someone outside of the consensus process to manage any discrepancies that developed. The auditor also helped to ensure that the nature of the data was captured accurately (Hill et al., 1997).

As indicated by Hill et al. (1997), it is important for the research team to meet and discuss research expectations and biases prior to starting data analysis. This process is especially relevant, given that the interviewer and judges were all in the roles of doctoral trainees and advisees and the auditor was in the advising role. Therefore, it was necessary to have an open discussion about the researchers' experiences as advisees, impressions about the advising relationship, and potential biases in this area. Similar conversations took place throughout the data analysis period to ensure that the researchers remained aware of any potential biases that may arise.

One member of the research team had experienced the loss of an advisor early on in graduate training. Given her own experience of loss and the many challenges involved, she shared an expectation that the loss would be linked to detrimental effects on graduate training. More specifically, she expected that the loss would be linked to hindered research progress and belongingness in the program. Although the two other members of the research team had not experienced the loss of an advisor, they voiced a similar expectation that the loss would come with many challenges. Both shared the belief that the advising relationship is a critical component of graduate school and that the loss of an advisor could have a significant impact, which they expected to be largely negative. One judge shared a concern that not having had the experience of losing an advisor would serve as a barrier to understanding the participants' experiences. Yet, this judge also shared the magnitude that she perceived the loss of an advisor would have and thus expressed an ability to empathize with the challenges she perceived would be involved.

All three judges shared the belief that their own advising had somehow influenced their perceptions and beliefs about the advising relationship. One judge shared that her strong relationship with her advisor shaped how she thought advising "should" look. She explained that her advising relationship is "hands on" and based in a personal relationship and mentorship. She noted that this has influenced how she defines advising and what she thinks must be present for strong advising to occur. Another judge shared that her advisory relationship looked somewhat different, yet was also positive. She indicated a belief that one's expectations play a huge role in how the advisory relationship is perceived. This judge explained that she works better with greater independence and therefore did not require constant check-ins for her advising needs to be met. All three judges agreed that individual characteristics and expectations likely play a role in how the advising relationship looks and how satisfied the student is with the relationship. The judges all expressed a variation on the belief that good advising likely occurs when individual needs and expectations are met.

One judge mentioned that the tasks and focus of her own advising had shifted over time. She indicated that this shift occurred as her needs changed, with more meetings and contact with the advisor occurring during times of needs. The other two judges shared similar sentiments, indicating that their advising also looked different at different points through the program. One team member shared that although weekly advising meetings were helpful during her first year in the program, this was not something she desired in her current point in the program. Therefore, the judges shared a belief that advisees may experience advising and the loss of an advisor differently depending on their place within the program and their needs at that time.

Finally, one judge discussed her expectation that the participants' career goals would influence the advising needs and impact of the advisor loss. She shared the belief that losing an advisor would be more "earth shattering" for those who wanted to pursue a career in academia. This spoke to this judge's belief that advisor loss would particularly affect research and professional development. The judge that had experienced loss of her advisor shared that she felt a strong impact of the loss despite her aspirations to be a clinician.

In sum, all three judges shared a belief that the advisor loss would have negative effects on graduate training. All three discussed the biases they held about advising and how they were related to their own advising experiences and resulting expectations of what advising "should" look like. All three judges also expressed a belief that the students' expectations, current needs, personal characteristics, and year in program were factors they expected to affect the experience of the loss.

**Measures**

**Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).** The ECR is a measure comprised of 36 items that are rated on a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (*Strongly Disagree)* to 7 (*Strongly Agree).* It is made up of two subscales, Anxiety and Avoidance, with higher scores on both subscales indicated higher levels of attachment avoidance or attachment anxiety. Given the sensitive nature of the relationship being studied, the current study utilized an adapted version of the ECR, in which the instructions were changed slightly to ask participants to think about an "important interpersonal relationship" instead of a "romantic relationship." This change prevented any confusion or concern that the present research is looking at any type of romantic relationship between advisors and advisees. Cassidy, Woodhouse, Sherman, Stupica, and Lejuez (2011) found that both the attachment anxiety subscale (18 items; $\alpha = .92$) and the attachment avoidance subscale (18 items; $\alpha = .86$) demonstrated high internal consistency and good validity. The ECR was completed by advisees right before they completed the demographic form and prior to their interview. Although this measure was not wrapped into the analyses, results helped to provide context and elucidate personality factors that might be linked to the experience of advisor loss. In the present study, high internal consistency was found for both the attachment anxiety subscale ($\alpha = .91$) and the attachment avoidance subscale ($\alpha = .88$).

**Demographic form.** A brief demographic form asked about participants' age, sex, gender identity, race/ ethnicity, sexual orientation, and current year in doctoral program. The form also inquired about assignment to the original advisor and new advisor (i.e., *chosen by you* or *chosen by the program*), time spent working with the original advisor and new advisor, and year in program when the original advisor left. Participants were also asked about the gender, race/ethnicity, and approximate age of their original advisor and new advisor. The last question requested participants' contact information so that they could be contacted for participation in the interview.

**Interview protocol.** A structured interview protocol was utilized in the study (Hill et al., 1997). This protocol included scripted questions as well as suggested probes. The suggested probes that were included in the protocol enabled the interviewer to gain additional information and explore supplementary areas based on the participants' responses. The goal of this protocol was to allow for a robust exploration and in-depth understanding of the participants' experience of advisor loss, as well as an understanding of the general domains that arose across participants' experiences.

The questions included in the interview focused on the following areas: (a) background information (e.g., program requirements completed); (b) relationship with original advisor prior to the loss (e.g., tasks and activities of advising, interpersonal connection to the advisor); (c) the experience of finding out the advisor was leaving (e.g., initial thoughts, feelings, and behaviors); (d) the experience after the advisor left the program (e.g., response by peers and program faculty); (e) the process of obtaining a new advisor (e.g., positive and challenging aspects of this transition); (f) relationship with the new advisor (e.g., tasks and activities of advising, interpersonal connection to the advisor); (g) current relationship with the original advisor (e.g., frequency and nature of contact with the original advisor); (h) Perceived changes related to the loss (e.g. changes in research and academic work); and (i) General thoughts about the advising relationship (e.g. perceived importance of this relationship). Such questions helped to ensure a thorough understanding of the loss and the area(s) perceived to be affected by the advisee. Pending the nature of responses, the researcher asked follow-up questions to probe deeper into each advisee's experience. For example, if the participant had many logistical issues arise connected to the loss, further questions were asked to assess the nature of these issues and how the individual experienced them. Similarly, if logistical concerns seemed less relevant than the participant's emotional experience, the researcher spent more time following-up regarding the emotional experience of the participant. The current study used only one interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length. The majority of past studies that used the CQR method only included one interview. Additionally, Hill et al. (2005) found that when they were used, second interviews were less productive than expected.

**Procedures**

**Recruitment.** Listservs were utilized to send recruitment emails to training directors of counseling psychology doctoral programs. A copy of this recruitment email is found in Appendix A. Training directors were asked to forward the email to all doctoral students. The recruitment email included a brief letter explaining the purpose of the research and the eligibility requirements for participation (Appendix B). Those receiving the email were encouraged to forward the invitation to any known individuals who meet the criteria.

If the individual met the inclusion criteria, he or she was given the option to opt into the study via an attached link at the end of the letter. In clicking on the link, participants were first asked to complete an informed consent form (Appendix C). The consent form explained what participation entailed. More specifically, trainees were given information on the one-hour audio-recorded Skype interview in which they would be asked questions about their experience of advisor loss. If the participant indicated intended participation via the informed consent form, he or she would then be directed to complete the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) and a brief demographic form. The ECR was completed first, prior to the demographic form and the interview. This was done to ensure that advisee ratings of their own interpersonal tendencies would not affect responses or prime the participant in any way. Finally, the trainee was prompted to provide contact information. If the participant was deemed an adequate fit for the study, he or she was contacted by the principal researcher to schedule an interview.

**Interviews.** Interviews were conducted via Skype and, after obtaining oral confirmation of consent from the student to record, were recorded using an audio-recording program. This method allowed for interviewing nationally, not limiting participation to programs within close proximity to the principle investigator. Participants were reminded about the protections in place to safeguard their confidentiality and the confidentiality of their responses during the interview. In particular, participants were informed about the efforts to disguise their identity in any future reports, as well as the opportunity to review the written material prior to any subsequent professional presentation or publication.

The researcher contacted the participant for the interview on the mutually agreed upon day and time. Before beginning, the interviewer reiterated the informed consent form that was previously signed by the trainee. The interviewer also mentioned the purpose of the interview, emphasized confidentiality of the study, and clarified that the interview was going to be audio-recorded. At this time, the interview terminology (i.e., *original advisor, new advisor,* and *interim advisor)* that was used throughout the interview was thoroughly explained to the participant. The terminology is as follows: (a) *original advisor,* the advisor that the advisee was matched with (either upon entrance into the program, or subsequently) that has since left the program; (b) *new advisor*, the advisor that the advisee is presently working with who was chosen or assigned after the loss of the original advisor; (c) *interim advisor*, any advisor that was chosen or assigned after the loss of the original advisor but before placement with the *new advisor.* If an advisee had more than one interim advisor, they were seriated based on chronology (e.g., interim1, interim 2, etc.). Such terminology was utilized for the sake of clarity throughout each interview and for consistency across interviews. These codes were also utilized to de-identify the data and ensure confidentiality of all individuals at the completion of data collection. Care was taken to ensure that the identity of the participants cannot be inferred from details provided (e.g., a specific number of interim advisors).

The interviewer then utilized the interview protocol to explore the trainee's experience of advisor loss. Once the interview was completed, the interviewer noted the length of the session. In addition, the interviewer recorded impressions of the interviewee and wrote down a few general notes about the interview. Hill et al. (1997) recommends this method to ensure a sense of context in later analysis.

**Transcription.** The interviewer transcribed the audio recordings for each interview verbatim. To protect confidentiality, each participant's name was deleted and replaced with a unique code number prior to analysis. Any identifying information (e.g., the institution's name, identifying circumstances of advisor loss, specific research areas) was removed from each interview transcript. In addition, the advisors' names were also de-identified and replaced with the appropriate code (i.e., *original advisor, new advisor,* or *interim advisor)*. This was done prior to any other member of the research team seeing any of the interview protocols.

**Data Analysis**

As mentioned previously, the CQR method (Hill et al., 1997, Hill et al., 2005) was used to analyze the data. This process involved three primary steps: (1) domains were identified; (2) core ideas were constructed; (3) cross-analysis was completed. This process was completed with the goal of reaching consensus among the research team regarding how the data were grouped together and understood. For each case, domains and core ideas were identified before examination of the subsequent case began. Only after step one and step two were complete was the next case assessed.

**Domains.** Following the protocol indicated by Hill et al. (1997, 2005), a list of domains was developed. These domains, or topics used to cluster the data into related topics, were developed through a consideration of preexisting literature. The interview protocol was also used to help create the domains, in which similar questions were grouped together.

Once a set list of domains was created, each individual transcript was divided up into smaller blocks to be analyzed. These blocks ranged from a short phrase to a cluster of sentences all related to the same topic, depending on the text being analyzed at that time. Each member of the research team worked independently to code each block within the transcript, assigning the block to one of the domains. The name of the assigned domain was written next to the relevant block of the transcription. All data from each interview was fit into at least one domain, and one block could be assigned to multiple domains. The research team then came together to discuss the assigned domains and to explore any disagreements that existed across the judges. Disagreements were explored and discussed further until consensus could be reached.

**Core ideas.** Each member of the research team then independently read the raw data for each domain in each individual transcript. A core idea that summarized the domain was created for each case. This step involved an editing process in which the participant's exact words were made more brief and clear. Once this process was completed, a team meeting was held to discuss the core ideas identified. The goal of this meeting was to again reach a consensus in core ideas, discussing any areas of disagreement until a consensus was met. At this stage, the auditor reviewed the agreed-upon domains and core ideas to ensure accurate content and wording.

Feedback given by the auditor was then discussed, with recommendations accepted or rejected based on consensus by all three members of the research team. Based on the auditor's feedback, the original list of eight domains was modified and collapsed into the final list of seven domains. The original *changes related to advisor loss* domain was removed and the data included in this domain was placed into other domains. This shift restructured and reorganized the data in terms of adaptive and maladaptive responses to the loss. This was done to create more helpful feedback for students and advisors who may experience advisor loss.

**Cross-Analysis.** Once domains and core ideas had been developed for each individual case, analysis occurred across all the cases. This is the point in which the data were analyzed and compared across participants to look for common categories. For each domain, every member of the research team recorded and examined the core ideas across all the cases at one time. These core ideas were copied onto a new spreadsheet, and categories were then developed based on the core ideas over all the cases. After the initial categories were created, the research team came together and examined the core ideas within each category. Following the recommendations of Hill (2012), subcategories were created to more fully describe the data within the study's large domains. Together, the research team determined which categories were too broad and could be broken down further into additional categories, as opposed to those categories that seemed to be coherent despite also potentially including subcategories. To create subcategories, team members independently grouped core ideas to meaningfully break the data into potential subgroupings. The research team then met again to discuss and come to consensus on the category and subcategory titles and the core ideas within each. Although a large amount of data was included in the robust categories, the use of subcategories helped to give a clearer picture of how the data within each category was broken down. The team then reviewed each interview to ensure that all the data fit into one of the categories. The auditor provided feedback and suggestions on these categories and subcategories, and the team met once again to come to consensus on these recommendations. Finally, frequency codes were assigned to categories and subcategories to help clarify the occurrence of categories across the data. As suggested by Hill et al. (2005), *general* is used to describe results applicable to all or all but one case, *typical* is used to describe results that apply to more than half of the cases up to the *general* cutoff, and *variant* is used to describe results that apply to at least two cases up to the *typical* cutoff (p. 201). Hill et al. (1997) initially suggested a stability check as part of the CQR method. Such a check typically includes holding back two cases from the cross-analysis and then checking whether the data from these cases fits into the developed categories. Yet, because newer research by Hill et al. (2005) deemed this to be unnecessary, no stability check was utilized in the current study. Yet despite the lack of a stability check, it was still important to ensure data saturation. Williams and Morrow (2009) recommended the use of theoretical saturation to establish trustworthiness of the data. The researchers indicated that this occurs when the researcher feels "empirically confident in the findings" (p.65) and sees no new data emerging. Upon review of the 10 participants, no new information and no new themes were emerging from the data. Although unique experiences were inherent in participants' accounts of the loss, overarching similarities and repetition were seen. Thus, data saturation was assumed.

As a means to increase trustworthiness of the data (Morrow, 2005), a draft of the final results will be sent to each participant to review and provide suggestions and comments to the research team. Based on recommendations by Hill et al. (2005), the current study will also provide the final article to participants. Providing this article is a means to include the participants, thank them for their participation, and provide them with the findings of the study.

# Chapter IV

## Results

The following section will provide domains and categories that emerged from the data. Table 1 provides information regarding domains, categories, subcategories, and frequencies. The seven domains that emerged include: (1) relationship with original advisor prior to departure; (2) experience of advisor loss; (3) responses to advisor loss (self and others); (4) transition to new advisor; (5) relationship with new advisor; (6) current relationship with original advisor; and (7) views of advising relationship. Results from each domain will be discussed, particularly related to the research questions that each domain addresses. Hill (2012) speaks to the challenge involved in determining which results to report. She indicated that questions or data that relate less to the research question and questions that may have been used as "warm-up questions" during the interview may be excluded from the report. Therefore, the author chose to exclude some basic demographic questions asked about the original advisor (i.e., match to original advisor, meeting frequency with original and new advisor). These questions were initially included to address the research question; *does the nature of the relationship with the original advisor and/or elements of the original advising relationship influence the experience of advisor loss.* Yet, it seems that such information did not provide useful insight into this research question and instead served as a "warm-up" during the interviews. Therefore, this information is excluded to ensure concise data that directly connects to the research questions presented by the present study.

As suggested by Hill (2005), the following section will describe, in narrative form, the results from general and typical categories, providing quotes to illustrate such categories. To protect confidentiality of participants in the study, any gendered pronouns have been replaced with “original advisor,” “new advisor,” or “he or she.” To protect participants’ confidentiality, no demographic information or case numbers are given along with exemplars to indicate from which participant the exemplar was derived. Instead, the number of exemplars provided by each participant is provided to demonstrate how participants were represented throughout the results. Participants 2, 3, and 7 all provided six quotations presented in the results section. Participants 1, 5, and 9 provided five quotations and participants 4 and 10 provided four quotations. Participant 8 provided three quotations and participant 6 provided two. Therefore, although there is some variability in how many times each participant is quoted, all 10 participants are represented within the results.

All the data, including those found to be in the *variant* and *rare* categories, are depicted in Tables 1-7. In the current study, categories are described as *general* if they apply to nine or ten cases, *typical* if they apply to six to eight cases, *variant* if they apply to two to five cases, and *rare* if they only apply to one case (p. 201). In some cases, categories that are classified as *variant* or *rare* are described in detail in the text below to illuminate unique, but potentially interesting, aspects of the advisor loss experience.

**Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR)**

The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR) was given to participants prior to the interview. Results of this measure will be used to help examine whether attachment style of the participant is linked to the way in which meaning is made when one loses one advisor, as well as how one copes with such a loss. This will be addressed further in the discussion section in addressing the research questions posed by the current study.

