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*Professional Issues*

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## Games in Clinical Genetic Counseling Supervision

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*Published Online: 29 July 2006*

*Games* are defined as ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions that are superficially plausible but have a concealed motivation to maximize pay-offs and minimize penalties for the initiator. While some games are harmless and part of socialization, others are destructive. Destructive game-playing in clinical supervision, in which game-playing (initiated by either supervisors or students) interferes with a student's realization of internship goals, has been documented in some allied healthcare professions but has not yet been studied in genetic counseling. Genetic counselors and clinical supervisors of genetic counseling students were anonymously surveyed regarding their experiences with destructive game-playing. Results show that such games do occur in genetic counseling clinical supervision. Some games are the same or similar to ones previously described in other health-care professions; others may be unique to genetic counseling. The purpose of this paper is to document these games as a first step to facilitating dialogue, understanding and awareness of them.

**KEY WORDS:** genetic counseling; games; game playing; gamesmanship; clinical supervision; student resistance; clinical supervisor; genetic counseling internship.

### INTRODUCTION

Live clinical supervision of genetic counseling students is an integral component of the training of genetic counselors (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Lindh *et al.*, 2003). Such training, which is strongly endorsed by both supervisors and students, is considered to be essential for students to develop clinical competencies, and has the added benefit of promoting professional development for both students and supervisors. Apart from two fairly recent studies (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Lindh *et al.*, 2003), a

book chapter on student supervision (McCarthy and LeRoy, 1998) and an issue of the *Journal of Genetic Counseling* ("Supervision. . .", 2000, October), little research has been done to fully explore what occurs in live clinical supervision in genetic counseling.

It is thought that for most students and supervisors, live clinical supervision is a positive experience in which supervisors are able to expand on their professional roles as teachers and mentors (Lindh *et al.*, 2003), and students are able, in a safe environment [also known as a "holding environment" (Kennedy, 2000)], to develop clinical and professional skills.

Anecdotally, some supervisors and students have a less than positive clinical supervisory experience. However, little has been reported or published about this aspect of supervision in genetic counseling. Destructive games that undermine clinical internship goals may be one factor in creating a negative supervisory experience. Such games have been documented in live clinical supervision in other health professions (Bauman, 1972; Hagler and Casey, 1990; Hawthorne, 1975; Kadushin, 1968; Sleight, 1984) but have not been examined in genetic counseling. The

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purpose of this paper is to document some of these destructive games in live clinical supervision in genetic counseling as a first step to facilitate dialogue, understanding and awareness of them.

### Transactional Analysis

In order to understand the notion of games, and more specifically destructive games, it is first necessary to briefly introduce the framework of transactional analysis (TA), in which games play a part.

Transactional analysis was first developed by Eric Berne in the 1950s as a new form of psychological therapy (Bailey and Baillie, 1996). It is a system in which verbal and non-verbal interactions (termed transactions) between two people can be documented and analyzed to better understand how people communicate (or miscommunicate) with each other.

Central to this framework is the concept that an individual is capable of interacting with others in one of three distinct roles, called “ego states.” These are classified as “parent,” “adult,” and “child” (Bailey and Baillie, 1996; Berne, 1964a). In the parent ego state (P) an individual behaves, thinks and feels like a parent (“Don’t forget to brush your teeth.”). In the adult ego state (A) an individual behaves, thinks and feels in a rational or logical manner (“I’ll be happy to drop off the package. It is on my way.”). In the child ego state (C) an individual behaves, thinks and feels in a childlike way (“Wow! Super cool!”). For the parent and child ego states there are further subdivisions, but for the purposes of this paper these will not be discussed. It should be noted that each individual is capable of being in each of these ego states and may fluidly change from one to another depending on the interaction at hand.

### Transactions

In TA the smallest unit of social interaction, in which one person communicates to another (both verbally and nonverbally) and the other responds (both verbally and nonverbally), is called a “transaction” and it comes in three flavors: complementary, crossed and ulterior.

### Complementary Transactions

A complementary transaction occurs when the ego states of the individuals interacting with each

other are the same or complementary. Transactions in which both individuals are in adult roles [“What would you like for dinner? We have some left over chicken.” (A); “Left over chicken sounds great. I don’t feel much like cooking.”(A)], or both are in child roles [“I know that you love chicken so much that we are having it again tonight!”(C); “Really? And I thought it was only because we have chicken leftovers!”(C)], are considered to be complementary transactions, as are transactions in which one individual is in a parent role and the other is in a child role [“We’re having chicken for dinner again.”(P); “Yum, yum! I love chicken!”(C)]. In these interactions the transactions result in little or no conflict, and the two individuals communicate well.