Participant scores on attachment anxiety ($M$ = 3.23, $SD$ = .97) and attachment avoidance ($M$ = 2.43, $SD$ = .67) were comparable to scores of non-help seeking volunteer clients in both attachment anxiety (*M* = 3.45, *SD* = 1.07) and attachment avoidance (*M* = 2.62, *SD* = 1.18) (Romano, Fitzpatrick, & Janzen, 2008), as well as to a sample of non-help seeking college students at a large Midwestern university in both attachment anxiety (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = 1.05) and attachment avoidance (*M* = 2.37, *SD* = .94). Therefore, these averages will be used as a reference at times in the discussion session in considering which participants have higher levels of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance and how this may be related to their experience of the loss.

**Domain 1: Relationship with Original Advisor Prior to Departure**

This domain reflects the relationship between participants and their original advisors prior to the news of the advisor's departure. Of the 15 categories in this domain, one general, six typical, seven variant, and one rare category emerged (Table 1). Of the eight sub-categories in this domain, two were typical and six were variant.

Regarding tasks being completed by the advisory dyad, participants were generally involved with their original advisor's research and were only variantly engaged in their own research projects. One participant touched on both types of tasks in stating:

> I was working on my master's thesis. But I still asked my original advisor if I could help with research so I still helped my original advisor in collecting data, reaching out to people via social media, and emailing and stuff like that.

Participants also spoke of successful guidance by original advisor (typical), as well as unsuccessful guidance by original advisor (typical). In describing successful guidance by original advisor, it was variant for participants to describe the way in which the original advisor helped to explain the nuances of research. One participant elaborated on this further:

> I think most prominent was my original advisor's knowledge of my research area, so my

> original advisor was able to help, either to help me find relevant literature that I needed or ways to think about methodology. Or with the population, my original advisor knows a lot of the previous and current research dealing with them. So having an idea of what has been done, what would be novel for me to do as a project that would help me get it published, where to publish it, how to write it to get it published in a particular journal or type of journal.

In describing unsuccessful guidance by the original advisor, it was typical for participants to describe the original advisor providing too much or too little direction. One participant described what it was like to feel that there was too little direction provided towards his or her own research interests:

> I can't blame my original advisor for this, but I definitely wish I had been more focused on my own research and on my own interests. Because whereas I was very, very busy, I was doing things that just benefited my original advisor and did not specifically benefit me as a graduate student. So it would have been nice if my original advisor had a little bit more focus on me.

It is of note that only two of the eight participants who identified the original advisor as providing successful guidance did not also identify unsuccessful guidance by the original advisor. Similarly, of the eight participants who identified the original advisor as providing unsuccessful guidance, only two did not also identify successful ways in which the original advisor also guided them. Therefore, the majority of participants (i.e., six advisees) identified both successful and unsuccessful elements of their original advisor's guidance. This speaks to the often complex and multidimensional nature of the advisory relationship and the guidance that may be provided by a doctoral advisor. This theme is one that continues to emerge in the data and indicates the many layers that are involved in the dynamics between trainees and their advisors.

It was typical for participants to describe a positive interpersonal relationship with the original advisor. One participant spoke specifically about the trust that was built with the original advisor and stated, “It was just that we trusted each other. Like we’ll have ruptures from time to time but we will always come back together and make it work.” In contrast, participants variantly described a mixed interpersonal relationship with the original advisor, in which both positive and negative interpersonal aspects were discussed. Eight out of the ten participants described similarities in research interests (general), which is probably related to the fact that all but one participant came into the program having chosen his or her original advisor based on a perceived research match. Participants typically spoke of similar overarching research topics with some nuanced differences (e.g., different population being studied). One participant explained:

> My original advisor does research on this (specific topic), which is the research I like to do. My original advisor also does a certain methodology and when I first started with him or her, we looked at this one specific area. The overarching population that we work with is the same but my original advisor likes to work more specifically with certain processes within that population and I look at a different subset within that population. And that’s a part of my research that my original advisor can’t necessarily guide me too much on, because he or she doesn’t know a lot of the literature on that subset of the population that I tend to focus on that is in conjunction with the greater population. So that is our divide. I’m much more specific into a certain sub community within this community.

In regard to style of conducting work, five participants noted similarities in style of conducting work (variant), whereas five other participants noted no similarities in style of conducting work (variant). One student spoke to the differences between his or her style of conducting work and the original advisor's style, yet noted the positives that came from those differences:

> My original advisor was very relaxed and just like, "Oh, we have time." But I'm like, "My thesis is due in two years, I have to have it finished by the end of the semester," kind of thing. So we were different in that aspect. But I also think that it helped me. So I think we were different and that was frustrating sometimes because I wanted to do more, have more deadlines, things like that, but it also kind of helped me relax into the program so that I didn't burn out my first year.

Overall, participants typically described a positive overall experience with the original advisor, as a negative overall experience was rare and a neutral overall experience was variant. Therefore, despite typical unsuccessful original advisor guidance and variant differences in work style, eight participants still described their overall experience with their original advisor in a positive light. One participant spoke specifically about the original advisor's ability to repair ruptures in helping to create a positive relationship:

> There are some ruptures, we are not always going to get along. But at the end of the day we fix our ruptures or we repair them or we'll talk it out or we just move on. But overall I feel like it was an incredibly positive relationship. I guess the best way to describe it was that there wasn't a single day when I was my original advisor's advisee that I wished I wasn't his or her advisee.

Although this domain was particularly looking at the overall experience with the original advisor during the time of that relationship, two participants specifically discussed the shift in how this relationship was perceived. Both participants specifically mentioned a positive view of the original advisor relationship in the past (i.e., when working with the original advisor), and then discussed a shift in how this relationship was viewed (i.e., at the time of the interview). Both of these participants described the hindsight and resulting realization that their advisory relationships may not have been as positive as they had perceived them to be at the time.

Although five participants identified their original advisor as a mentor to them (typical), five other participants identified that their advisor did not serve as a mentor (variant). Therefore, although eight total participants identified the relationship with the original advisor as positive, only five of those participants identified the relationship as one that involved mentorship. Four participants who identified the original advisory relationship as positive did not also identify their advisor as a mentor. This aligns with the research that draws a distinct difference between advising and mentoring (Schlosser et al., 2003). One participant spoke to this distinction in explaining why his or her original advisor did not fulfill the role of mentor:

> No, I don't think so. More of the advising for sure. I mean I think that professional development piece was kind of the key. I don't mean this to come across probably as negatively as it will sound, but I think we did a lot more to develop my original advisor professionally than was done to develop us professionally, or me specifically.

In contrast, the five participants who identified their original advisor as a mentor mentioned the guidance received, egalitarian nature of the relationship, and genuine interest the original advisor took in their professional development and growth as both a student and as an individual. One participant spoke more in-depth about the qualities that helped classify the original advisor as a mentor:

> My original advisor was always very interested in what was going on with me and how I was navigating the beginning of the program and what my future goals were. My original advisor was really supportive of me pursuing a different interest than a lot of people in my program do, so I think my original advisor was actually a pretty good mentor.

Interestingly, one participant who identified the relationship with the original advisor as negative simultaneously identified the original advisor as a mentor. This individual spoke about the ways in which he or she appreciated the original advisor as an individual and felt the original advisor was concerned about his or her professional development and growth as a psychologist. Yet, in speaking about the advising aspects of the relationship, the participant described the ways in which the original advisor did not fill the advising function; "my original advisor didn't really do too much advising."

**Domain 2: Experience of Advisor Loss**

This domain is the first to examine the experience of the advisor loss. This includes questions related to the situational factors involved in the loss, as well as the advisees' reactions. Of the 12 categories included in this domain, three were general, three were typical, four were variant, and two were rare (Table 2). Of the 16 sub-categories included in this domain, two were general, one was typical, 11 were variant, and two were rare.

Interestingly, all ten participants indicated that the loss occurred during their first or second year in their program. When asked how they were informed about the loss of their original advisor, participants typically were informed by the original advisor. Yet, how this was done varied between original advisors, ranging from individual meetings to informal text messages and emails. One participant described being informed via email; "Yeah, I think my original advisor emailed me saying, "I'm out" and that was it." Yet, although it was typical for original advisors to inform their advisees themselves, participants generally felt that they did not receive enough notice of the news of their advisor leaving. One participant spoke to the "quick" nature of this transition:

> It was kind of really quick. I mean every university does it differently but you should know by like, March or April. But my original advisor didn't know until later so he or she had a month to get there and kind of start everything. So it was pretty quick.

Typically, the original advisor's reason for departure was due to an offer at a new institution. In discussing this further, participants often spoke to the increase in prestige or increase in pay that came with the new job offer. One participant explained:

> My original advisor got an offer at another institution. They just gave my original advisor a much better, more lucrative opportunity and better in terms of professional development. You know, I didn't ever think it was personal but it definitely did obviously stress me out.

Although variant, it is of note that four participants specifically spoke to department politics or multicultural concerns factoring into the original advisor's decision to leave the home institution. Participants spoke to complex programmatic dynamics that often increased the original advisor's unhappiness and led to the original advisor seeking out new positions.

It is important to remember that the situations leading up to the loss are presented by the participant and are therefore seen through the lens of a student. Given the participants' roles as students, it is plausible that they were not aware of certain factors that may have influenced their advisor's departure from the program. In addition, it is also interesting to consider the nature and extent of information provided to students throughout the loss. The maintenance of or lack of boundaries within the advisory relationship was mentioned numerous times by various participants. One participant's comments raise the question of boundaries and the extent of the information that original advisors provided to participants regarding why they were leaving:

> I was so naïve. At the time, I felt like my original advisor was a victim and all the faculty had all these flaws, like they were against him or her. You think of a hyena pouncing on a rabbit; that's the image I get. And my original advisor told me negative flaws about every faculty member who I hadn't even met, most of them. I hadn't even met them, I hadn't taken classes from them. So my original advisor really got into my mind that these people were out to get him or her.

When it comes to moving to the new institution with the original advisor, participants were variantly given the option to move. Variant reasons for not going with their original advisors included issues of fit with the new program, as well as personal or financial reasons. One student touched on these reasons in explaining why he or she did not go with the original advisor to the new institution:

> I guess I never considered going with my original advisor because my life had started at my program and I had a really good friendship base and I really enjoyed my program. And my original advisor was going to a school that wasn't as good, not as prestigious of a program.

When considering reactions that participants had when being informed that their advisor would be leaving the program, advisees generally spoke about thoughts and feelings they had during this time, and typically spoke about behaviors. In terms of thoughts that were experienced by participants, nine out of ten (general) thought about their future in the program. It was typical for participants to feel anxiety in hearing the news of their original advisor's upcoming departure. Behaviors that participants mentioned included planning for next steps (variant), seeking advisor support (variant), and advocating for his or her advisor (rare). The following participant response helps to illustrate some of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that were experienced during this time:

> I immediately was thinking, who would I go to next. I didn't want to be displaced, I didn't want to be put in a lab I didn't like. There was definitely a feeling of lack of control and having to strategize and make sure I acted quickly. So stress and anxiety was probably self-induced. We didn't hear from our program and our advisor certainly didn't put pressure on us to decide anything quickly, but I definitely felt like, "I need to make a decision in order to make sure I don't regret my next three years of my time here" or whatever. And there is no real structure to this process, like there was no step two after my original advisor decided to leave that I knew I had to follow, so I felt very much like, it's a free-fall. And the way that I react to anxiety is planning and preparation, trying to get ahead of whatever.

Although most of the thoughts and feelings that participants described were negative (e.g., angry, hurt), a few participants (variant) mentioned feeling relieved in hearing that their advisor would be leaving:

> I was also somewhat relieved because of the struggle that I had had throughout the year with trying to get my original advisor to talk to me more and meet with me more and get more guidance. So I had also been like, "well, that kind of helps, I don't have to decide now if I stay with you or not."

It was variant for the participants to comment on changes in their advisor's behavior or in their advisory relationship after they were informed their advisor would be leaving. Three participants described the way in which their advisors became more distant, whereas two other participants described the ways in which their advisors became more open. One participant spoke to an increasing distance from his or her advisor:

> My original advisor became more distant. And I don't know how much of that distance is due to my original advisor being overwhelmed with all the logistics of negotiation and moving and grieving process for him or her, and how much of that is pure conflict avoidance because my original advisor is highly conflict avoidant.

**Domain 3: Responses to Advisor Loss (Self and Others)**

The previous domain explored the participant's experience of finding out the original advisor was leaving and the immediate reactions (e.g., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) that were experienced. Domain 3 focuses on later responses to the loss, particularly the ways in which advisees utilized adaptive coping mechanisms and/or maladaptive coping mechanisms to manage this experience. Coping with the loss became a prominent theme throughout the interviews and seemed to be particularly relevant in how advisees dealt with and made meaning of the experience. This domain included eight categories, one of which was general, four that were typical, and three that were variant. Of the 22 sub-categories, one was general, three were typical, 16 were variant, and two were rare. Further information on the variant and rare categories and sub-categories can be found in Table 3.

In first exploring adaptive responses to the participant's experience of advisor loss, it was general for the participants to describe "adaptive self-responses" to the loss. The term "self-response" was used to describe how the participant personally reacted and responded to the loss. This included changes in the view of self, engagement in self-care, and adjustments in how the program was navigated. More specifically, advisees generally discussed engagement in self-care activities (i.e., actions initiated by the individual to support positive coping). Participants variantly sought support from those within the program (e.g., peers, faculty) and typically sought support from those outside of the program (e.g., parents, friends). One participant touched upon the ways in which he or she sought out support during this time:

> I did talk to friends outside the program. I actually reached out to some of my old colleagues because I was like, "okay is this just a sign that grad school is not working out, should I just leave the program completely?" So yeah, talking to friends and I think just kind of giving myself time to process it in addition to everything that was going on with the end of semester. It's just a crazy and busy time so just dealing with this whirlwind. My original advisor's students—we did a lot to support each other and kind of check in on each other. Again, we were all kind of at different points, but just making sure we were doing okay. Just tried to give myself the grace to know that I wasn't going to be as productive and with some things, just trying to get them done versus be outstanding at it.

Other adaptive responses involved participants navigating the research process more effectively and/or more efficiently (variant) and participants seeking out their own professional development opportunities and/or exploring a new career path (variant). When speaking of this, participants addressed the tendency to contribute to the original advisor's research and the ways in which this could limit their own research interests and professional identity from developing:

> I'm finally starting to focus on what I really want to be doing. And that that will continue. I still feel like with my original advisor, it would have always been a push-pull between what I wanted to do and what he or she wanted me to do. So I feel like I will get to make a name for myself in the area that I truly want, and also that I'll get to do the type

of research I want.

It was typical for participants to identify helpful peer responses. One participant spoke to this further, stating, "So I think people from my lab, we tried to support each other because we are all sort of panicking and wondering what we are going to do."

Unfortunately, helpful faculty or programmatic responses were only variantly reported by three participants. Even further, unhelpful faculty responses were typical. This is somewhat striking, as other helpful and unhelpful pairs (e.g., adaptive self-response/maladaptive self-response) were more closely matched in frequency. For example, it was general for participants to report both an adaptive self-response and a maladaptive self-response. The unhelpful faculty responses described included the faculty's failure to respond to the situation and advisee needs that arose due to the loss of the advisor (typical) and participants seeing faculty in a less positive light because of how the advisor loss was handled within the program (typical). One participant who spoke about faculty's failure to respond discussed the fact that out of all the faculty in his or her program, only one took the time to check-in on how he or she was handling the loss:

> I think only one faculty member asked me how I was doing with it. Yep, only one. And I wrote this faculty a handwritten thank you card. Nobody reached out to me all summer. Only one faculty asked me, "how are you doing with your advisor leaving," and I almost started crying because nobody had asked me. And I was just like, "Oh, I'm okay." It just kind of hit me that no one had asked me and so I even wrote the handwritten thank you card. It meant so much to me and I didn't realize that nobody had asked me or that maybe that should have been a thing, like people should have reached out to see if I was doing okay. I'm a super upbeat person, so I think everyone thinks like, "Oh, he or she will be fine, he or she is fine" and didn't really try. So, yeah, the answer to that is

> nobody, no one.

One participant commented, “To be honest overall I did not feel very supported. I felt very alone. I kind of had to find and fend for myself to find somebody else to work with.” Another participant commented on how he or she came to view the faculty in a less positive light after the loss occurred:

> I view faculty differently, definitely. I think I’ve seen a lot more of the politics. And I was hurt that no one reached out to me aside from the one professor. So yeah, I think I’m like a free bird, I just kind of float everywhere and make connections where I can type of thing, which is not typically how I am. But I think I’ve learned I have to be that way and I view faculty very differently I think. One, for not feeling supported, but also seeing some more of the politics and stuff.

It was variant for participants to report an unhelpful peer response. One participant described the way in which the loss fractured the sense of cohesiveness and community among peers in the program:

> The cohesiveness of our program definitely started falling apart during that summer because the people who were affected really stayed to ourselves, we didn’t really process much with each other. And then peers on the outside wanted to give us space so they didn’t really interact with us or help us process either. So everyone was just in their own little universe by themselves, universe of grief by themselves, without a lot of external support. So unless you consciously and purposefully reached out to other people, you’re not going to get it.

It was typical for participants to identify maladaptive self-responses. Such self-responses included a hindered view of self (variant), navigating the research process or program less effectively (variant), less exposure to professional development opportunities (variant), negative mental health outcomes (variant), and/or no self-care (rare). One participant spoke to this type of maladaptive self-response further in how it hindered his or her view of self:

> I think it made me doubt myself a little bit more. Sometimes I wonder, and I still wonder, why my current advisor took me in. Is it because they felt bad for me? Did they really think I was competent? Why would they take me on? So it made me more doubtful about that. And also the fact that like, why did my previous advisor not take me? So in some ways it made me feel more insecure and doubt my competence. But in other ways I feel that I've become more resourceful and more proactive, more in control of where I'm going with my research and my degree.

This illustrates the way in which self-doubt and negative views of the self can variantly emerge from the experience of advisor loss. Therefore, it is not just logistical concerns (e.g., finding a new advisor, navigating the research agenda) that emerge when an advisor leaves the program, but also broader concerns related to competency and confidence that may also arise.

Finally, this domain assessed how the participant characterized the loss and its impact on his or her graduate training. Six participants described the departure of their original advisor as having an overall negative impact (typical), and five participants described the departure of their original advisor as having an overall positive impact (variant). Impact that the loss had on length of time in the program (e.g., moving through the program faster or slower as perceived to be related to the loss) arose as a theme in both the comments on negative impact and positive impact. This indicates that movement through the program may be of particular importance, and that assistance or hindrance in this movement may influence how the overall impact of the loss is perceived. In discussing the negative impact of this event, participants touched on having to stay in the program longer, feeling unsupported by their program, and having less professional development opportunities. One participant discussed the perceived negative impact further:

> The process definitely hindered my process as a doctoral student. Because I was so self-sufficient during that year (after the original advisor left), I did everything on my own and I really don't know if I did it correctly. There wasn't a lot of mentorship so I didn't have a lot of growth. I know that I can survive a program by myself, but I don't know how much I actually develop and grow though. I can survive. I was in survival mode. But I don't think I grew.

On the contrary, participants who spoke about the positive impact of their original advisor leaving described moving through the program quicker, growing professionally, and increasing in their independence and autonomy. One participant spoke to such a positive impact in more depth:

> I think as difficult as it was a few times, I think it helped me become more independent to really assert, "here are my needs, this is what I need now." Just to be more vocal about those things once my original advisor left because I had to in some ways. My original advisor could only advocate for me so far from a distance. Where it really upped my game up like, "okay, you need to advocate for yourself at some point. Your original advisor's not here, you have to speak up." So I think overall that just made me a stronger scholar, researcher, clinician. Overcoming that adversity, I don't think I'd have that level of skill if she had stayed because I think I would have gotten a little comfortable.

It is of note that two participants discussed the ways in which their original advisor leaving had both a concurrent positive and negative impact on graduate training. The following participant spoke to both the positive and negative impact that resulted from this loss:

I think it interrupted consistency because I thought I would be with my original advisor for the rest of my time, so it interrupted that.  But at the same time now that I have a new home I'm really interested to see where this goes.  And I think, although I'm not going to have consistency on my side, I think I'll have diversity of experience and I'm actually excited.

**Domain 4: Transition to New Advisor**

Domain 4 focuses on the participant's experience in the transition to his or her new advisor.  Table 4 highlights all the areas that were covered in this domain, with questions regarding assignment to the new advisor, any prior relationship with this advisor, and the various factors that either eased or hindered this transition.  Of the eight categories included in this domain, four were general, one was typical, one was variant, and one was rare.  Of the 21 sub-categories in this domain, three were typical, 14 were variant, and six were rare.

Generally, advisees chose their new advisor.  It was variant for this new advisor to be chosen based on a personality or demographic fit (e.g., gender) and was also variant for the new advisor to be chosen based on a perceived research match.  Many participants spoke to this, mentioning that none of the available faculty members did research on their chosen topic.  In the following quote, the participant speaks to choosing his or her advisee based on personality fit. This participant also highlights the way in which choosing based on a personality fit was due to the fact that choosing based on research match was not an option:

So the new (faculty to choose from), none of them have my research interests.  Not even (a broad topic P is interested in).  So I was like, "okay, so I can't pick an advisor based on research match, so what's my next criteria?"  And I was like, "you know what, I just finished (a large program requirement), I'm gearing up for my proposal and doing

> internship, I just want an advisor who is going to support me and just honestly be chill. Just a chill advisor who can see me through the program and not make things difficult for me. I want someone who is going to be there to support me.

Generally, participants spoke about their prior relationship to their new advisor, with six participants having no formal relationship with the new advisor prior to choosing him or her (typical), and four participants having a collaborative or mentorship relationship prior to choosing him or her (variant). "No formal relationship" varied from having never met the faculty member before to having met the faculty member once or twice. No participant quote will be given as a means to protect confidentiality and to limit the exposure of identifying information due to the unique circumstances that participants described.

It was general for participants to describe the positive components of the transition to the new advisor and typical for participants to describe the challenging components of the transition. In terms of the positive components of the transition, participants variantly mentioned the way in which the new advisor was established in the program, had a work style that aided the transition, or allowed the advisee freedom and/or autonomy. One participant spoke to the way in which it was helpful to have someone more "seasoned" to help navigate the ins and outs of the program:

> I think the thing that was positive with them was that they were (established) at another school so they were seasoned. They had seen people through dissertation and internship and knew the ins and outs of getting comps done, proposals done. They just know all that stuff. So that was a benefit, that they were confident in terms of just having some experience already.

On the contrary, participants variantly described the personality of the new advisor, the work style of the new advisor, research-related issues, and programmatic-related issues as challenging components of the transition. One participant spoke about the negative aspects of his or her transition further in stating the following:

> Well, if my new advisor was a little bit more available, that would have been nice. My new advisor is very, very busy and is a little bit opposite from my previous advisor in that sometimes I have to send three to four emails just to get a response. I think it would have been nice if my new advisor had introduced me to other students that he or she was advising because for a while I didn't even know who my new advisor was advising. I mean we would have lab meetings but they were huge lab meetings with people from everywhere. Just like-- "I'm working with this student, I'm advising this student," because I had no idea.

In describing the ways in which the transition was either positive or challenging, participants typically spoke of cultural factors involved in the transition, variantly describing cultural similarities and cultural differences and how such factors were connected to the transition. To illustrate this further, the following provides a participant's explanation of the ways in which cultural differences made the transition more challenging:

> I think because I come from a certain minority background, we have a lot of respect for authority figures and this is something that I've noticed too. Because of my background, sometimes I get pretty anxious being around people who are his or her age and race demographic. It's a bit intimidating. So I think maybe that might have played a factor. My new advisor could probably tell that I was quite anxious and nervous.

Participants also generally spoke about personality factors that were linked to the transition to their new advisor. Five participant described the way in which the new advisor's personality helped to ease the transition (variant). Some words participants used to describe such personality factors included warm, empathic, supportive, and open. One participant spoke to the warmth and support of his or her new advisor in helping to ease the transition:

> I felt like I could always talk to my new advisor. I felt like I could be completely honest and my new advisor would keep things confidential. He or she just has such a warm, empathic, supportive personality that just made a difficult situation bearable.

**Domain 5: Relationship with New Advisor**

The fifth domain reflects the participant's relationship with the new advisor after the transition was complete and work with this advisor had begun. Similar to topics covered when examining the relationship with the original advisor, topics included tasks, guidance, interpersonal relationship, research, and overall experience with the new advisor as an advisor and as a potential mentor. As shown in Table 6, of the 16 categories in this domain, one is general, six are typical, six are variant, and three are rare. Of the seven subcategories in this domain, two are typical, four are variant, and one is rare.

When speaking about the tasks being completed with the new advisor, it was typical for participants to discuss working on their own research. It is of note that only five participants were working on their own research with their original advisor, whereas eight participants were working on their own research with their new advisor. Further, although nine participants were collaborating with their original advisor on the advisor's research, only three participants were collaborating with their new advisor on his or her own research. One participant spoke to this further in addressing the tasks he or she had been working on and the way that the participant had been able to focus on his or her own research:

> I'm not on my new advisor's research team or any of his or her projects but that's by choice because my new advisor's research is not my specific research interest. I do

> appreciate that our faculty do encourage us to say no to things. They are like, "graduate students want to say yes to everything but at some point you have to say no." So I was very transparent with my new advisor like, "my goal right now is this internship stuff and dissertation." And my new advisor was like, "no that makes sense." I was like, "I'm not going to pick up any projects I don't need to right now, it doesn't make sense." So I'm not really working on any tasks with my new advisor. I kind of pulled back.

Participants generally spoke of successful guidance received by their new advisor, with participants typically speaking of the new advisor's style of providing feedback and support. A participant spoke to this successful guidance further, particularly mentioning the new advisor's style of providing feedback:

> My new advisor gives me feedback and does a really thorough job looking through chapters using track changes. My advisor will tell me if I need to do something or expand and will tell me exactly where to do that. My new advisor is pretty direct with feedback. He or she does help us set goals, all of the advisees. We will set a goal even if it's just like, get this little bit done or get that little bit done. My new advisor has always had that as a consistent part of his or her advisorship.

It was also typical for participants to mention the ways in which their new advisor was unsuccessful in guiding them. This included participants variantly describing a lack of availability and support by the new advisor and rarely describing the new advisor's lack of knowledge of their research. One participant spoke to the lack of support experienced in describing this unsuccessful guidance:

> I mean, sometimes it would be nice to feel a little bit more supported and not feel so alone in doing the research project. It's nice to have the autonomy but I wish my new

> advisor could even check-in on how things are going. Sometimes I wonder if my new advisor even remembers what I'm doing. So maybe getting a little bit more attention would be nice.

In exploring the interpersonal elements of the relationship with the new advisor, participants variantly described a positive interpersonal relationship, variantly described a professional relationship that was lacking in interpersonal closeness, and only rarely described a negative interpersonal relationship. In describing what the positive interpersonal relationship with the new advisor looked like, one participant described the relationship further; "So far, so good. It's good so far. I think that my new advisor listens and I think he or she is very conscientious and I really appreciate that so far so we'll see."

In regard to research, it was typical for participants to describe perceived similarities in research interest and/or conceptualization of research, with it being typical for participants to classify this similarity as something positive or neutral. This is particularly interesting, given that in describing the transition from the original advisor to the new advisor, it was more common for participants to mention fit based on personality or demographic variables. based on perceived research match, often citing the lack of available faculty doing research in their area of interest. One participant spoke to this further, describing that although the new advisor was not initially chosen based on a perceived research match, an appreciation for the new advisor's research developed and a research match was ultimately built:

> My new advisor has a lab and studies (specific research area removed for confidentiality). And I was like, "wow, I find that topic really fascinating. Like, that's cool." I like other (specific research area) topics too. I really like the population my new advisor works with and may want to work with them in the future. So that all really aligned, even

> though it wasn't stuff that before I would have been like, these are my interests. But when my new advisor said them I was like, "oh, yes, I am interested."

Regarding style of conducting work, it was typical for participants to describe similarities with their new advisor in this area. In describing the similarities in style of conducting work, one participant stated the following:

> I would say we are both pretty efficient, absolutely. And we are both really quick to respond. And I like that my new advisor is so available via email or in the office, that's really nice that I can always pop in and ask my new advisor a question. That's kind of how I operate. So I think we are similar in that regard.

Other participants spoke about similarities in organization, attention to detail, and response time.

Overall, participants typically described a positive overall experience with their new advisor. One participant reflected on the fact that he or she had passed specific programmatic milestones and therefore was able to look back and comment on the advising relationship being positive overall. This participant stated:

> I guess it's been a positive. You know, it's so complex. At this point I've (achieved program milestones) and my new advisor has gotten me where I need to be, so in that way it's been really positive. I don't know if I always felt that way, especially when my new advisor was unresponsive to my emails at weeks at a time and I couldn't (reach a program milestone). I definitely was resentful about that. But my new advisor never did anything wrong as an advisor, he or she just wasn't always there for me, which I guess may be wrong, I don't know. Just depends on the style of the advisor I guess.

This implies that year in program and specific programmatic accomplishments achieved may contribute to how participants feels about their new advisors. Those participants who spoke of a positive overall relationship often commented on the way in which their new advisor helped them navigate their program and achieve certain milestones, whereas those who spoke of a negative overall relationship often spoke of the hindrances they faced along the way in moving through their programs. Therefore, hindsight may contribute to many of the findings we see here, particularly regarding the experience with the new advisor and how meaning is made of the loss. Another participant who spoke of an overall positive relationship commented on the way in which the new advisor respected the relationship he or she had with the original advisor and worked to integrate both perspectives and advising styles. The participant stated the following:

> I think it's a positive relationship, primarily because my new advisor just respects what I had before and was very open, like, "that could still be part of your academic journey, you don't have to say goodbye to your previous advisor just because he or she is gone. We will find a way to integrate both of us into your project and see you graduate because that's the ultimate goal." I was like, "this is the best situation I could be in, ever." I would say that I feel very fortunate because my new advisor is someone I think cares for the well-being of the students. Even though I'm new to my new advisor's team or advising list, I've never felt like the black sheep or kind of left out so to speak. It's kind of like, "yep you are in my advising now and we are going to get you through." I appreciate that.

Despite the accounts of overall positive experiences with the new advisor, it was variant for participants to describe their new advisor as a mentor and was typical for participants to disclose that their new advisor was not a mentor to them. Therefore, although participants described an overall positive experience with both the original advisor and new advisor, it was less common for the new advisor to be identified as a mentor. In looking at this further, it seems that differing interests or differing areas of expertise often came up in participants explaining why the new advisor did not serve as a mentor to them.  One participant who described a positive overall relationship with the new advisor stated the following about the new advisor *not* serving as a mentor:

> I think my new advisor has been a really good advisor to me, but my new advisor is not someone that I would go to like, “these are my future plans, how am I going to get there?”  Maybe because my new advisor is academic and I want to go more practitioner. But yeah, my new advisor is different in that way from my first advisor.  My new advisor has done that a little bit with the different components that we have to do outside of class. He or she has helped me figure out what the timeline is for that, but usually because that is involved with my dissertation in some way.  (Interviewer: So what was missing from your advising relationship that prevented your new advisor from serving as a mentor?)  I think the guidance piece. And I think my new advisor’s general disconnect from the practice of counseling.  My new advisor teaches and does research and I’m not going to be doing either of those things.

Just as was true for participants’ experiences of the original advisor, it also is true that participants often spoke to both the good and bad elements of working with the new advisor in terms of both advising and mentorship.  Therefore, participant responses continued to display the complexities involved in the advising relationship.

**Domain 6: Current Relationship with the Original Advisor**

This domain encompasses participants’ descriptions of their current relationship with their original advisor.  This includes information regarding the nature of the contact with the original advisor at the time the study was conducted.  This also includes participants’ comments about how satisfied they are with the nature of the relationship as it currently stands. Five categories and two sub-categories emerged, with one category being typical and the other categories and sub-categories being variant.

It was typical for participants to still be in contact with the original advisor in some capacity, with three participants describing frequent contact (variant) and three participants describing infrequent contact (variant). Those that described more frequent contact often described an interpersonal component to the relationship, whereas more infrequent contact often involved contact focused on projects that the advisee was still involved with. One participant also spoke to the level of communication changing, depending on the current phase of the project being worked on with the original advisor:

> Yes, we are still in contact because we are still working on a project together, but that contact is really pretty minimal right now. How often we are in contact is also a function of the phase of the project that we are in.

In speaking to the satisfaction associated with the level of contact with the original advisor, participants were variantly satisfied with the current relationship with the original advisor, variantly dissatisfied, and variantly neutral or mixed about the current relationship. In describing the dissatisfaction they felt in their current relationship with their original advisor, participants often cited lack of contact and/or support as a primary reason for dissatisfaction. One participant spoke to the mixed feelings experienced regarding the current status of the relationship with the original advisor:

> I don't know. I haven't had many expectations so I guess I'm satisfied. I guess a part of me would like to feel like my original advisor was rooting for me and I could let him or her know how I'm doing. I mean, I'm sure I could and my original advisor would

probably write back, but I guess I should write to them. But my original advisor never tried to contact me after so it's just felt like they have moved on. They (original advisors) hold a lot of power and as a student you are always making assumptions about what they are thinking or not thinking. I don't know if that's healthy or not but part of me is just like, it's easier not to bother.

**Domain 7: Views of Advising Relationship**

This domain encompasses participants' views of the advising relationship more generally. This includes how important or unimportant the participant may perceive this relationship to be in graduate training and the reasons for such a belief. This domain also captures any changes in how the advising relationship is viewed since the loss. Within this domain, two categories and two sub-categories emerged. Of the two categories, one was general and one was typical. Of the two sub-categories, one was typical and one was variant.