### Crossed Transactions

A crossed transaction occurs when the ego states of the individuals interacting with each other are in conflict. This results when one is in an adult ego state and the other is in either a parent or a child ego state (“What would you like for dinner? We have some left over chicken.” (A); “You know I hate leftovers! I’m ordering pizza.”(C)), or when both are in parent ego states relating to the other’s child ego state (“You should eat the left over chicken.”(P); “No, you should eat the left over chicken.”(P)). Crossed transactions often result in communication breakdowns, conflict and stress for one or both individuals, and are typified by a classic transference reaction (Bailey and Baillie, 1996; Berne, 1964a).

### Ulterior Transactions

Ulterior transactions are those that take place on two different levels simultaneously such that the “surface” message (called the social message) is different from the real, hidden message (called the psychological message). These represent the core type of transactions found in games (Berne, 1964a).

Here is an example of an ulterior transaction between two colleagues:

I liked your presentation. It is always refreshing to see an old topic treated with such creativity (*said with a note of sarcasm*).

Thank you. I thought that you especially might learn something from it.

The surface transaction that relates the social message is adult to adult in both directions, with one showing appreciation for the other's presentation and the other acknowledging the appreciation. The hidden transaction relating the psychological message, however, is of one criticizing the presentation (in the parent ego role) and the other responding to the criticism with a barb (in the child ego role).

These types of transactions not only hinder open communication but often result in negative feelings, and if they make up a part of a series of transactions, are called a "game."

### Games in Transactional Analysis

Games, therefore, in the context of TA, are defined as "ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions that are superficially plausible but have a concealed motivation to maximize pay-offs and minimize penalties for the initiator" (Berne, 1964b). Given that games are made up of many transactions with multiple layers of meaning, analyzing them using the symbols for simple transactions is too complicated. Instead, games in TA are described by naming the game with a catchy title, and giving information about who the players are (initiator and non-initiator(s)), how the game is played, and what the payoff(s) of playing are (Berne, 1964a).

Games are not occasional occurrences but are thought to be frequently engaged in in society. We engage in such game-playing routinely for a number of reasons. Primarily, game initiators do so because games are a low-risk way of maximizing pay-offs while minimizing penalties. What makes game-playing low risk is that the game is superficially plausible, meaning that there is an element of truth or logic to accepting it at face value (or, in other words, at the social transaction level), so that non-initiators are drawn into playing without protest. In addition, non-initiators may also accept playing, or fall into playing and continue to play, because the game may have a pay-off for them as well. Hidden in the game, however, is the ulterior motive of the initiator (relating to the psychological message), which is the pay-off, and it generally takes the form of satisfying an immediate primary need or deferring a harm (Hagler and Casey, 1990).

Although game playing as described by Berne (1964b) brings to mind social scheming and the manipulation of individuals for ulterior motives, the origins of game playing are more benign and are

thought to be rooted in our need to learn "sociability," or how to interact within society (Middleman, 1970). In this way game-playing is an integral part of cultural life, and it is thought that those who do it well may be more attuned to the social rules and dynamics that govern us, and use them for personal advantage.

### Destructive Games

While some games are harmless, all have the potential to create miscommunication and some can be downright destructive. Destructive games are those in which a significant negative outcome occurs for one or both of the players (usually the non-initiator) as a result of playing. In the context of live clinical supervision, which this paper addresses, destructive games are defined as those that undermine a student's internship goals in exchange for short-term pay-offs.

Destructive game-playing has been documented between health professionals in the work place (Armstrong, 1973; Cady, 1973; Cummings and Groves, 1982; Deering, 1993; Lankford, 1982; McGee and Martin, 1978) and between students and their supervisors in live clinical supervision. Destructive games played in clinical supervisory relationships have been described in: social work (Hawthorne, 1975; Kadushin, 1968); speech and language pathology (Sleight, 1984; Hagler and Casey, 1990); and counseling (Bauman, 1972).

### Destructive Games in Live Clinical Supervision

Destructive games are thought to be initiated by both supervisors and students in live clinical supervision as a response to anxiety that results from aspects of the supervisory experience (Sleight, 1984; Hagler and Casey, 1990).