Generally, participants perceived the advising relationship as important. Based on their own experiences with their advisors, participants commented on the ways in which they thought this relationship was crucial to the graduate process. It was typical for participants to identify advisor support and guidance as primary reasons the advising relationship was seen as so important. This included descriptions of how the advisor aids in navigating program requirements (e.g., choosing classes, completing dissertation). It was variant for participants to describe the advisor's assistance in reaching professional development goals as a main reason the advising relationship was seen as important. This included descriptions of how the advisor provided help beyond the basic logistical components of the program. The following participant explained how an advisor's importance lies in what cannot be gained by reading the program manual:

> I think it (the advisory relationship) is so important. In my opinion, if I didn't have a solid advisor I think I would feel lost. I think I would be trying to figure out what is going on. Because I think to some degree, you need an advisor to kind of show you the way of like, "here is what is expected of you." But also to show you, "here is what is expected of you that's not written in the program. Like, if you want a tenure position you should probably get published." That's not explicitly in your program course planner. And not just for logistical pieces, but just an advisor you can confide in. I never had to feel afraid to tell my original advisor that I felt incompetent on certain things or scared, or like, "I don't know how to do that." I was always vocal because I trusted my advisor, where I have friends who are like, "Oh I can't tell my advisor that, I just have to suck it up and figure it out." Or another friend who is like, "my advisor is never around, I've met with him or her once this full semester." And I'm like, "that sucks." So, I just think it's a really important role for students.

Another participant touched upon this same idea, and also mentioned the way in which the advisory relationship can ultimately impact the greater public good:

> Yeah, I think that it (the advising relationship) is of huge importance, especially at the Ph.D. level. Because they can give you a handbook, but it doesn't exactly tell you how to maneuver through graduate school, it just tells you how to physically sign up for classes and what to take. So I think it is really important, because I think it's a process of forming an identity that highly impacts the public too. So if you have a negative kind of skewed personality because of your training experiences or negative perspectives with an advisor, I think that can cause harm to the public eventually.

Participants also generally spoke about changes that occurred in how they viewed the advising relationship, focusing specifically on how the experience of the loss was connected to this change. Participants specifically discussed that after the loss, they came to realize the relationship with their original advisor was not the "norm" or was not the only way to have a successful advising relationship. Participants also mentioned a change in how they viewed the permanence of the advising relationship. This included an increased understanding that advisors may leave or one's advisor may change throughout doctoral training. One participant addressed the change experienced after going through advisor loss and having a new advisory relationship that looked very different than the previous one:

> With my current advisor it is more task oriented and that's okay. It doesn't have to be a, "let's go out for coffee and bagels and be best friends" type of relationship, which it sort of felt like it was with my old advisor. It can sort of be like, "okay, let's get things done." Like, "how are you, but let's get things done." But I'm sure it can also be both or a mixture or so. So maybe (I changed in learning) that all advising relationships are going to be somewhat different depending on the two people in it and their personalities and their styles.

Despite discrepancies in how participants dealt with the advisor loss or how affected he or she was by it, this final domain demonstrates something very important. Through this domain, it becomes clear that participants all seem to identify the advisory relationship as an important one throughout graduate training.

## Chapter V

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experience of advisor loss as it was perceived by doctoral trainees in counseling psychology programs. Previous studies have found the advising relationship to be one of significant importance (Gelso, 1979; Gelso & Lent, 2000; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Doctoral advisors wear many hats as they guide advisees through research, program requirements, and professional development tasks. Additionally, advisors have been theorized as attachment figures; they serve a secure base function from which the advisee can explore and later come back to for the encouragement and support (Huber, Sauer, Mrdjenovich, & Gugiu, 2010).

Data indicates that there is increasing mobility in higher education (Aggarwal & Medbury, 2012). This, in addition to program closures, job terminations, and retirements, contributes to the number of advisees who experience advisor loss during their graduate training. Despite the importance of the advisor and the frequency of advisor loss, we know surprisingly little about this occurrence. Knox et al. (2006) is the sole study to make mention of advisor loss. This qualitative study examined graduate advising relationships from the perspective of counseling psychology faculty advisors. In this study, one advising relationship discussed as "difficult" was a relationship in which the original advisor had left the program. The new advisor described the challenges that came with taking on the advisee following the loss, thus highlighting the potential importance of advisor loss. Although Knox et al. were the first to introduce the topic of advisor loss, the mention was brief and left many unanswered questions about how the loss is experienced by advisees. The current study aimed to be the first to address some of the important questions related to how the loss of an advisor is experienced by doctoral trainees in counseling psychology.

The present study suggested that losing an advisor would share some theoretical similarities to losing an attachment figure and the grieving process that results. Thus, Bowlby's literature on losing an attachment figure (1973, 1980, 1988) and research on the grief and bereavement process (Bauer & Bonanno, 2001; Mor, McHorney, & Sherwood, 1986; Raphael, 1983; Vachon & Stylianos, 1988) were used throughout this study to help frame the experience of losing an advisor. Although this is not a perfect metaphor, the suddenness, influence of social support, impact of time and outside stressors, cognitive reorganization, and anxiety that results are all factors that make grief and loss a relevant way to frame the experience of losing an advisor.

That is not to say that there are not other potential ways to frame this experience. A child's perspective on divorce was also considered as a metaphor for understanding the experience of advisor loss. Research on this experience places emphasis on income, interparental conflict, and close relationships maintained after the divorce occurs (Lansford, J.E., 2009). Such factors may also be important in the experience of advisor loss. For example, income and financial support may buffer negative effects of advisor loss, just as financial factors may influence a child's experience of parents' divorce. In addition, interparental conflict may parallel some of the conflicts that participants described between original advisors and programs. Just as children may be forced to witness conflict prior to and during divorce, advisees may too be forced to witness departmental politics and conflict that factor into the advisor's decision to leave the institution. Finally, relationships maintained by children after divorce may share some similarities to the experience of maintaining a relationship with the original advisor after advisor loss. In addition, research has identified that an easy temperament and social competence are both factors linked to children's resiliency after divorce (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989). These are similar to the factors expected to be linked to resiliency in for advisees experiencing advisor loss. Yet, despite such similarities, important differences exist as well. Although relationships maintained after the experience may be relevant in both cases, there are many differences between a child's parental relationships after divorce and an advisee staying in contact with his or her original advisor. For example, a child is still constantly around one or both parents. He or she must constantly navigate these relationships and such relationships are at the forefront of theory and research highlighting this experience (Lansford, 2009). This is markedly different from the intermittent contact that may exist when an advisee and original advisor stay in contact. In addition, the stigmatization of divorce is often discussed in the literature and has been found to be relevant in how a child is affected by the experience of divorce (Amato & Keith, 1991). This issue of stigma does not seem relevant when considering the loss of an advisor. Finally, the research on children's experience of divorce is focused on younger populations than is relevant in the experience of losing an advisor. Although some studies on divorce extend to emerging adults in their early to mid-twenties, the research is most often aimed towards a younger population and a different developmental period. Thus, this perspective seemed like less useful of a metaphor to understand the experience of advisor loss.

Research on attachment, in contrast, has shown the importance of attachment in adulthood (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Although Bowlby's theory was initially designed to explain the young child's use of a caregiver as a secure base (Bowlby, 1988), Bowlby (1969) wrote that attachment was important from "the cradle to the grave" (p. 208). Subsequently, a vast body of research emerged on attachment in adulthood, with Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) providing an extensive review of research that documents links between adult attachment and interpersonal goals, disposition skills, and interactions. Thus, attachment theory provides a useful lens to frame interpersonal tendencies in adult relationships and may be more developmentally relevant in understanding the experience of advisor loss than a child's perspective of divorce. Further, research on loss of a therapist has been theorized from a grief and loss perspective (Knox, Adrians, Everson, Hess, Hill & Crook-Lyon, 2011), indicating that the loss of a professional relationship may be best theorized from this perspective. Within this qualitative study on therapeutic termination by Knox et al. (2011), it was typical for participants to discuss prior losses and experiences of grief, and was also typical for participants to describe feelings of grief when discussing termination. The researchers found that the loss of such a professional attachment relationship often brought up negative emotional reactions and feelings of abandonment, thus highlighting the relevance of a loss perspective. Just as the advisor has been theorized as an attachment figure (Huber et al., 2010), so too has the therapist (Farber, Lippert, and Nevas, 1995). Thus, the present study utilized a similar perspective.

The current study used the consensual qualitative research method (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) to examine four key research questions about how advisees experience the loss of an academic advisor. Seven domains emerged from the data: (1) the nature of the relationship with original advisor prior to departure; (2) advisees' experience of advisor loss; (3) advisees' responses to advisor loss (self and others); (4) the transition to the new advisor; (5) the relationship with the new advisor; (6) the current relationship with the original advisor; and (7) advisees' view of the advising relationship in general. The following section will review the findings and discuss the conclusions that can be drawn in connection with each of the research questions addressed in the present study, specifically: (1) How do advisees experience advisor loss? (2) Does the nature of the relationship with the original advisor and/or elements of the original advising relationship influence the experience of advisor loss? (3) How are key aspects of student life (e.g., overall experience in the doctoral program, research, feelings about the self, feelings about peers or faculty in the program, academic work, career-related and professional-development tasks) experienced in the face of advisor loss? (4) How do advisees readjust after experiencing the loss of their advisor?

**Research Question 1: How do advisees experience advisor loss?**

This research question is concerned with the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions that advisees had to the loss of their advisors. This question is particularly focused on how advisees report having experienced the loss at the time the loss occurred, as opposed to the aftermath and later effects of the loss, which are the focus of Research Questions 3 and 4. This distinction is critical to draw, as it seems that some experiences were very different during and immediately after the loss as compared to later on with increased hindsight. This was noticeable during the interviews, as some advisees would discuss differences in how they currently saw the situation as compared to how they experienced it during and shortly after the loss.

As discussed earlier, the initial experience of loss included finding out the advisor would be leaving and attempting to seek out support and find a new advisor. All participants spoke about the initial experience of the loss in a negative way that involved either stress, disappointment, shock, or anxiety. Only one participant spoke about relief in the initial discovery of the loss. Yet in addition to the relief this advisee described, anxiety was also described in relation to a research project that he or she needed to complete. Thus, in the one instance in which positive emotions were discussed in the initial discovery of advisor loss, negative emotions were discussed as well.

The anxiety described by this advisee was not a unique occurrence. In fact, the most common emotional and cognitive experiences participants discussed included anxiety related to finishing program requirements and graduating on time. This tendency towards anxiety aligns with Bowlby's theory (1973) on temporary separation from an attachment figure. Bowlby indicated that temporary separation is linked with anxiety, whereas a more permanent loss is linked with despair. This may help to explain some of the initial anxiety reported by participants immediately after the loss. Prior to processing the permanence of such a loss, the participants may have experienced anxiety at the initial separation from the advisor.

A lack of guidance and confusion about one's role within the program were both factors that advisees anticipated to cause delays in completing program requirements and graduating. One participant spoke specifically to this in questioning, "what do I do now; what is my role within the program?" Not having an original advisor present seemed to be associated with having a more difficult time navigating the program. Therefore, advisees were initially concerned with having difficulty finishing program requirements and graduating in a timely fashion. Other emotional experiences commonly described included anger, fear, shock, and sadness. One participant spoke to the anger related to not knowing that the original advisor was looking for a new job and the general feeling of being uninformed.

Many participants eventually came to view the loss in a more neutral or even more positive light. A few participants spoke explicitly about how they *now* looked at the loss as compared to how the loss was experienced at that time. Meaning was often made after the fact, with increased hindsight that came from moving through the program or having the new advisor approach advising in a different and sometimes even more helpful way. Most advisees were able to adapt in a positive way, yet this adaptation often took time. The environment seemed to be a critical factor in whether a positive adaptation took place. The experience of advisor loss is one in which the advisee has very little control. One participant spoke specifically about how a lack of structure in being informed of the loss and finding a new advisor contributed to overall feelings of not having control. Therefore, it is possible that the importance of others' responses is accentuated, as this is another area that the advisee lacks control.

Some participants reported that their ability to make positive meaning was linked to how others (e.g., faculty and peers) responded to the loss. Self-response, defined in the present study as the adaptive or maladaptive ways the participant responded to the loss (e.g., self-care, changes in views of the self), was often discussed with less emphasis and less frequency than were the responses of others, such as faculty and peers. Such findings highlight the key importance of the social context within which the loss is experienced, and align with past research indicating the importance of perceived social support in bereavement (Vachon & Stylianos, 1988) and the detrimental outcomes when social support is lacking (Mor, McHorney, & Sherwood, 1986; Raphael, 1983). This aligns with the attachment lens utilized to better conceptualize this experience. Bowlby (1980) emphasized the social circumstances affecting the bereaved over the course of mourning. For example, he noted that living with others may help those experiencing bereavement fare better, whereas social isolation may cause individuals to fare worse.

In summary, the study's first research question indicates that advisees experience the loss of an advisor in a way that is initially negative. Despite how the loss is dealt with or how meaning is ultimately made, there seems to be a common experience of anxiety, anticipation, and worry at the outset of the loss. This seems to be particularly affected by the responses of others.

Therefore, negative experiences of the loss may be mitigated by more proactive and helpful responses of faculty and peers within the program. This may help to ease some of the common anxieties regarding movement within the program and a timely graduation. In addition, the common narrative involved in the "how I felt about it *then* versus how I feel about it *now*" provides promising findings. This indicates that the initial negative experiences of advisor loss may change and ultimately be seen in a positive way. How and when this occurs is addressed in later research questions.

**Research Question 2: Does the nature of the relationship with the original advisor and/or elements of the original advising relationship influence the experience of advisor loss?**

Although numerous participants spoke about the strong relationship they had with their original advisor, no single pattern emerged regarding advisee perceptions of how the quality of the relationship was linked to advisee experience of the advisor loss. For instance, there was no evidence that the stronger the relationship with the original advisor, the harder the loss was on the advisee. In fact, four advisees who reported the original advisor was both a good advisor and mentor described adaptive responses to the loss. In contrast, one participant spoke of a very strong relationship with the original advisor and then spoke of the negative outcomes perceived to be linked to the loss. In addition, another participant spoke of a very negative relationship with the original advisor and then spoke of the positive outcomes that he or she felt were linked to the loss.

Why might participants who classified the original advisor as both a good advisor and good mentor also have adaptive responses to the loss? There are a few possible explanations for why this may be the case. It is possible that a strong advising relationship or mentorship also comes with a high level of transparency and openness that allows for more adaptive coping at the time of loss. A few participants addressed this, indicating that understanding why the original advisor was leaving the program made it easier to cope with the loss and made the advisor's departure feel less shocking or unexpected. It is also possible that a strong relationship with the original advisor led to participants staying in contact with the original advisor after he or she had left the university. Three out of four participants who classified the original advisor as both a positive advisor and as a mentor were still in touch with the original advisor at the time of the interview. These three participants classified either feeling satisfied or neutral about the nature of the relationship with their original advisor at the time the interview took place. Therefore, a more positive relationship may be linked to more contact after the original advisor leaves the program and to more adaptive responses to the loss of the advisor. Finally, it is also possible that strong interpersonal skills could contribute to strong relationships with both the old and new advisors. This could be linked to greater means for adaptive coping and greater social support networks that could help the student during the time of the loss.

A strong relationship with the original advisor was linked to advisee experiences in some notable ways. Advisees that identified strong relationships with their original advisors often expressed concerns about finding a new advisor that they could establish a similarly strong interpersonal and working connection with. One participant spoke specifically about the way in which he or she had catastrophized after the loss of the original advisor; "I felt like this was the end of the world." This advisee identified that this tendency to catastrophize was probably due to the very strong relationship he or she had with the original advisor. This provides further evidence for the advisor as a secure base figure and the despair that can come from losing such an important attachment relationship. As a secure base, the advisor would be important in helping the advisee feel supported and able to explore and grow. This understanding helps to elucidate the challenges that may come when that strong and critical relationship was lost.

Findings related to research match with the original advisor are complex. For some participants, a strong research match with the original advisor made the loss more challenging to cope with, as research slowed and a new advisor with similar research interests was hard to find. Yet for others, a strong research match with the original advisor could also be limiting in certain ways and therefore made the loss easier to cope with. Numerous participants mentioned that working on the original advisor's research projects was a primary task within the advising. Therefore, the positive of the research match with the original advisor was often hindered by the focus on the professor's projects. This was the reason two participants gave for not classifying the original advisor as a mentor. One stated, "we did a lot more to develop my original advisor professionally than was done to develop us professionally, or me specifically." Therefore, coming into the doctoral program to work with a specific advisor with a similar research interest may have prevented some advisees from developing their own passions or working on their own projects.

The advisory alliance is defined as "the connection made between advisor and advisee as a result of the work done towards common goals" (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, p. 158). Findings of this study indicate that *common goals* may not have been established or met in situations in which the original advisor and advisee were very focused on the original advisor's research and not the research of the advisee. This may have limited advisees' abilities to engage in professional development tasks with their original advisors. A newfound ability to engage in such professional development tasks with the new advisor may have made the advisor loss easier to cope with and may have even contributed to the loss being a positive experience for the participant. This aligns with findings by Schlosser et al. (2003), in which professional development tasks were linked to satisfactory advising relationships.

Results also seem to indicate that whether the advisee is given the option to move with his or her original advisor may be linked to how the loss is perceived. Three of the eight participants whose advisors were going to a new institution were not given the option to go. These three advisees who were not invited to go to the new institution reported that the loss impacted their graduate experience negatively. Conversely, three of the five participants that were given the option to go with their new advisor indicated that the loss impacted their graduate experience positively. It is possible that participants perceived to be stronger students were asked to go with their professors, and students perceived to be weaker were not asked. It is also possible that stronger students may have had an easier time adjusting to the change involved in the advisor loss and may have experienced more positive outcomes as a result that did weaker students. Student strength is a potential confound that cannot be ruled out in the present study. However, it is also important to note that two participants that were given the option to move to the new institution with their original advisor nevertheless still felt that the loss impacted their graduate experience negatively. Both of these participants spoke about the complex reasons that limited them from going with their original advisors, including issues with the location of the new institution, funding concerns, and delays in graduation that would have occurred. Thus, simply being invited to move to the new institution with the advisor is not necessarily helpful to all students losing an advisor. Nevertheless, the students who were not given the option to move to the new institution reported more negative outcomes after advisor loss. This finding suggests that perhaps if advisees have more agency in such situations, they may be more likely to have more positive outcomes related to the loss. Future research could examine this question.

Overall, results suggest that experience of the loss may be less about the advisee's relationship with the original advisor and may be more about what happens next. Even when the relationship with the original advisor was very strong, advisees seemed to be most concerned with movement through the program, missed or attained opportunities, and peer and faculty responses. It is also possible that the experience of the loss may be related to particular advisee characteristics that allow them to have better advising relationships and adapt to new situations more effectively. This may include being more adaptable, social, or resilient. Future research is essential to further examine what factors may influence strong advising relationships and a greater ability to adapt to new situations. Such research could look at advisee personality traits and characteristics, interpersonal skills, coping styles, and issues around agency and control.

**Research Question 3: How are key aspects of student life (e.g., overall experience in the doctoral program, research, feelings about the self, feelings about peers or faculty in the program, academic work, career-related and professional-development tasks) experienced in the face of advisor loss?**

The overall impact of advisor loss on the graduate training experience was seen as positive by five participants and as negative by six participants. Yet, perceptions of the loss appeared to be less related to the relationship with the original advisor or to tasks being completed with the original advisor, and more related to faculty responses to the loss and the perceived impact that the event had on research goals, professional development, and advancement in the program. Therefore, it seems that what happens *after* the loss may be more predictive of whether the loss is seen to have a more positive or more negative impact on graduate training. This finding is quite promising; although programs may not have control over faculty leaving the institution, they do have control over how the situation is handled after the fact.

Key aspects of student life were examined in terms of whether advisees reported dealing with them adaptively or maladaptively. As mentioned earlier, something shifted in advisee perceptions of the loss between the initial experience of the loss and the meaning that was made after the loss. The initial experience of the loss was viewed by nine out of 10 participants as negative, whereas the overall impact of the loss on graduate training was ultimately viewed as positive by five participants. This indicates that something can change between the initial negative experiences of stress and anxiety highlighted by so many participants and the end result of how the loss is experienced. Bowlby (1980) emphasized the many factors that can affect the course of bereavement and how mourning is dealt with. Multiple stressors, social and psychological circumstances, and factors precipitating the experience of the loss were all theorized to play a role. Thus, such factors may have influenced the shift from the initial experience to the loss's later impact. The fourth research question may help to shed light on the processes through which this shift may take place.

A key aspect of student life noticeably affected by the loss was how faculty was seen after the fact. Participants placed a particular emphasis on the responses of peers and faculty instead of on their own self-response. Others' responses seemed to be linked to how participants retold the experience and their reports of how they were affected by the loss. Feelings about faculty responses to the loss appeared to be particularly salient in the experience of advisor loss and what came up most in participants' reflections on how the loss impacted their overall graduate experience. Eight participants described an unhelpful faculty response and of these eight participants, six reported that they came to view faculty in a less positive light as a result.

This was something discussed often by those participants who felt the loss had an overall negative impact. Such participants described feeling abandoned and unsupported by their programs and their programs' faculty. Other participants mentioned the way in which the loss exposed them to the faults within their program. In particular, a few participants described a newfound awareness of program politics. In becoming aware of their advisor's unhappiness or the reason behind their advisor's departure, some participants discussed exposure to components of their program that were not "healthy," or were perceived as such by the original advisor. This was particularly relevant in situations in which the advising relationship was strong and the original advisor was leaving or being forced out due to something perceived as unjust or related to departmental or programmatic politics.

Although eight participants described a faculty response that was "unhelpful," this did not always lead to an overall perceived negative impact of the loss. Somewhat surprisingly, some of the positive impacts of the loss that were discussed were peripherally related to such unhelpful faculty responses. Participants often referred to increased independence and autonomy that came from an inadequate or absent faculty response. One participant mentioned the way in which it encouraged him or her to seek mentorship and to find opportunities outside of the program (i.e., through an outside research mentor).

Changes in feelings of competence were another key factor for participants' experiences of advisor loss. Four participants mentioned the way in which the loss improved how they viewed themselves. For these participants, navigating the program in the face of adversity helped to increase feelings of competence and self-sufficiency. It is important to note, however, that increased feelings of competency did not necessarily result in an overall positive experience with the loss of the advisor. Among the four participants who felt the loss led to an improved view of the self, only two of these participants felt the loss had an overall positive impact whereas two of the participants felt the loss had an overall negative impact.

In contrast to the four participants for whom the loss of the advisor was linked to increased feelings competence, two participants discussed the loss hindering how they viewed themselves, mentioning feelings of insecurity and concerns about competency. Both of these participants reported an overall negative impact of the loss of the advisor on their graduate training experience. Future research would benefit from exploring ways that programs can help students foster feelings of competency during the experience of advisor loss, given that at least a minority of students who lose their advisors report experiencing a decrease in competence and self-confidence after losing an advisor.

The response of peers was also discussed by participants, yet was seemingly less integral than the faculty response in terms of advisee reports of the impact of the loss. Although eight participants referenced a change in how they came to see faculty in their program after the loss, no participants mentioned a change in how they came to view peers. Instead, participants spoke more generally about feeling alone and isolated and how peers' lack of response may have influenced this. Some participants discussed the way in which their peers were dealing with their own grieving process if they too had lost their advisor. A few participants mentioned how this caused individuals to retreat and grieve alone instead of joining together. Thus, although the nature of peer responses was discussed, participants did not speak about a lasting impact on how they viewed their peers as a result.

All but one participant discussed the effects that the loss had on their research. These nine participants who discussed the effects of advisor loss on their research most frequently discussed how effectively they completed research projects, such as their thesis or dissertation.

They spoke about the ways in which the loss either helped or hindered the timely completion of their projects. Participants also discussed how the advisor loss sometimes led to engagement in new areas of research or finding research in which they were more interested. It is interesting to note the discrepancy in the nature of the research tasks being completed with the original advisor, as compared to those being completed with the new advisor. Nine participants were working with their original advisor on their advisor's research, whereas only three participants were working with their new advisor on their advisor's research. In examining this divergence further, it seems that participants felt indebted to their original advisor and felt that they "owed" the original advisor something, which often included helping them with their research. Once the original advisor left, it seemed to have a freeing effect in which advisees could explore other avenues or pursue their own research. It is possible that having a new advisor helped to ease pressure and a sense of obligation to assist with the advisor's research.

This switch in research tasks was sometimes voluntary and was sometimes forced. For example, some participants did not have access to a new advisor doing research that they were interested in. All three of the participants working on their new advisor's research reported research similarities with their new advisor or a general interest in their new advisor's research. Of the participants who were not engaged in their new advisor's research, three reported some interest in their new advisor's research but indicated a need to focus on their own research projects. This suggests a more voluntary and intentional shift in focus to the advisees' own research. This is in contrast to the three participants who were not engaged in their new advisors' research and reported no interest in their new advisors' research. For these three participants, the shift in focus onto their own research suggests something that was forced upon them. Yet this forced change in research focus was the exception, not the rule. Seven out of 10 participants were either working on their new advisor's research because they were interested in it, or were working on their own research despite also being interested in their new advisor's research. These findings may explain why it was more common for participants to discuss adaptive responses to how research was navigated than to discuss maladaptive responses.

These findings may also help to shed light on why five participants perceived that the loss had a positive impact on their career trajectory and professional development tasks, as opposed to only two participants who perceived a negative impact. It may be that once advisees were able to focus on their own research interests and career interests, career plans and professional development tasks were clarified and more fully explored. For example, three participants mentioned an ability to foster their passion for clinical work and explore their potential as a clinician once their original advisor left. Such findings indicate the importance of the both the original and new advisory dyads maintaining an open dialogue about the advisee's professional goals and career aspirations.

It should be noted that course work seems to be one key area that was generally absent from discussions of how student life was dealt with after advisor loss. Only one participant referenced course work, mentioning that his or her academics suffered due to a loss of motivation experienced after the loss. Aside from this, no other mention was made to course work. This may speak to what factors are considered important in doctoral training. In a qualitative longitudinal study examining the graduate socialization experience, one participant noted, "it's the things you don't get grades for that are the most important…presenting papers...schmoozing at conferences…the politics of the department" (Austin, 2002, p.110). This may account for why the loss's impact on research and professional development were emphasized much more than the impact on classwork and grades.

In summary, this research question examined how different aspects of student life were experienced after advisor loss. Data indicate that what happens after the loss may be particularly relevant to how advisees experiences the loss. This is highlighted by the noticeable shift in how the loss was initially experienced versus how its impact was perceived later on; only one participant reported that the initial experience of the loss was positive whereas five participants identified that the overall impact of the loss was positive. This poses the question; what adaptive responses helped to facilitate this shift? Further, what maladaptive responses prevented this shift from occurring for other participants? Nine participants referenced adaptive responses that they had to the loss, with emphasis placed on more effective navigation of the research process and more professional development opportunities being sought out after the loss. Eight participants referenced maladaptive responses to the loss, with the majority focusing on maladaptive faculty responses that often resulted in seeing faculty less positively. Other maladaptive responses included less effective advisee navigation of the doctoral program and the research process. Overall, participants commonly discussed faculty responses to the loss, professional development tasks, and advancement in the doctoral program as key areas perceived as either positively or negatively connected to the experience of advisor loss. Views of the self and views of peers were not mentioned nearly as frequently as were views of the faculty, and thus may be less relevant in an advisee's experience after the loss.

A few important points can be taken away from data provided in response the interview questions regarding links between the advisor loss and the experience of student life. First, what occurs after the loss seems to be very important to advisees. The experience of advisor loss is the beginning of the story and not the end of it, and programs can look for ways to support a sense of growing competence and foster positive self-views after the loss. The present data also indicate that faculty responses seem to be critically important and may be connected to how the impact of the loss comes to be perceived by advisees. Finally, staying on track with research and professional development tasks seems to be very important in adjustment after the loss, as noted by the number of advisees who discussed these topics. Thus, students who experienced the loss of their original advisor would benefit from faculty and program attunement to these areas.

**Research Question 4: How do advisees readjust after experiencing the loss of their advisor?**

The new advisor seems to be critically important in how participants in the present study readjusted after the loss of their original advisor. Nine participants identified the relationship with their new advisor as either positive or neutral, with only one participant describing the relationship with the new advisor as negative. This is similar to how participants identified the relationship with their original advisor, with eight participants identifying it as positive, three identifying it as neutral, and only one participant describing the relationship as negative. It is of note that the participant who described the relationship with the original advisor as negative was not the same participant who described the relationship with the new advisor as negative. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that classifying the advising relationship as negative is unique to that individual and based in his or her characteristics.

Four participants identified the new advisor as a mentor as compared to the five participants who identified the original advisor as a mentor. Three out of the four participants who thought of the new advisor as a mentor had identified that their original advisor was *not* a mentor. Four out of the five participants who identified their original advisor as a mentor indicated that their new advisor was *not* a mentor. Only one participant saw both the original advisor and new advisor as mentors. This is an important finding because it indicates that identifying a mentor is not solely about some characteristics of the student. If it had been common for participants to describe both the original advisor and new advisor as mentors, one could argue, for example, that well-adjusted students tend to be satisfied and to seek mentorship in every situation. Yet, the present results do not support such an interpretation.

There are many potential explanations for such findings. For participants who identified the original advisor as a mentor but did not classify the new advisor as such, it is possible that they were less interested in developing a mentoring relationship after having had a mentoring relationship with their original advisor. It is also possible that these participants reporting the original advisor as a mentor were still utilizing their original advisor to fill the mentoring role and therefore did not need additional mentorship. It may also be the case that once advisees lost such a special relationship, it was hard to replace it. It also may have been challenging for participants to develop a mentorship with their new advisor if research interests did not match, especially given the important role that research match plays in the advisory alliance (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Kahn & Schlosser, 2010). It may also be the case that participants' attachment styles are influencing such a finding. Five participants had higher than average attachment anxiety scores on the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR). Attachment anxiety, defined by a fear of rejection and abandonment by others, is associated with longer and more complicated grief (Meier, A.M., Carr, D.R., Currier, J.M., & Neimeyer, R.A., 2013). Therefore, it may be that such findings represent the difficulty developing mentorship after the attachment system has been activated and perceived abandonment is experienced, particularly for those with attachment anxiety. It is also conceivable that advisors themselves may have influenced this finding. New advisors do not typically select their advisees after a loss occurs and may therefore be less invested in the student and provide less mentorship. It is also possible that the new advisor was at a loss regarding how to mentor a student whose research interests did not match their own.

For those few participants who did not identify the original advisor as a mentor yet found mentorship with the new advisor, it is possible that they were more invested in developing mentorship given the lack of mentorship that existed with their previous advisor. It is also possible that the loss they experienced created more of a desire and a need for mentorship with the new advisor. Advisees may have also found that the increased focus on their own research tasks and professional goals, as opposed to aiding in the tasks and goals of the original advisor, fostered mentorship with the new advisor. It may also be that some advisors are conscious of the difficulties associated with advisor loss and emphasize mentorship with their new advisee. Regardless of why the present results emerged, such findings suggest that it may be helpful for new advisors to have explicit conversations with new advisees about how they can best meet their mentoring needs after a loss occurs. More research is indicated to investigate what may be contributing to or limiting mentorship after loss of an advisor.

Results of the present study also indicate that the new advisor's role as a mentor may have less to do with the overall positive or negative meaning that the advisee makes of the loss. For the four participants that thought of the new advisor as a mentor, three identified the loss of the original advisor as something that had an overall negative impact on graduate training. It may be that the new advisors' mentorship came too late to mitigate the damage or negative effects of the loss experienced by the advisee.

Advisees varied only slightly in how they selected a new advisor, with all but one advisee choosing their new advisor. The new advisor was most often chosen based on a personality or demographic fit, as opposed to the original advisor who was most often chosen based on a research fit. Despite this, six participants identified similarities with their new advisor in terms of research. All six of these participants categorized their overall experience with their new advisor as positive, and four of the six comprised the complete group of four participants that identified the new advisor as a mentor. Therefore, it could be that research plays an important role in maintaining a positive advisory working alliance and building a mentorship relationship. Past research supports this notion; advisory working alliance has been found to be linked to advisees' positive attitudes towards research (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001) and to research productivity (Kahn & Schlosser, 2010). Further, Schlosser et al. (2003) found that a focus on research throughout advising is linked to more satisfactory advising relationships. In addition, Clark, Harden, and Johnson (2000) found that an emphasis on collaborative research between professors and students was linked to a higher prevalence of mentoring. Therefore, research similarities with the new advisor may be particularly critical in ensuring satisfaction within these advising relationships.

Participants also emphasized cultural factors in discussing the relationship with the new advisor. Differences in various socio-cultural factors (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) were discussed as challenging elements in the transition to and relationship with the new advisor. Advisees often discussed likeness in social identity factors as something favorable within the advising relationship. These results are in line with theoretical work of Sbaratta, Tirpak, and Schlosser (2015), who theorized that a demographically matched (male-male) advisory dyad would be advantageous. Despite this, differences across identity do not necessarily mean a negative advisory relationship. Some participants spoke about the new advisor's multicultural sensitivity as a mitigating factor in helping to ease the transition and create greater comfort with the new advisor. Therefore, cultural identity differences within the advising dyad may be eased by the new advisor's multicultural competence.

Findings also indicated that time since the loss occurred, as well as the number of program requirements completed (e.g., thesis, dissertation), may be linked to how the advisee readjusts after the loss. Of the five participants who identified the loss as having had a positive impact on graduate training, three had the loss occur two or more years prior to the interview and had the majority of program requirements completed (i.e., at least three out of five major program requirements). Four of the six participants who described that the loss had a negative impact on graduate training had the loss occur between 6 months to 2 years prior and had two or fewer program requirements completed. Although one participant who identified a negative impact of the loss did not fit into these categories, he or she spoke extensively about how the experience significantly delayed graduation from the program. These findings suggest that time may be beneficial in helping mitigate the negative impact of the loss. This aligns with the literature on bereavement that found the distress experienced after death decreases with time (Feigelman, Jordan, & Gorman, 2008; Ott, Lueger, Kelber, & Prigerson, 2007). Such findings may also align with Aron and Aron's self-expansion theory (1997). This theory states that humans have a self-motivation to expand the self and utilize relationships as a means to reach this goal. The theory postulates that individuals seek relationships because they increase resources and perspectives and ultimately expand the self. It is possible that advisor loss may be a disruption of that very goal, particularly when few program requirements have been met or the individual is not far along in his or her program. Thus, the loss may be perceived to have less of a negative impact when it does not greatly hinder the goal towards self-expansion. Future research could examine such a question.