### Reasons a Supervisor Might Initiate a Destructive Game

In genetic counseling, as in other health fields, supervisors often lack formal training in clinical supervision (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Lindh *et al.*, 2003) and as a result may be insecure and anxious about the requirements of the role. In addition, supervisors may have difficulty adjusting to their new authority, and this may lead to feelings of inadequacy

(Sleight, 1984). Such feelings may result in a need to play games that manipulate the circumstances so that the supervisor is unable to exercise authority, or allows the supervisor to project the responsibility elsewhere. Alternatively, game-playing may be motivated by a supervisor's need to dominate and control the student in such a way that the supervisor views his/her authority as omnipotent, and helplessness and submission are deliberately generated in the student (Kadushin, 1968). In addition, anxiety related to fear (fear of losing face, of failure, of confrontation, and of criticism) may create situations in which supervisors play games to maintain an image or avoid an issue rather than confront and/or solve it (Hagler and Casey, 1990). Finally, it is thought that supervisors play some games with the aim to meet their own unfulfilled needs and/or reduce supervisory responsibilities and work loads.

### **Reasons a Student Might Initiate a Destructive Game**

Live clinical supervision for students creates a lot of anxiety as well (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Lindh *et al.*, 2003). The act of learning requires a transformation that often results in changes in behavior, and in some cases, personality (Kadushin, 1968). In the adult student this may require changing well-established patterns of thinking, believing, and acting, and this process can be painful. The supervisor-student relationship is also one of dependence and may be viewed by the student as a threat to his/her autonomy. This may be especially difficult for adult students who have held positions of responsibility prior to becoming students again, as is the case for some students in genetic counseling. The student also must face threats to his/her sense of adequacy. Admitting and confronting one's weaknesses and ignorance, all part of the process of being open to learning and change, makes, by definition, a student vulnerable to many unpleasant emotions, including shame and feeling rejected. For these reasons, it is common for students to be fearful and anxious in supervisory situations, and it should come as no surprise that the types of games that have been documented that are initiated by students involve manipulating demand or expectation levels, redefining relationships, reducing power disparities, and controlling feedback/conferences—all devices to minimize failure and maximize success (Kadushin, 1968; Sleight, 1984).

### **It Takes Two to Tango**

For game-playing to occur, both the initiator and the non-initiator must play. Given the power differential between supervisors and students, students are often reluctant players of supervisor-initiated games, but in some cases some may play willingly as it may result in some pay-offs. If a game is understood by the student and not too unpleasant, the student may feel comfortable playing within the confines of the rules of the game. In this way the student may, for an acceptable price, maximize his/her success in the internship while avoiding confrontation. Similarly, supervisors play student-initiated games because they too experience some pay-off. These payoffs typically relate to reaffirming the supervisor's identity as being knowledgeable, helpful, and compassionate, as well as highlighting his/her status as an educator.

### **Detecting Games is Not Easy**

It is not always clear when a destructive game is being played. On the surface (the social transaction level), games have elements of reality, truth or logic, making them superficially plausible, acceptable or valid. In this way they mirror some selective, essentially truthful, aspect of the supervisory relationship (Kadushin, 1968). The defining feature of a destructive game for the purposes of this paper, however, is that it has an element of exploitation and, as a result of it being played, student internship goals are undermined; these goals may pertain to a student expanding his/her knowledge base, practicing or mastering counseling skills, and/or completing administrative duties. In addition, the supervisor-student relationship is often compromised if destructive games are played. Ideally, the relationship between supervisor and student is one of respect, openness and trust that forms a safe and healthy learning environment (Kennedy, 2000). Symptoms that a game is being played include "the presence of a cool, unsatisfying relationship, a general sense of discomfort, and a feeling of having been misinterpreted, belittled, imposed upon or somehow threatened" (Hagler and Casey, 1990). In some destructive games the student-supervisor relationship is the only casualty. While this may not, on the surface, seem to meet the definition of undermining internship goals, it is argued that if the student-supervisor relationship is no longer "functional," then all aspects of the internship, including achieving goals and providing

appropriate patient services, suffer at some level (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002).

## METHODS

Participants were invited by an email message posted on the National Society of Genetic Counselors' (NSGC) listserv to complete an anonymous, on-line, eight-question survey that was active for three months during the summer of 2004. The NSGC listserv is available to members of the Society and is accessed by approximately 1500 genetic counselors.

The study criteria were that participants must: (1) currently be a student in a Master's level genetic counseling program and have completed at least one clinical internship; (2) be an individual who has completed a Master's degree in genetic counseling and as part of his/her training completed at least one clinical internship; or (3) be an individual who has supervised a genetic counseling student from a Master's level genetic counseling program in a genetic clinical rotation.

The study was approved by the Brandeis University, Waltham, MA Internal Review Board, and by the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada, Research Ethics Board.