Time may also be beneficial in other ways. For example, more time may enable students to mature or give faculty more time to respond. More time may also allow students to increase in self-efficacy and complete more program requirements. Self-efficacy is defined as "people's judgements of their own capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p.391). With greater self-efficacy comes greater psychological well-being and a greater ability to meet life's challenges and achieve personal satisfaction (Gosselin & Maddux, 2003). Self-efficacy beliefs are also predictive of effective coping with traumatic life events (Epel, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 1999; Benight, Swift, Sanger, Smith, & Zeppelin, 2000) and more adaptive bereavement responses (Bauer & Bonanno, 2001). Theory also suggests that self-efficacy rises when specific domain-relevant tasks are successfully accomplished (Schunk,1989), so completion of requirements over time would likely result in increased self-efficacy. Greater self-efficacy that comes with meeting academic requirements and career-related goals, in turn, may be linked to more positive readjustment to the loss of an advisor over time. Greater research self-efficacy has also been found to be linked to more positive reports of the advising relationship (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). This may ultimately help the advisee have a positive advisory alliance with the new advisor and an overall easier adjustment to the loss.

Yet somewhat surprisingly, year within the program does not seem to be linked to perceived adjustment to the loss. Of the six participants that identified the loss had a negative impact, four were earlier in their program at the time of the interview (i.e., between their first and third year) and two were later in their program (i.e., in their fourth year or above). Of the five participants who indicated a positive impact of the loss, three were earlier in their program at the time of the interview and two were later in their program. Interestingly, all ten participants indicated that the loss occurred either during their first or second year in their program. Thus, it is hard to identify whether year in program at the time of loss is linked to any particular outcome. Although there is no evidence that year in program at the time of loss or time of interview were linked to better or worse outcomes, it seems that time since the loss occurred may be. Thus, it may be that further hindsight and time to readjust and make meaning of the loss are important.

Readjusting after the loss seems to come with making meaning of the loss, as well as taking care of the logistical concerns necessary to complete the program. This idea of "making meaning" seemed to be very important for participants. The ability to make meaning may occur with increased reflection and with natural movement through the program. How meaning is made may also be based on how the individual develops as a professional and how easily he or she completes program requirements. One participant spoke to this, discussing being far enough along in the program and thus able to feel more positively than right after the loss occurred. This advisee referenced the three to four-year gap since the initial loss occurred, crediting the increased feelings of accomplishment to this lapse in time.

This idea of making meaning is one that is common in the literature on grief and bereavement. Often, individuals must reassess and revise their sense of the world after it has been challenged by a loss (Neimeyer, 2002). The literature on bereavement explores how this helps individuals who are grieving organize, understand, and have some control over what they are experiencing. This can help link the loss to increased maturity, competence, and overall life perspective. Such personal growth and meaning making have been described by some as a "silver lining" in the process of bereavement (Neimeyer, 2004). In contrast, those who are unable to make meaning of a loss may experience prolonged distress and grief (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). Whether or not meaning of the loss was made was something most participants either directly or indirectly addressed within the current study. For those who made meaning of the loss, there was often discussion of an improved view of self, more professional development opportunities, and an overall more efficient or effective navigation of the program or their research. In contrast, those that did not make meaning of the loss often described a hindered view of self, fewer professional development opportunities, negative mental health outcomes, and less efficient or effective navigation of the program or their research. Just as is true in the bereavement literature, seeing personal growth or development from the loss seemed to be a critical component of coping. Theory on attachment indicates that meaning may be harder to make for those with an insecure attachment style who generally have greater difficulty coping with loss (Bowlby, 1980). A study by Graci and Fivush (2017) found that higher levels of attachment avoidance is linked to less narrative meaning making and less growth from traumatic experiences. Yet, this study did not find a similar link for attachment anxiety. This may indicate that deactivating strategies may contribute to a decreased ability for meaning to be made. Results of the present study were not consistent with the pattern found by Graci and Fivush , as two of the four participants with elevated attachment avoidance explicitly discussed positive outcomes of the loss and alluded to the ways in which they had made meaning of their experiences. Yet, there is still much that yet to be learned about personality traits that may either help or hinder one's ability to make meaning after the loss of an advisor. Thus, future research would benefit from including personality measures to investigate such questions about the personal and environmental factors influencing the experience of advisor loss.

Cognitive restructuring may also help explain the meaning participants make of the loss after it has occurred. Theory indicates that after a death, cognitive restructuring helps a grieving individual reconstruct life without their loved one (Berder, 2004-5; Bowlby, 1980). Cognitive restructuring after advisor loss may serve a similar purpose; the advisee may reconstruct views of advising and their graduate experience. For example, an advisee accustomed to a more directive approach may have to adjust expectations if his or her new advisor takes a less active approach. Cognitive restructuring is demonstrated by the way in which advisees spoke about changes in how the advising relationship was viewed after the loss. Some advisees came to see the advising relationship as more important than they initially thought it was; advisees often realized just how important the advising relationship was after it was gone. Other times, this shift was due to more effective advising by the new advisor, demonstrating how important this relationship could be. Conversely, some advisees came to realize that they needed to lower their expectations of the advising relationship after realizing that no advisor would ever be perfect.

Attachment style of the advisee may also be related to how advisees readjust after the experience of advisor loss. The present study examined whether higher levels of attachment avoidance or attachment anxiety were associated with particular outcomes or responses to advisor loss. Three participants had higher than average scores on both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance scales, whereas two participants solely had elevated attachment anxiety scores and one had an elevated attachment avoidance score. The three participants with higher than average scores on both the attachment anxiety scale and the attachment avoidance scale, as well as the two participants with solely elevated attachment anxiety scores often emphasized their concerns about themselves and their future in the program. This included concerns regarding the program timeline, project completion, and finding a new advisor. Self-care after the loss also seemed to be linked to attachment style of the participant. The two participants that were solely elevated on the attachment anxiety subscale mentioned a lack of self-care and a tendency to avoid seeking the support of others after the advisor loss. This was not common among other participants who were at or below the average score on attachment anxiety. Florian, Mikulincer, and Bucholtz (1995) found that those with greater security of attachment, as compared to those who are high on attachment anxiety and/or attachment avoidance, were more likely to turn to partners, friends, and parents in times of need, and were more likely to benefit from these supportive interactions. Thus, this may explain the lack of self-care described by those with higher than average scores on attachment anxiety in the present study. Not engaging in self-care or seeking out social support may have led these individuals to handle the situation alone and ultimately experience greater amounts of anxiety. This aligns with past research that has found that those high in attachment anxiety tend to experience greater distress and be more emotionally reactive and sensitive to problems experienced (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005; Wei, Vogel, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005).

It is also of note that these two participants indicated that their original advisors were mentors and that their new advisors were not mentors, despite both indicating that their new advisory relationship was positive. Attachment anxiety is defined in terms of fear of rejection and abandonment by others (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). Thus, it is possible that perceived abandonment may have prevented the new advisor from being seen as a mentor for the participants with higher than average attachment anxiety. Additionally, research has found that those with insecure attachment (i.e., high in attachment anxiety and/or avoidance) were more likely to view interpersonal conflict as threatening and were less likely to utilize successful conflict-resolution strategies as compared to their securely attached counterparts **(**Gaines et al., 1997; Pistole, 1989**).** This may have also contributed to lack of mentorship with the new advisor, as successful conflict resolution has been found to be a critical component of successful mentorship (Punyanunt-Carter & Wrench, 2008).

There was nothing notable or distinguishing about the management of the advisor loss for the one individual who had a higher than average attachment avoidance score without an elevated attachment anxiety score. In fact, this participant described an overall positive impact with very few perceived negative changes or effects related to the loss. Although this in itself is not particularly remarkable, it is interesting to conceptualize such a finding in the context of this advisee's attachment style. In their research, Cassidy and Kobak (1988) identified *deactivation* as an attachment-related regulatory strategy utilized by individuals high in attachment avoidance. Deactivation refers to disengaging from the attachment needs and denial of distress. Thus, it may be that the individual high in attachment avoidance was prone to denying the distress experienced due to the loss. Yet given the small representation of attachment avoidance in the present sample, further research is indicated before conclusions can be drawn. It may therefore be helpful for future research on advisor loss to be conducted with students with higher than average attachment avoidance scores. This will help to gain a more complete picture as to how such students may uniquely be experiencing the loss.

Such findings related to participants' attachment styles must be interpreted with caution given the small sample size and the qualitative analysis. Future research would benefit from examining this further to better understand the role that attachment style of advisee plays in advisor loss. If these findings regarding participant attachment style are replicated in future research, there could be implications for programs and advisors. Although the majority of students may demonstrate a secure attachment style and naturally seek out supports and engage in self-care to manage the loss of an advisor, students with higher levels of attachment anxiety may need additional guidance in this area.

**Implications for Advisors**

The present study elucidates the experiences of advisor loss among counseling psychology doctoral students. Given what is known about high rates of faculty turnover and mobility within higher education, it is important to consider implications of the current study for advisors or other faculty members who may have contact with students who have experienced the loss of an advisor. The advisee stress and anxiety that may initially follow the experience of advisor loss may be inevitable. Yet, this is not the end of the story. The meaning that advisees make after the fact does not necessarily have to be negative. There are certain things advisors and programs can be aware of to help ensure minimal disruption or negative outcomes related to advisor loss. The following is intended to provide guidance based on findings of the present study. More research will be needed in this area, but in the meantime, the following suggestions may be useful for advisors leaving their institutions, new advisors taking on students who recently experienced advisor loss, or programs that may be dealing with this issue.

First, advisors may consider the important role that strong mentorship has in graduate training. Research indicates that students who identified a mentor throughout graduate training demonstrated a great number of publications, greater levels of grant funding, and an overall higher level of productivity within graduate work (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002). Dohn and Cummings (2002) found that having a research mentor during graduate school predicted whether one continued to engage in research following graduation. Mentored graduate students also reported greater overall satisfaction with their doctoral programs than those with no mentorship relationships (Clark et al., 2000). Therefore, it is important for advisors to consider ways in which they can foster mentorship. It is important for advisors to have explicit conversations with advisees regarding what type of mentorship they are looking for and what they need in order for mentorship to be possible. Discussions about how students will seek mentoring throughout the transition may be particularly useful.

Next, results of the present study suggest that it may be important for advisors, program directors, and faculty to show students support in the face of advisor loss. Throughout the present study, participants seemed particularly focused on the lack of support shown by their original advisor, program, or department. One student specifically spoke about the lack of response from all faculty except for one faculty member who made a conscious effort to reach out. This individual spoke about how influential that faculty member was in helping to cope with the loss. This story illustrates the essential role that support can play in such situations. Therefore, showing support may be critically important. This support can come in various forms. Students who spoke of positive support from faculty discussed individual or group meetings to process the loss, increased communication and transparency via the program director or original advisor, and student mentorship programs that helped the individual cope and navigate the program. Thus, faculty of counseling psychology doctoral programs could realize the importance of their support and come together to provide assistance and encouragement for students who are experiencing such a loss.

The next piece of advice for faculty members relates to attachment style of advisees. Attachment style of the advisee may likely be playing a role in how the advisee is dealing with the loss. As indicated by the results, higher levels of attachment anxiety may be indicative of less adaptive coping, as well as greater concern about meeting program requirements and finishing the program on time. Research has found that individuals with secure attachment styles have more social supports available to them (Kobac & Sceery, 1988) and are more likely to seek emotional support and social support from others as a means of coping (Simpson, Rholes, &

Nelligan, 1992; Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993). Therefore, it may be important for advisors to be aware of individual advisee differences that make it easier or more challenging to cope with advisor loss in adaptive ways. Because of individual differences (e.g., in attachment style), some students may need additional supports in place to help develop effective coping mechanisms for dealing with the loss, whereas other students may cope well without additional supports.

It may also be imperative for advisors to remember the importance of the advising relationship and to keep it as a focus within their work with students. Research indicates that the advisory relationship is very important to graduate students (Clark et al., 2000). Research has also found that more positive perceptions of the advisory alliance are linked to advisees' use of more effective coping strategies (Farrelly, 2007). Students' perceptions of the advisory alliance were also positively correlated with students' self-reported research self-efficacy (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Schlosser and Gelso (p. 158) conceptualized the advisory alliance in terms of three constructs: *Rapport, Apprenticeship, and Identification-Individuation.* Participants spoke to all three of these areas in discussing the relationship with each advisor. *Rapport* was spoken about in regard to the interpersonal relationship advisees developed with advisors. *Apprenticeship* was discussed when participants mentioned professional development tasks as an important part of the relationship with the original advisor and new advisor. *Identification-individuation* was spoken about regarding similarities and differences that participants saw as integral parts of the relationship with their original advisor and new advisor. Such similarities and differences were related to research, style of conducting work, and socio-cultural identities. Tending to such components seems to be important for advisors in maintaining a positive advisory alliance.

Research has also been found to be a critical component in the creation of a positive advisory alliance. Studies have shown that a focus on collaborative research within advising is linked to more satisfactory advisory alliances and greater mentorship (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Schlosser et al., 2003). Therefore, advisors may be helpful by encouraging engagement in research and fostering research self-efficacy. The important role that research holds within doctoral training is visible in the current study, with all but one participant mentioning the effect the loss had on their research. Sometimes advisees were able to respond in adaptive ways, and the research process was navigated more effectively; sometimes advisees were not able to adapt to the new, post-loss situation and perceived the loss to be related to the slowing or halt of research tasks. Although it may be impossible for a research match to be forged after the experience of advisor loss, there is may still be something advisors can take away from results of the present study. Effective advising or mentorship is not solely about a research match. Although some participants in the present study mentioned a research match as one factor that contributed to a strong advisory alliance, this was not the only factor. In fact, some participants identified feeling more able to pursue their own research interests once the original advisor, with whom they shared a research match, left the program. A few participants mentioned that despite having a different research focus than their advisor, similarities were present in how research was approached and conceptualized. Therefore, engaging advisees in conversation about how students think about and approach research may be important. Further, if the advisee and advisor do not share a research match, the advisor may try to find other ways to foster the advisee’s passions and encourage the development of the advisee’s own research.

It may be helpful for advisors to remember that an advisee’s sense of agency may be critically important during the experience of the loss. Giving as much notice as possible, communicating openly, and helping the advisee search for a new advisor are all ways that the student can be given some control in the experience of loss. Advisors should also present as many options as possible as a way to increase agency. If there is an option for the advisee to go with the advisor to the new program, the advisor could help the student explore the pros and cons that such a decision would entail. If a student will be able to select a new advisor, the original advisor should help the student understand how to best explore their options and make a choice. Finally, if the original advisor is not available to assist with exploration of options and choices, the student may need interim help in navigating his or her choices prior to identifying a new advisor. An overall increase in transparency is a pragmatic step that advisors could take as a means of increasing the level of agency a student feels he or she has. This may help to enable advisees to have a sense of control in a situation that often involves a lack of control for the student.

It is also important for advisors to remember the role that cultural identities play in advising relationships. Although cultural similarities may ease the transition to a new advisor or help aid in an advisee feeling comfortable, this is not the end of the story. Advisors who differ from their advisees in socio-cultural identities are not destined for a failed advising relationship. In such relationships, multicultural competence is essential. Advisees indicated an appreciation for open discussions about differences within the advisory dyad. A number of advisees reported that creating space for such open conversations helped to bridge advisor-advisee differences in identities and build positive relationship.

Advisors should also make sure to acknowledge and respect the relationship between the advisee and the original advisor. A few participants mentioned appreciating their NA's willingness to let the original advisor provide mentorship, even after the new advisor had taken over as the advisor. This comes with the new advisor's respect and understanding that an important relationship may still exist between the advisee and the original advisor. It is important for new advisors to assess the needs of their advisee and see which of these needs are still being met by the original advisor. One participant spoke to this issue specifically, emphasizing how challenging it was when such issues were not clarified. This student described a situation in which the original advisor thought that the new advisor was taking over certain responsibilities and the new advisor thought the original advisor was still actively engaged with the student. This resulted in a diffusion of responsibilities and the student not having his or her advising needs met. This clearly illustrates the importance of all advisors being on the same page. The new advisor may be helpful in asking specific questions about the nature of the current relationship with the original advisor and the ways in which he or she can honor this relationship, while also working to develop his or her relationship with the student.

Finally, the following is a concrete suggestion based on the findings of the present study. This suggestion is aimed specifically at faculty and administrators of counseling psychology doctoral programs. Students continually discussed some of the anxiety and confusion that came with the experience of advisor loss. Much of this was related to questions about what to do, where to turn, and how to go about dealing with logistical issues involved with the loss. Participants often described having a lack of control in such situations and feeling that most of their questions were left unanswered. One participant particularly satisfied with his or her program's response discussed a helpful meeting that the program held to discuss next steps and address any questions or concerns that students were having. Together, the present results suggest it may be very helpful for such meetings to be routinely held when an advisor leaves. Further, programs could help their students by proactively addressing procedures to be followed in the case of advisor loss, for example via a statement in the student handbook.  This statement should include who will follow up with the student after the loss occurs, the timeline in which this communication will take place, and who the student can contact with any questions or concerns.  Such statements may also include specific information on how a student should go about identifying a new advisor to work with. Such proactive communication would help to outline procedures, provide guidance to remaining faculty, and help students gain a sense of control by knowing what steps would be taken if loss was to occur.

**Summary, Limitations, and Future Research**

Given what is known about advisors leaving their programs and the high rates of advisor loss among doctoral students within counseling psychology (Aggarwal & Medury, 2012), it is important to understand advisee experiences of advisor loss.  The present qualitative study was the first to focus on this phenomenon and begin to examine how counseling psychology doctoral students deal with advisor loss.  The present study offered some promising results, indicating that there are things that advisors and programs can do to help ensure a more positive experience for students experiencing such a loss. The current study also examined advisee attachment style as a potential advisee characteristic that may be linked to advisee experiences of advisor loss. Further research, however, is indicated to explore other advisee characteristics that may be linked to positive outcomes in the face of advisor loss.  For example, self-efficacy beliefs, dispositional optimism, life satisfaction, and perceived social support are all advisee characteristics that may be related to more adaptive responses to advisor loss.  Research has linked self-efficacy beliefs to effective coping with traumatic events (Epel, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 1999; Benight, Swift, Sanger, Smith, & Zeppelin, 2000) and more adaptive bereavement responses (Bauer & Bonanno, 2001). Research has also linked dispositional optimism, life satisfaction, and perceived social support to positive thinking and happiness (Caprara & Steca, 2005). Further research is indicated to examine these constructs further and explore if they are connected to how advisees cope and reorganize after the experience of advisor loss.

There are some limitations of the present study that must be considered when interpreting the findings. First is the small sample size inherent in most qualitative research. Given the relatively low-frequency event of advisor loss, the general pool of potential participants was limited. Thus, although a sample size of 10 students falls within the recommendations made by Hill et al. (1997) for a CQR study, there are still some questions about generalizability. In addition, the participants who opted to participate in the present study may have had particularly strong reactions to the experience of the advisor loss, whether positive or negative. Those who did not feel largely affected by the loss may have been less likely to want to participate and tell their story. Therefore, this sample may be of a particular subset of the population of students who experience advisor loss. The researcher added an incentive as a thank you for participation as a means to manage this effect and create a more diverse sample and more generalizable findings. Yet, this is a limitation that must be considered when examining the study's results.

Additionally, the self-report and retrospective element true of all qualitative research may have impacted the findings (Polkinghorne, 2005). Amount of time since the participant experienced the advisor loss ranged from six months to five years. Subsequently, some participants had much more time to process the event, gain additional support, and make meaning of what occurred than did other participants. Future research should consider this and try to control for this factor or limit inclusion criteria. Longitudinal examination of students experiencing advisor loss may help to elucidate the processes through which positive (or negative) advisee outcomes occur.

Another consideration is the large variability present in the experience of advisor loss. The present study limited participation to counseling psychology doctoral students. Yet aside from this, inclusion criteria were quite broad, allowing for a broader picture of the phenomenon within counseling psychology training. Although common experiences and feelings were examined through the present study, there were still many aspects of each experience that were unique to that advisory dyad. Whereas some advisor loss was due to advisor choice, other losses were due to circumstances outside of the advisor's control. Whereas some advisees were working with their advisor for a year prior to the loss, other advisees were working with their advisor for five years. Further, some students had just experienced the loss whereas others had experienced it many years prior. The variability in the circumstances around advisor loss made the balance of recognizing unique elements and finding common themes a challenging one. The current study was the first to examine the experience the advisor loss. Therefore, it was important for this research to take an introductory and broad approach to develop a snapshot of what this experience is like. Yet, future research should expand upon the present research and work to make this broad topic somewhat narrower. For example, this could be done by limiting the sample to students who experienced the loss more recently, or by focusing on the experience immediately after the loss instead of trying to examine the experience before, during, and after. Larger sample sizes or more defined inclusion criteria may be helpful in better understanding what factors are affecting the experience. Additionally, the present research did not utilize any objective measures of student outcomes (e.g., research productivity, quality of dissertation, measurable aspects of career attainment, etc.). Future research may wish to examine such measurable outcomes in addition to perceived student outcomes. Participant follow-up could be useful to gain such information. Such follow-up could be used to ask participants about current status within their program (e.g., dropped out, graduated, still enrolled). If the participant is still enrolled, anticipated graduation date and current dissertation status could be obtained. For those who may have dropped out, reasons for this could be assessed to better understand if it was related to the participant's experience of advisor loss. For those participants who had graduated, further information can be obtained regarding how many years it took to complete the program. Additional questions could be asked to assess participants' current careers and their overall level of satisfaction in this area.

As was mentioned above, the present study only examined the experience of counseling psychology doctoral students. This was due to the unique and often differing elements of the advising relationship that exists across counseling psychology programs. A study conducted by Barnes, Williams, and Archer (2010) found that discipline structures and cultures led to different advising relationships across disciplines. Barnes et al. concluded that what makes for a positive advising relationship in one field does not necessarily make for a positive relationship in another field. It is possible that some of the unique elements of counseling psychology (i.e., a focus on multiculturalism and social justice) may create room for a more egalitarian approach, open dialogue, and increased advisee comfort. Therefore, future research could benefit from expanding to other disciplines to see the similarities and differences in how advisor loss is experienced across field of study. Such an expansion would help to broaden our understanding of how advisor loss is experienced more generally. It is important to note that for the present study, interpretation of results of the present study are limited to counseling psychology.

Additionally, the present study utilized both categories and subcategories to group the data, instead of merely using categories. Hill (2012) mentions the use of subcategories as a way to further present and classify the data. Given the robust nature of many of the domains and categories in the present study, subcategories were utilized. This helped to clarify the range of data within each larger category. Yet, this may have also created artificially robust categories because of the large amount of data comprising each larger category. Therefore, this must be considered in looking at the frequency codes assigned to each category within the present study.

Finally, the structured nature of the interview that was utilized in the present study may have limited participants' responses. Because of the more structured approach, participants may have been primed to talk about something mentioned by the researcher instead of constructing their own narrative. A more structured approach was taken due to the wide range of situational factors in each participant's experience. This ensured that consistent information was gathered across participants. Future research may benefit from a less structured interview protocol.

Furthermore, analysis of the present data allowed for additional questions to emerge that should be addressed by future research on advisor loss. First is the issue of time since the advisor loss. Analysis of the present study indicated that for four of the six participants who described a negative impact of the loss on graduate training, the loss had occurred more recently (e.g., 6 months to 2 years prior). Is the amount of time since the loss was experienced something that the participant's saw as affecting their experience of the loss? Further, if a longitudinal study were to be conducted and those four participants examined in another two years, would the perceived impact of the loss be different? Next is a question for students who identified the new advisor as a positive advisor and/or mentor, yet still perceived the loss to have had an overall negative impact on graduate training. For these students, what caused them to still feel as though the advisor loss had a negative impact on graduate training and what, if anything, could have helped ensure the loss would not have a lasting negative impact on their graduate training? Finally, a question related to faculty response emerged. The importance of faculty responses to the loss was made clear in results of the present study, with students emphasizing the significance of faculty's support and encouragement through the process of adjusting to the loss of an advisor. Given the importance of the faculty response, what additional steps could advisors and faculty take to address the needs of students during this time? These three additional questions from the in-depth, integrative analysis of the data obtained from each participant should be explored by future research.

Despite its limitations, the current study was the first of its kind. The research tells us that advisors are leaving counseling psychology programs at steady rates. Yet, that is where the research seems to end. Until now, no study has explored the implications such mobility has on the students enrolled in these doctoral programs. Given what is already known about the importance of the advising relationship, it is critical to know what happens when such relationships come to an end during graduate training. Results of the current study indicate that although the experience of advisor loss may commonly come with initial anxiety, there is more to the story. The present study was the first to show the ways in which advisor loss may be greatly impacting students in counseling psychology doctoral programs. It also aimed to give faculty and programs a closer look at what can be done to mitigate some of the stresses that are inherent in the experience of advisor loss. Although the present study is a start, it is by no means an ending. Future research is indicated to continue exploring this critical topic. This study comprehensively examines some of the common experiences of students that experience advisor loss. Yet, more information is needed regarding the factors that lead to more adaptive responses and to more positive meaning being made of the loss. Although advisor loss may be an unavoidable component of doctoral training programs, the present study should leave faculty and students with hope that much can be done to ensure that students deal with advisor loss in an adaptive way.

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Table 1

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 1: Relationship with Original Advisor Prior to Departure*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Tasks included collaborating on OA's research | General (9) |
| Tasks included participant's own research | Variant (5) |
| Successful guidance by OA | Typical (8) |
| Helped P understand the nuances of research | Variant (5) |
| Helped P with professional development | Variant (3) |
| Unsuccessful guidance by OA | Typical (8) |
| Too much or too little direction | Typical (6) |
| Lack of availability and support | Variant (5) |
| Positive interpersonal relationship with OA | Typical (7) |
| Positive attributes of OA (e.g., supportive, friendly) | Variant (4) |
| Multicultural awareness | Variant (3) |
| Mixed interpersonal relationship with OA | Variant (4) |
| Boundaries were lacking or too strict | Variant (3) |
| Similarities with OA in research interest | Typical (8) |
| Similar overarching research topic with nuanced differences | Typical (6) |
| No similarities with OA in research interest | Variant (2) |
| Similarities with OA in style of conducting work | Variant (5) |
| No similarities with OA in style of conducting work | Variant (5) |
| Positive overall experience with OA | Typical (8) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Negative overall experience with OA | Rare (1) |
| Neutral overall experience with OA | Variant (3) |
| OA was a mentor | Variant (5) |
| OA was not a mentor | Variant (5) |

Table 2

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 2: Experience of Advisor Loss*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Informed of loss by OA | Typical (8) |
| Informed of loss by other (faculty or students) | Variant (2) |
| Notice period of loss | General (10) |
| Not far in advance | General (9) |
| Adequate Notice | Rare (1) |
| OA left due to offer at new institution | Typical (6) |
| OA left due to health condition | Rare (1) |
| OA left due to department politics/multicultural concerns | Variant (4) |
| OA was denied tenure | Rare (1) |
| P was given option to move with advisor | Variant (5) |
| Didn't go because new program didn't fit career trajectory | Variant (3) |
| Didn't go because of personal/financial reasons | Variant (4) |
| Thoughts when informed of loss | General (10) |
| Future in program (e.g., requirements, new advisor) | General (9) |
| Negativity towards program | Variant (3) |
| Feelings when informed of loss | General (10) |
| Anxious | Typical (7) |
| Angry | Variant (3) |
| Hurt | Variant (4) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Shock | Variant (3) |
| Relief | Variant (2) |
| Behaviors when informed of loss | Typical (6) |
| Planned for next steps | Variant (3) |
| Sought social support | Variant (2) |
| Advocated for advisor | Rare (1) |
| Changes noted in advisor behavior/relationship | Variant (5) |
| Advisor more distant | Variant (3) |
| Advisor more open | Variant (2) |

Table 3

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 3: Responses to Advisor Loss (Self and Others)*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Helpful faculty/systemic response | Variant (3) |
| Response was supportive | Variant (2) |
| Saw faculty in a more positive light | Variant (2) |
| Helpful peer response | Typical (6) |
| Response was supportive | Variant (5) |
| Peers united to advocate together | Rare (1) |
| Adaptive self response | General (9) |
| Improved view of self | Variant (4) |
| Engaged in self-care | General (9) |
| Sought support from program (e.g., peers) | Variant (5) |
| Sought support from outside (e.g., parents) | Typical (8) |
| Navigated the research process more effectively and/or efficiently (e.g., explored new areas aligned with interests) | Variant (5) |
| Sought out own professional development opportunities and/or new career path | Variant (5) |
| Navigated the program more effectively and/or efficiently | Variant (3) |
| Unhelpful faculty response | Typical (8) |
| Response limited to logistics/ did not include mentorship or support | Variant (4) |

| | |
|---|---|
| No response | Typical (6) |
| Saw faculty in a less positive light | Typical (6) |
| Unhelpful peer response | Variant (5) |
| Peers consumed with own anxiety and/or loss | Variant (4) |
| No response | Variant (3) |
| Maladaptive self response | Typical (8) |
| Hindered view of self | Variant (2) |
| Engaged in no self care | Rare (1) |
| Navigated the research process less effectively and/or efficiently | Variant (4) |
| Experienced negative mental health outcomes (e.g., depression) | Variant (2) |
| Navigated the program less effectively and/or efficiently | Variant (4) |
| Less exposure to professional development opportunities/desired career path | Variant (2) |
| Positive impact on graduate training | Variant (5) |
| Negative impact on graduate training | Typical (6) |

Table 4

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 4: Transition to a New Advisor*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Assigned new advisor based on faculty advising load | Rare (1) |
| NA chosen by advisee | General (9) |
| Personality/Demographic fit | Variant (5) |
| Research fit | Variant (4) |
| Interim advisor between OA and NA | Variant (2) |
| Prior relationship to new advisor | General (10) |
| Collaborative and/or mentorship relationship | Variant (4) |
| No formal relationship | Typical (6) |
| Positive components of transition | General (8) |
| NA was established in program (e.g., knowledge of program) | Variant (4) |
| Work style of NA (e.g., timely, available, encouraged autonomy) | Variant (4) |
| Research Match | Rare (1) |
| Advisee was given freedom (e.g., to keep research topic) | Variant (2) |
| Challenging components of transition | Typical (6) |
| Personality of NA | Variant (2) |
| Work style of NA (e.g., lack of availability, not helpful) | Variant (3) |
| Research-related issues | Variant (4) |
| Programmatic issues (e.g., too many advisees, new to program) | Variant (3) |
| Cultural factors of transition | Typical (6) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cultural similarities | Variant (2) |
| Eased transition | Rare (1) |
| Cultural differences | Variant (4) |
| Made transition more challenging | Variant (2) |
| Personality factors of transition | General (9) |
| P’s personality eased transition | Rare (1) |
| NA’s personality eased transition | Variant (5) |
| NA’s personality hindered transition | Rare (1) |
| Intersection of NA and P’s personality eased transition | Rare (1) |
| Intersection of NA and P’s personality hindered transition | Rare (1) |

Table 5

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 5: Relationship with New Advisor*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Tasks included collaborating on NA's research | Variant (3) |
| Tasks included participant's own research | Typical (8) |
| No tasks worked on with NA | Rare (1) |
| Successful guidance by NA | General (10) |
| NA helped with research | Variant (5) |
| NA's style of providing feedback and support (e.g., prompt) | Typical (6) |
| Unsuccessful guidance by NA | Typical (6) |
| Lack of availability and support | Variant (4) |
| Lack of knowledge of P's research | Rare (1) |
| Positive interpersonal relationship with NA | Variant (5) |
| Professional relationship lacking interpersonal closeness with NA | Variant (4) |
| Negative interpersonal relationship with NA | Rare (1) |
| Similarities with NA in research interest/conceptualization of research | Typical (6) |
| Experienced as positive or neutral by advisee | Typical (6) |
| No similarities with NA in research interest | Variant (4) |
| Experienced as positive or neutral by advisee | Variant (2) |
| Experienced as negative by advisee | Variant (2) |
| Similarities with NA in style of conducting work | Typical (6) |
| Positive overall experience with NA | Typical (7) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Negative overall experience with NA | Rare (1) |
| Neutral overall experience with NA | Variant (2) |
| NA was a mentor | Variant (4) |
| NA was not a mentor | Typical (6) |

Table 6

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 6: Current Relationship with Original Advisor*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Still in contact with OA | Typical (6) |
| Frequent contact | Variant (3) |
| Infrequent contact | Variant (3) |
| Not in contact | Variant (4) |
| Satisfied with current OA relationship | Variant (4) |
| Dissatisfied with current OA relationship | Variant (4) |
| Neutral/mixed about current OA relationship | Variant (2) |

Table 7

*Categories and Sub-Categories for Domain 7: Views of Advising Relationship*

| **Categories and Sub-Categories** | **Frequency** |
|---|---|
| Perceived importance of advising relationship | General (10) |
| Important due to support and guidance | Typical (6) |
| Important in researching professional development goals | Variant (4) |
| Changes experienced in how advising relationship is viewed | Typical (8) |

Appendix A

Training Director Recruitment Email

Dear Training Director,

My name is Stephanie Codos and I am a doctoral student in Lehigh University's Counseling Psychology program. Under the guidance of Dr. Susan Woodhouse, I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation study. This study will examine the experience of counseling psychology doctoral students who lost their advisor during their graduate training due to the advisor leaving the program (e.g., retirement, a new job) or a program closure. Through this study, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of advisor loss from the perspective of the advisee who went through it. Counseling psychology doctoral students will be given the opportunity to share their experience of advisor loss and any changes they faced that were related to the loss. Given that this is a new and unexplored area of research, student participation will be crucial in understanding advisor loss and the impact that this experience may have for doctoral student.

I would like to ask for your help in forwarding the participation request below to graduate students in your program or any other individuals you know that may be interested in participating. This research has been approved by the Lehigh University Institutional Review Board (IRB# 801733-2). If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at slc411@lehigh.edu or Dr. Susan Woodhouse at woodhouse@lehigh.edu. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Codos, M.Ed

Lehigh University

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Email

Dear participant,

My name is Stephanie Codos and I am doctoral student in the counseling psychology program at Lehigh University. I am currently conducting a study for my dissertation focused on understanding the experience of advisees who lost their advisor at some point during their graduate training. This loss may have been due to the advisor leaving the program (e.g., retirement, a new job) or due to a program closure. By participating in this study, you will have the opportunity to share your experience of this loss and any changes you faced that were related to it. Given that this is a new and unexplored area of research, your participation will be crucial in understanding advisor loss and the impact that this experience may have for doctoral student.