The eight-question survey (Appendix A) was hosted by the Survey Monkey website (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). Survey Monkey was used to ensure anonymity of participants (no identifying information was requested) to maximize participation. The first two questions related to participants meeting study criteria. The third question asked who initiated the game, and the remaining questions were open-ended and invited participants to describe a game, the motivations behind playing, the internship goals that were undermined, and thoughts on how the game might have been stopped. The questions were developed to obtain information typically included in a game descriptions described in the literature (Hagler and Casey, 1990; Hawthorne, 1975; Kadushin, 1968; Sleight, 1984). They were open-ended to allow participants to describe games in their own words. The aim of the study was to document some destructive games in live clinical supervision in genetic counseling and, given this aim, only information related to meeting study criteria and describing a game was included in the survey. For these reasons information regarding the characteristics of game-players, how common certain games are, and how prevalent game playing is in live clinical supervi-

sion cannot be inferred from the data. Rather, results provide information about whether games are being played in live clinical supervision in genetic counseling and the nature of some of them.

## Data Analysis

Each of the authors independently reviewed the survey results. Each game description was summarized into the game's core content and then, using our best judgment, like-games were grouped under game names previously outlined in the literature, or under game names created to reflect the new content of the game. There was no disagreement between the authors relating to game core content or grouping of games. Games were then grouped under broader headings (for student-initiated games: redefining relationships, and controlling feedback/conference; for supervisor-initiated games: power, image maintenance, meeting unfulfilled needs, and reducing responsibilities) that were previously outlined in the literature describing larger categories.

## RESULTS

One or more questions of the survey were completed in 204 surveys. In all surveys the first question which related to meeting study criteria was answered, and in 201 surveys the second question which related to the number of students supervised was answered. In only 36 surveys, however, were the questions completed relating to describing a game (questions 3–8). In terms of meeting the study criteria, 99% (202 of 204) of surveys were completed by individuals who had done at least one clinical internship in genetic counseling, and 58% (117 of 201) by individuals who had supervised at least one Master's-level genetic counseling student in a clinical internship.

The 36 game descriptions were given sequential numbers 1 through 36. One description (17) contained two games, making a total of 37 games submitted. All games, with one exception (game 7), were written in such a way as to suggest that they were from the perspective of the non-initiator.

### Student-Initiated Games

Ten of the 37 games described were initiated by students. When similar games were grouped, there

were 7 student-initiated games described, 4 having to do with redefining relationships and 3 having to do with controlling feedback or conferences. Table I summarizes the student-initiated games. These games are presented below, with games that have been previously described discussed first, and those not previously described following. Quotes of game descriptions taken from the survey are given in some cases to provide examples in the words of the survey respondents. Quotes are given for games described more than once, and for others, were chosen at random.

### Student Initiated Games Already Described in the Literature

Four of the seven student-initiated games ascertained have been previously described. The most commonly described student-initiated game, “Poor me,” which was described in 4 of the 10 student-initiated games submitted, has also been described in the social work (“Treat me, don’t beat me” [Kadushin, 1968]), speech and language pathology (“Poor me” [Sleight, 1984]) and counseling (“I’m no good” [Bauman, 1972]) literature, suggesting that it may be the most prevalent student-initiated game played. It is a game in which the relationship between the student and supervisor is redefined to one akin to that of counselee and counselor whereby the student, given his/her lack of confidence and poor self esteem, plays to the supervisor’s natural tendencies to be supportive and helpful, and in so doing reduces the supervisor’s expectations of the student.

Game 7: “I was being supervised by a person who I lost respect for based on how she treated clients and how she treated me. As a result, over time, I noticed that I began to demonstrate to her that I was less capable than I was in order to avoid her reprimands of me when she thought I did something wrong. I also demanded less responsibility to be given to me because I detested being around her and wanted to reduce the amount of time I spent with her as much as possible. This was a real “180” from how I normally behaved in all of my previous internships where I showed that I was a motivated, independent and capable worker, and enjoyed spending time with my supervisors.”

“Cozy student” is a variation of “Evaluation is not for friends” (Kadushin, 1968). In “Cozy student,” like in “Evaluation is not for friends,” the student redefines the relationship as a friendly, peer relationship such that the supervisor is disinclined to hold the

student to usual standards, but unlike “Evaluation is not for friends” the student does not go so far as to continue the friendly relationship outside of the internship setting.

Game 24: “The intern who had been made aware by other supervisors that her performance was not up to par made efforts to develop more of a peer relationship with the supervisor. The intern made jokes with the supervisor, shared “gossip” about other interns and supervisors, and asked the supervisor personal questions about the supervisor’s weekend, family, etc. The intern specifically shared stories about how other supervisors treated her unfairly.”

“Challenge me” is a variation of “I have a little list” (Kadushin, 1968). In “I have a little list” the student controls feedback sessions by preparing a litany of self-assessment points, leaving the supervisor no time or room to actively give constructive criticism. In “Challenge me” the student also controls feedback sessions or conferences but in this game by asking a quick succession of questions, rather than offering self-assessment points, for the supervisor to fill the time allotted for supervisor feedback.

### Student Initiated Games Not Previously Described in the Literature

Three student-initiated games described are new to the literature.

“I can do it earlier” is a game that redefines the student-supervisor relationship and it relates to a student’s imposing new rules on him/herself in such a way that he/she reduces the power of the supervisor by taking more control over the rules of the internship. This would not be a game if the student were able to meet his/her new expectations, but in this game the student fails to meet both the new and old deadlines that were imposed, and in so doing, undermines his/her ability to show accountability, responsibility and professionalism.

Game 4: “Supervisor would give intern a task with a deadline for completion of project. Intern would shorten deadline saying she/he could complete the project more timely. Then intern would miss his/her own deadline AND the initial deadline the supervisor set. Supervisor would then have to remind the student to get task completed.”

In the game “Student vs. student,” a triangle between two students and a supervisor forms in which one student befriends the other while secretly undermining him/her to the supervisor. The student who

**Table 1.** Intern-Initiated Games in Genetic Counseling

Game Name	Game Description	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
Redefining Relationships "Poor Me" ("Treat me don't beat me" (Kadushin, 1968); "Poor Me" (Sleight, 1984); "I'm no good; helplessness" (Bauman, 1972))	Intern offers poor self assessment, downplays abilities, and promotes image of being less capable.	2, 7, 14, 23	Intern decreases/avoids criticism and negative feedback, reduce work load/ responsibilities, decreases time with supervisor, and increases supervisor support and encouragement.	Supervisor decreases the need to identify and work through areas of improvement (decreases responsibility), and increases role of supportive and empathic individual.	Specific areas in need of improvement are not addressed, and intern does not learn or practice skills as he/she should have.	Supervisor could take more control over the feedback-giving process (making rules about providing balanced feedback), supervisor could confront the intern about the game, supervisor might monitor/reduce the amount of support she gives because of the game.
"I can do it earlier"	Intern changes task deadlines but didn't meet the new or old deadlines.	4	Intern increases control over deadlines/workload, initially increases respect from the supervisor, and takes power from supervisor.	Supervisor is able to empower/support intern.	Understanding the importance of accountability, responsibility and professionalism is not learned.	Supervisor should retain power/control and not alter deadlines.
"Intern vs. Intern"	Intern A befriends Intern B, but then undermines Intern B's abilities to supervisor.	10	Intern A maximizes friendship with supervisor, refocuses attention away from intern A to B, increases sense of superiority over intern B.	Supervisor gains insight into Intern B and friendship with intern A; and power/superiority over intern B.	Trusting relationship between supervisor and intern B is never established.	Supervisor should require that interns not discuss each other (especially in a negative light), should facilitate a meeting between interns A and B and self to reach consensus on a working relationship.
"Cozy intern" variation on "Evaluation is not for friends" (Kadushin, 1968)	Intern with significant weaknesses made efforts to develop a peer relationship with the supervisor.	24	Intern reduces negative feedback, and improves his/her reputation with the supervisor.	Supervisor has a new friend and enjoys the comradery/attention.	Intern's skill/knowledge deficits are not adequately addressed.	Supervisor should draw clear boundaries regarding his/her relationship with the intern, give appropriate feedback, and hold the intern to internship standards.

Table I. Continued

Game Name	Game Description	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
Controlling Feedback /Conferences "I have a little list" (Kadushin, 1968)	After a session the intern immediately begins an exhaustive self-assessment leaving no time for the supervisor to give constructive criticism.	1	Intern controls the focus of feedback, and presents him/herself as insightful and motivated.	Supervisor does not have to invest the time/energy to give thoughtful feedback.	Intern may not be getting the benefit of the supervisor's experience to focus on areas of weakness.	Supervisor could set the rules for giving feedback upfront and stick to them.
"Challenge me" variation of "I have a little list" (Kadushin, 1968).	Intern overly tests supervisor's knowledge and skills by asking more than the usual volume of questions.	15	Intern presents as being motivated, smart, and enthusiastic; intern decreases responsibility (for research), and refocuses attention on intern's agenda, taking power away from the supervisor.	Supervisor is able to offer experience/ knowledge.	Intern's agenda takes away time/resources for other things; supervisor when overwhelmed adopts a hands off approach and becomes less accessible.	Supervisor could point out the game and require that before asking questions the intern research/use other resources to get the information.
"My dog ate it"	Intern is unprepared for clinic, but offers many excuses that put him/her in a favorable light to explain the situation.	34	Intern reduces risk of taking personal responsibility for his/her unpreparedness.	By accepting the excuses supervisor avoids the unpleasant task of confronting the intern, and is perceived as being understanding.	Intern does not learn the importance of being self-motivated nor does he/she practice case preparation skills.	Supervisor could have restricted assess to patients for cases the intern did not prepare for- giving consequence for the intern's actions.