Participation includes a 5 minute survey, a brief demographic questionnaire, and an audio-recorded Skype interview lasting 60-90 minutes. As a thank you, all participants will receive a $20 dollar Amazon gift card and a draft of the final results.

**To participate in the study the following criteria must be met:** (a)current enrollment in a counseling psychology doctoral program; (b) 18 years of age or older; (c) English-speaking.(d) experienced the loss of a doctoral advisor during graduate training due to the advisor leaving the university. If you obtained a new advisor without your initial advisor leaving the program (e.g. due to a rupture or change in research interest), or if your original advisor passed away, you are not eligible to participate.

If you would like to participate in this study, please click on the link below and you will be directed to an online consent form. At the completion of this form, you will be asked to provide your contact information so that the principal researcher can contact you to schedule an interview time. To ensure your confidentiality and the confidentiality of anyone spoken about during the interview, all data will be assigned unique codes and de-identified. All identifying information will be removed from each interview transcript. Care will also be taken to ensure that the identity of participants cannot be inferred from any of the details provided in the final report. Participants will also be given the opportunity to review the written material prior to any subsequent presentation or publication.

*Insert link here*

This research has been approved by the Lehigh University Institutional Review Board (IRB# *****).If you have any question about this study, please feel free to contact me at slc411@lehigh.edu or my advisor, Dr. Susan S. Woodhouse at woodhouse@lehigh.edu.If you do not fit the criteria above, feel free to pass along this information to anyone who fits the criteria and may be interested in participating. Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Codos, M.Ed

Lehigh University

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates the experience of advisees who lost their advisor during graduate training. This loss can be due to the advisor leaving the program voluntarily (e.g. retirement, a new job) or due to program closure. You were selected as a possible participant because you are enrolled in an APA-accredited Counseling Psychology doctoral program and have experienced the loss of an advisor during your graduate training. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**This study is being conducted by**: Stephanie Codos, Lehigh University, under the direction of Dr. Susan Woodhouse, Associate Professor, Lehigh University.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of advisor loss as perceived by doctoral trainees in counseling psychology. This study will be the first, to our knowledge, to examine the experience of advisor loss. Therefore, this study will fill the void in our knowledge of how losing an advisor is experienced by doctoral students.

**Procedures**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 5 minutes of your time, a brief demographic questionnaire, and a 60-90 minute audio- recorded Skype interview (only audio will be recorded; no video will be recorded). During this interview, you will be asked a broad range of questions about your experience with your *original* advisor (i.e., the advisor that you are no longer working with because he or she left your current program) and your *new* advisor (i.e., the advisor that you chose or were assigned after you experienced the loss of your original advisor). Questions will also pertain to the experience of the loss, the transition to a new advisor, and any changes you believe are linked to the advisor loss.

***Risks* and *Benefits* of being in the study**

**Possible risks:**

Anticipated risks associated with participation in this study are minimal. However, you may find that in reflecting on the experience of losing your advisor, you may experience minor psychological discomfort. If this is to occur, you are encouraged to seek out the support of a colleague and/or seek services at your University's counseling center.

**The benefits to participation are:**

Helping contribute to a greater understanding of how advisees' experience the loss of their advisor. Findings of this study may help contribute to an understanding of the type of support and resources students may benefit from after experiencing such a loss.

**Compensation**
A $20 gift card to Amazon.com will be given to each participant as a thank you for participation.

**Confidentiality**
Your confidentiality is of utmost importance and will be maintained throughout the study. To protect confidentiality, each participant's name will be deleted and replaced with a unique code number prior to analysis. Any identifying information (e.g., the institution's name, identifying circumstances of advisor loss, specific research areas) will be removed from each interview transcript. In addition, the advisor's names will also be de-identified and replaced with an appropriate code. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Audio records will be kept on an encrypted USB and will only be accessed by the principal researcher. All interview recordings will be deleted no later than one month after the interview is conducted.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**
**Participation in this study is voluntary:**
Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Lehigh University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions**
If you have any questions about this study, **you are encouraged** to contact Stephanie Codos at slc411@lehigh.edu or Dr. Susan Woodhouse at woodhouse@lehigh.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s),**you are encouraged** to contact Naomi Coll, Lehigh University's Manager of Research Integrity, at (610) 758-2985 (email: nac314@lehigh.edu). All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

**IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING THE ABOVE INFORMATION, PLEASE CLICK ON THE NEXT BUTTON BELOW. YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS**

Appendix D

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

**Please answer each of the following questions. The information you provide will help to identify crucial components of the current study's sample.**

1) Age: _______________

2) What was your assigned sex at birth?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Intersex

3) What is your current gender identity?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-Binary Gender Identity

4) Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?
   a. Exclusively heterosexual
   b. Mostly heterosexual
   c. Bisexual
   d. Mostly Gay/Lesbian
   e. Exclusively Gay/Lesbian
   f. Queer
   g. Asexual
   h. Other (Please Specify): _________

5) What is your race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)
   a. White/European American
   b. Black/African American
   c. Latino(a)/Hispanic
   d. Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
   e. Middle Eastern/Arabic
   f. Native American/Alaska Native
   g. Multiracial
   h. Other (Specify):

6) Please place a check in the box for each of the following program requirements that you have **completed:**
   a. Thesis or Equivalent
   b. Comprehensive Examination or Equivalent

c. Dissertation Proposal
d. Dissertation Defense
e. Internship

7) How many semesters of clinical practicum have you completed (e.g., Indicate you have completed 3 semesters by typing 3): ______

8) Current year in program (e.g., Indicate you are in your $3^{rd}$ year by typing 3): _______

9) Your year in the program when your original advisor left (e.g., Indicate you were in your $3^{rd}$ year by typing 3): _______

*The following questions will pertain to your **Original** advisor (i.e. the advisor that the advisee was matched with upon entrance into the program that has since left the program):*

10) How were you paired with your **Original** advisor? (check one)
    a. You chose your advisor
    b. Program faculty chose an advisor for you
    c. Do not know

11) How long (i.e. length of time) were you working with your **original** advisor prior to he or she leaving your program?
    a. 6 months to one year
    b. 1 year to 2 years
    c. 2 years to 3 years
    d. 3 years to 4 years
    e. 4 years to 5 years
    f. More than 5 years

12) From today, approximately how long (i.e. length of time) has it been since your **original advisor** left your program?
    a. 6 months to one year
    b. 1 year to 2 years
    c. 2 years to 3 years
    d. 3 years to 4 years
    e. 4 years to 5 years
    f. More than 5 years

13) What was the gender identity of your **original** advisor?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-Binary Gender Identity

14) What is the race/Ethnicity of your **original** advisor (check all that apply)

a. White/European American
b. Black/African American
c. Latino(a)/Hispanic
d. Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
e. Middle Eastern/Arabic
f. Native American/Alaska Native
g. Multiracial
h. Other (Specify): ____________
i. Unsure

*The following questions will pertain to your **new** advisor (i.e. the advisor that you are presently working with who you chose or was assigned to you after the loss of your original advisor)*

15) How were your paired with your **new** advisor? (check one)
    a. You chose your advisor
    b. Program faculty chose an advisor for you
    c. Don't know

16) How long (i.e. length of time) have you been working with your **new** advisor?
    g. 6 months to one year
    h. 1 year to 2 years
    i. 2 years to 3 years
    j. 3 years to 4 years
    k. 4 years to 5 years
    l. More than 5 years

17) What was the gender identity of your **new** advisor?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-Binary Gender Identity

18) What is the race/Ethnicity of your **new** advisor? (check all that apply)
    a. White/European American
    b. Black/African American
    c. Latino(a)/Hispanic
    d. Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
    e. Middle Eastern/Arabic
    f. Native American/Alaska Native
    g. Multiracial
    h. Other (Specify): ____________
    i. Unsure

19) If you are still interested in participating in the study or would like to learn more about what participation entails, please provide your contact information in the space provided

so that the researcher can contact you to schedule your interview. As a reminder, all information will be kept confidential and any identifiers you provide will be deleted.

Email: __________________

Phone Number: ____________________

Appendix E

Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998)

Now we would like for you to take a moment to think about how you ***generally*** feel in ***important relationships in your life***. Think about your past and present relationships with people who have been especially important to you, such as romantic partners and close friends. Respond to each statement in terms of how you ***generally*** feel in these relationships. Please circle **ONE** number.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I prefer not to show people how I feel deep down. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. | I worry about being abandoned. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. | I am very uncomfortable being close to people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. | I worry a lot about my relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. | Just when people start to get close to me, I find myself pulling away. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. | I worry that people won't care about me as much as I care about them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. | I get uncomfortable when people want to be very close to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. | I worry a fair amount about losing close relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. | I don't feel comfortable opening up to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. | I often wish that other people's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. | I want to get close to people, but I keep pulling back. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. | I often want to merge completely with people, and this sometimes scares them away. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. | I am nervous when people get too close to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | I worry about being alone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. | I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. | My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. | I try to avoid getting too close to people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. | I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. | I find it relatively easy to get close to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. | Sometimes I feel that I force people to show more feeling and more commitment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. | I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. | I do not often worry about being abandoned. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. | I prefer not to be too close to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. | If I can't get other people to show interest in me, I get upset or angry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. | I tell close others just about everything. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. | I find that people don't want to get as close as I would like. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. | I usually discuss my problems and concerns with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28. | When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29. | I feel comfortable depending on others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30. | I get frustrated when people are not around as much as I would like. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31. | I don't mind asking others for comfort, advice, or help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. | I get frustrated if people are not available when I need them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. | It helps to turn to close others in times of need. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. | When others disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. | I turn to others for many things, including comfort and reassurance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. | I resent it when close others spend time away from me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

1. **I'd like to start by asking you some questions about your relationship with your original advisor prior to finding out that he/ she would be leaving your program.**
    a. How were you matched to your "original advisor?"
        i. Did you have a different interim advisor prior to the advisor we are calling your "original advisor" for the purposes of this study?
    **b.** When did you begin working with your original advisor?
    **c.** How often did you meet prior to his/her departure/retirement?
    **d.** What tasks were you were working on (e.g. a research project, professional development activity, conference presentation, etc.)
        **i.** In what ways did your original advisor successfully guide you in the completion of these tasks? (*Apprenticeship)*
        **ii.** In what ways did you wish your original advisor would have guided you differently in the completion of these tasks?
    **e.** What was your interpersonal connection to your original advisor like? *(Rapport)*
        **i.** What was your rapport with your advisor like? For example, some advisees describe a relationship based in encouragement and respect, whereas other advisees describe a different kind of relationship.
    **f.** In what ways did you feel similar to your original advisor in regards to interest? In terms of your style of conducting work? (*Identification/Individuation)*
        **i.** In what ways did you feel different from your original advisor in terms of interest? In terms of your style of conducting your work?

**g.** Overall, would you characterize your experience with your original advisor as a positive or a negative one?

**i.** Why would you describe it this way?

**h.** The literature on the advising relationship has made a distinction between the term "advisor" and the term "mentor." By definition, advising can refer to either a positive or negative relationship with a formal advisor, whereas mentoring refers to a positive relationship with a faculty member or other more experienced person who provides guidance, training, and support in both career development and psychosocial areas. Therefore, although advising can often serve as a gateway to mentoring, not all advisors would be classified as mentors.

**i.** Given this description, would you classify your original advisor as a mentor to you?

**1.** **If yes:** What makes you classify your original advisor as a mentor?

**2.** **If no:** What makes you **not** classify your original advisor as a mentor?

**a.** What was missing from your advising relationship that prevented your original advisor from serving as a mentor?

**2. I'd now like to ask you about your experience when you firstfoundoutabout the circumstances resulting in the loss of your original advisor**

**a.** How were you informed your original advisor would be leaving?

i. Who informed you?

**ii.** How far in advance were you informed?

**b.** What was your understanding of why your advisor was leaving?

**i.** If the advisor **chose** to leave for a new institution:

**1.** Were you given the option to move with your advisor to his or her new institution

**a.** **If yes:** What contributed to your decision to not follow your advisor to his/her new institution?

**b.** **If no:** Were any other advisees given the option to move with your advisor to his or her new institution?

**c.** How did you feel upon finding out your advisor was leaving your program?

**i.** Initial thoughts?

ii. Initial feelings?

**iii.** Initial behaviors?

**d.** Did you have any concerns in hearing that your advisor would be leaving your program?

**i.** IF YES:

**1.** Please elaborate on these concerns.

**2.** What was your **biggest** concern in hearing this news?

e. Did you notice any changes in your advisor's behavior prior to his/ her departure?

i. **If yes:** Please elaborate on these changes

f. Did you notice any changes in your relationship with your advisor prior to his/her departure?

i. **If yes:** Please elaborate on these changes

**3. What wasitlike for you after your advisor left your program?**

**a.** How did other faculty members in your program/ department respond to you during this time?

**b.** How did your peers in your program/department respond to you during this time?

**c.** Did you seek out support outside of your program (e.g. therapy, friends or family support) or engage in specific self-care activities during this time?

**d.** Please describe the process of obtaining your new advisor.

- **i.** Did you choose your new advisor?
    - **1.** If so, how did you go about making that decision?
    - **2.** If not, how was the advisor chosen for you?
    - **3.** Did you have any other interim advisors between the time your original advisor left the program and the time you were placed with your new advisor?
        - **a.** **If Yes:** How many interim advisors did you have in total prior to placement with your new advisor?
        - **b.** Did you choose this/these interim advisor(s)
            - **i.** If so, how did you go about making the decision(s)?
            - **ii.** If not, how was this interim advisor chosen for you?
- **ii.** What was your relationship like with your new advisor <u>prior to their assignment as your new advisor</u>?
- **iii.** How was your transition to the new advisor?
    - **1.** What aspects of the transition were positive, or helpful?
        - **a.** How were these aspects positive or helpful?
    - **2.** What aspects of the transition were challenging?

a. What could have made the transition to your new advisor easier for you?

3. Were there any cultural factors that you think played a role in the transition?

4. Were there any personality factors that played a role in the transition?

**4. How would you describe your relationship with your new advisor?**

**a.** How often do you meet?

**b.** What tasks are you were working on (e.g. a research project, professional development activity, conference presentation, etc.)

**i.** In what ways does your new advisor successfully guide you in the completion of these tasks?

**ii.** In what ways do you wish your new advisor would guide you differently in the completion of these tasks?

**c.** What is your interpersonal connection to your new advisor like? (*Rapport)*

**i.** What is your rapport with your advisor like? For example, some advisees describe a relationship based in encouragement and respect, whereas other advisees describe a different kind of relationship.

**d.** In what ways do you feel similar to your new advisor in regards to interest? In terms of your style of conducting work? (*Identification/Individuation)*

**i.** In what ways did you feel different from your new advisor in terms of interest? In terms of your style of conducting your work?

**e.** Overall, would you characterize your experience with your new advisor as a positive or a negative one?

  **i.** Why would you describe it in this way?

**f.** The literature on the advising relationship has made a distinction between the term "advisor" and the term "mentor." By definition, advising can refer to either a positive or negative relationship with a formal advisor, whereas mentoring refers to a positive relationship with a faculty member or other more experienced person who provides guidance, training, and support in both career development and psychosocial areas.  Therefore, although advising can often serve as a gateway to mentoring, not all advisors would be classified as mentors.

  **i.** Given this description, would you classify your new advisor as a mentor to you?

    **1.** **If yes:** What makes you classify your new advisor as a mentor?

    **2.** **If no:** What makes you **not** classify your new advisor as a mentor?

      **a.** What was missing from your advising relationship that prevented your new advisor from serving as a mentor?

**5. How would you describe your current relationship with your original advisor?**

**a.** Are you still in contact with this individual?

  **i.** If yes:

    **1.** How often are you in contact with your original advisor?

    **2.** What is the nature of your contact with your original advisor?

**b.** How satisfied are you with the nature of this relationship as it currently stands?

  **i.** What contributes to any satisfaction with that current relationship?

**ii.** What contributes to any dissatisfaction with that current relationship?

**1.** What could make you more satisfied with this relationship?

6. **Now I'd like to ask you about changes (either positive or negative) that you think are related to your original advisor leaving the program.**
    a. In what ways, if any, do you feel this event has impacted your overall experience in your graduate program?
    b. Did you experience any changes (either positive or negative) in your feelings about yourself that you think are related to your original advisor leaving your program?
    c. Did you experience any changes (either positive or negative) in your feelings about others in the program (e.g. peers, faculty) that you perceive to be related to your original advisor leaving your program?
    d. Did you experience any changes (either positive or negative) in your research that you perceive to be related to youroriginaladvisor leaving your program?
    e. Did you experience any changes (either positive or negative) in your academic work (e.g., classes) that you perceive to be related to your advisor leaving your program?
    f. Did you experience any changes (either positive or negative) in your career-related tasks or professional development activities (e.g. presentations at conferences, networking opportunities) that you perceive to be related to your advisor leaving your program?
7. **I'd now like to ask you a few more general questions about how you view the advising relationship.**

**a.** How important do you think the advising relationship is in graduate training?

**i.** Why do think this is so?

**b.** Has your view of the advising relationship changed throughout the course of your graduate training?

**i.** If yes: Please elaborate on this change.

**c.** Did the experience of having your original advisor leave your program change how you view the advising relationship?

i. If yes: Please elaborate on this change.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?