initiates this game maximizes his/her friendship with the supervisor and refocuses attention away from him/herself to the deficiencies of the other student. This game falls under the heading of “redefining relationships.” The supervisor plays because he/she may feel that the “inside” information the student has is important for him/her to know; he/she enjoys the titillating aspect of knowing an individual’s weaknesses; and/or being privy to the information feeds into his/her sense of superiority.

“My dog ate it” is a game that serves to control feedback and conferences. It is similar to “Poor me” in that the student portrays him/herself as being somewhat of a victim, but in this game he/she is a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. This game becomes apparent only when “uncontrollable circumstances” seem to be the norm for the student, and many goals of the internship are not being met as a result. The supervisor may play, at least initially, to show his/her supportive and understanding nature.

Game 34: “The intern would come to clinic unprepared for a case that they were aware would be occurring that day and downplay the significance of their actions by trying to make excuses for shrugging off their responsibility to be prepared for and ready to discuss the case prior to counseling the patient. This was after a clear set of expectations had been laid out and the student had voiced understanding of the expectations.”

### Supervisor-initiated Games

Twenty-seven of the 37 games described were initiated by supervisors. When similar games were grouped, there were 17 games described in total: 10 under the heading of “power,” 2 under the heading of “image maintenance,” 2 under the heading of “image-maintenance and power,” 1 under the heading of “meeting unfulfilled needs,” and 2 under the heading of “reducing responsibilities.” As mentioned before, in one instance, a game description contained elements of 2 games (game 17), one having to do with power and the other having to do with meeting unfulfilled needs. Table II summarizes the supervisor-initiated games. The games are presented below and are organized in the same way the student-initiated games are, with those that have been previously described in the literature presented first, followed by the newly ascertained games. Quotes of game descriptions from the surveys are also included for some games. Again quotes are provided for games

that were described more than once, and for the others were chosen at random.

### Supervisor Initiated Games Previously Described in the Literature

Seven of the 17 supervisor-initiated games have either been previously described in the literature or are variations of games previously described.

“Pop quiz” is a variation of “Of course you recall. . .” (Hagler and Casey, 1980), and falls under the heading of “power.” In “Of course you recall. . .” the supervisor puts the student on the defensive by insinuating that he/she should be familiar with esoteric information. In “Pop quiz” the supervisor goes one step further and quizzes the student prior to giving him/her time to adequately prepare to be tested. This game clearly demonstrates to the student that the supervisor is in control, but may lead to high levels of student anxiety such that the student does not perform at his/her potential.

Game 11: “The supervisor would tell the intern that a patient was coming in the next day with a history of X (not a well known condition to the GC intern). The supervisor would then immediately ask the intern to explain the possible recurrence risks depending on who in the family had condition X as well as how the intern would explain condition X to the client. Thus no time was allotted for the intern to research condition X nor were any suggestions for resources given if needed.”

“Do it exactly as I do,” “Putting the student in her place,” and “I have my eye on you” are variations of “Remember who’s boss” (Hawthorne, 1975). These games, like the one previously mentioned, have to do with power. In “Remember who’s boss” the supervisor tolerates no contradictions, negotiations or disagreements, and defines his/her role as one of absolute power. In all the variations of this game the commonality is the supervisor’s inability to tolerate criticism at the expense of healthy disagreement and exchange. In “Do it exactly as I do” the supervisor also defines his/her role as the “boss,” requiring that the student follow his/her rules exactly, one of them being that the student should mimic the supervisor’s counseling, including small details like hand movements. In “Putting the student in his/her place” the supervisor, in addition to not tolerating criticism, uses ongoing negative feedback to keep the student on the defensive. In “I have my eye on you” the supervisor increases the standards of the

Table II. Supervisor-Initiated Games in Genetic Counseling

Game Name	Game	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
Power "Letters are due yesterday"	Supervisor changes the rules on the intern, making deadlines earlier and then finding fault with the intern for being late retroactively.	3	Supervisor exerts power and maintains position of authority.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor.	Intern duties may suffer by being rushed, and the relationship between the intern and supervisor is undermined.	Intern should clarify rules and hold supervisor to them.
"Make this little change"	Supervisor gives "picky" or unsubstantial feedback, especially relating to letter writing.	8, 9, 21, 27, 28, 36	Supervisor exerts control over intern and may be taking out frustrations with life/job on intern; increases superiority; power.	Intern increases chance of doing well by playing (pleases supervisor) and avoids confronting supervisor.	Time is taken away from other internships experiences; letter writing skills are not improved; respect/rapport with supervisor is undermined. If the feedback occurs in the session, the intern is distracted.	Intern should clarify letter writing and other duties with supervisor, or call supervisor on "picky" requirements.
"Pop quiz" variation of "Of course, you recall..." (Hagler and Casey, 1990)	Supervisor gives the intern no time to research information before testing the intern on it.	11	Supervisor exerts control and power over the intern and increases perception of being superior in knowledge.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor.	Increases anxiety in intern so that he/she performs at a less than optimal level; decreases self-esteem; undermines rapport with supervisor.	Intern should discuss with supervisor the need to do research before being tested.
"Do it exactly as I do it" variation of "Remember who's boss" (Hawthorne, 1975)	Supervisor requires intern to "mimic" her/his counseling style and every move.	13	Supervisor exerts control/power over intern.	Intern avoids confronting the supervisor and increases chance of doing well in the internship.	Rapport/respect for supervisor is undermined; intern does not discover his/her own style or explore other ways to offer counseling services.	Intern should discuss with supervisor his/her goals of trying out different things to develop his/her own style.
"Putting the intern in his/her place" variation of "Remember who's boss" (Hagler and Casey, 1990)	Supervisor gives a lot of negative feedback and does not tolerate any criticism.	17	Supervisor maintains notion that the program is meeting goals and avoids the work of improving areas that need improvement.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor and increases chance of doing well.	Intern's experience is not optimal if the program has serious areas of weakness that should be addressed.	Intern should suggest a mechanism to evaluate the site or give constructive feedback to it in a non-threatening way.

Table II. Continued

Game Name	Game	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
"I have my eye on you" variation of "Remember who's boss" (Hagler and Casey, 1990)	Supervisor increases the standards of the internship to put "cocky" intern in her/his place.	6	Supervisor exerts control/power over intern.	Intern avoids confronting the supervisor and increases chance of doing well in the internship.	The focus of the internship is to showcase the intern's weaknesses rather than optimize his/her experience. The supervisor-intern relationship is also undermined.	Intern should confront the supervisor if expectations or standards are not in keeping with the program's mandate.
"I won't tell you what to do but I will say you're doing it wrong" variation of "I'm only trying to help you!" (Hawthorne, 1975)	Supervisor gives vague instructions purposefully, offers no help when asked, and then negatively criticizes the intern's efforts.	18, 19	Supervisor maintains control/power over the intern and increases the perception of superiority.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor and increases chance of doing well.	Intern is not offered the guidance/supervision necessary to learn/practice new skills efficiently.	Intern should confront the supervisor and request more supervision/support in the internship.
"I need to sign off on that"	Senior genetic counselor requires that the intern's work be approved by both him/her and the intern's supervisor.	32	Senior genetic counselor exerts control over the intern and maintains his/her superiority.	Intern avoids confrontation and increases chance of doing well and may reduce his/her "real" work load because of the time inefficiencies of needing the second approval.	Intern is not spending his/her time efficiently and may be missing opportunities to work on skill set and knowledge base.	Intern should discuss with the supervisor how best to address the inconsistencies of feedback and inefficiency of the system.
"Of course you need to file"	Supervisor requires that the intern does mundane or "girl Friday" work.	29, 33	Supervisor exerts control over the intern and maintains his/her superiority while reducing her/his work load.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor and increases chance of doing well.	Intern is not spending his/her time efficiently and may be missing opportunities to work on skill set and knowledge base.	Intern should discuss with the program and the supervisor the task that are appropriate for interns to do in an internship.
"Observe me only"	Supervisor is not boarded and does not allow the intern to practice his/her skills.	35	Supervisor exerts control over the interaction with the client, and increases his/her superiority over the intern; power.	Intern avoids doing work, improving areas of weakness and increases chances of doing well in the internship.	Intern is not spending his/her time efficiently and may be missing opportunities to work on true weaknesses in his/her skill set and knowledge base.	Intern should discuss with program and the supervisor his/her role in the internship.

Table II. Continued

Game Name	Game	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
Image Maintenance & Power "I'll take it from here"	Supervisor acknowledges the intern's work on preparing a case presentation but does not let the intern present in front of the supervisor's peers, preferring instead to do it him/herself.	12	Supervisor increases perception of being knowledgeable/prepared in front of his/her peers; also exerts power and control over intern.	Intern avoids confronting the supervisor and increases chance of doing well in the internship.	Rapport/respect for supervisor is undermined; intern is not able to practice certain skills (presenting a case) and the intern's level of confidence is decreased.	Intern should confront supervisor and make it clear that he/she should give him/her the opportunity to present cases he/she has prepared.
"You need to work on..."	Supervisor sees deficits in the intern's work where they do not exist, particularly in areas in which the supervisor feels she/he is strong.	26	Supervisor exerts control over the intern and maintains his/her superiority.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor and increases chance of doing well.	Intern is not spending his/her time efficiently and may be missing opportunities to work on true weaknesses in his/her skill set and knowledge base.	Intern should clarify with supervisor the deficits she sees and confront him/her if he/she does not agree with them.
Image maintenance "You are always late"	Supervisor blames the intern for delays related to completing work when it is the supervisor's lack of organization that leads to the delays.	25	Supervisor saves face.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor, increases chance of doing well, and may reduce his/her work load because of the delays.	Intern is not using her time efficiently.	Intern should explicitly outline deadlines with the supervisor.
"This case will be good practice for you"	Supervisor requires that the intern research a case that the supervisor is not comfortable counseling.	30	Supervisor maintains a sense of superiority; reduces case load; and maintains perception of being knowledgeable in front of client	Intern avoids confronting supervisor, increases chance of doing well, and is given the opportunity to counsel a difficult case.	Intern is not getting appropriate supervision in complex/difficult cases.	Intern should discuss with the program and the supervisor the role of the supervisor in the internship.

Table II. Continued

Game Name	Game	Survey Games #	Initiator Motivator	Non-Initiator Motivator	Goals Undermined	Possible Ways to Stop the Game
Meeting unfulfilled needs "She's just a student" variation of "Anything you can do, I can do better" (Hagler and Casey, 1990)	Supervisor undermines/belittles the intern in front of the patient.	5, 17, 31	Supervisor exerts control over the interaction with the client, and increases his/her superiority over the intern; power.	Intern avoids confronting supervisor and increases chance of doing well.	Intern's rapport with client suffers as does the intern's confidence and ability to perform genetic counseling services.	Intern should work with the supervisor to work out how the two will interact with clients.
Reducing Responsibilities "You were passing until I failed you" variation of "Doing just fine" (Hagler and Casey, 1990).	Supervisor leaves giving negative feedback until the end of the internship.	22, 16	Supervisor avoids the unpleasant task of giving negative feedback; and avoids working with the intern to improve skills.	Intern is an unaware participant in the game- doesn't know he/she is failing until the last moment.	Intern does not have time to improve on skills/knowledge needed to successfully pass internship or incorporate feedback into his/her work.	Intern should request feedback regularly and document formally the supervisor feedback.
"The more cases the better"	Supervisor requires that the intern take his/her case load.	20	Supervisor reduces work load.	Intern gains a lot of experience and pleases supervisor.	Intern is not getting appropriate supervision with each case and is not learning as much as he/she could with each case.	Intern should discuss with the program and the supervisor what is an appropriate case load, and the role of the supervisor in supervising the intern.

internship in a student-specific and heavy handed way to keep the student in an unquestioning and subordinate position. In all three cases the supervisor-student relationship suffers, and the student is not able to have open discussions or disagreements with the supervisor, thus limiting the learning potential of the internship experience.

Game 13: "It is hard to describe, but the supervisor wanted the student to be exactly like her, and expected her to counsel exactly with her same style. The student and supervisor were two very different people, and the relationship became hostile after the student would not mimic hand motions, exact wording, etc., that the supervisor used. This negatively affected the student's experience, especially since it was the last rotation she would have with her program."

"I won't tell you what to do, but I will say you are doing it wrong" is a variation of "I'm only trying to help you" (Hawthorne, 1975) and also falls under the heading of "power." This game was described twice. In "I'm only trying to help you" the supervisor offers help but, all the while, intends for the student to fail. When the student does fail, it is ostensibly because he/she did not take the help offered, or did not use it appropriately. If the student succeeds, the supervisor takes credit for the success given his/her intervention. In the variation "I won't tell you what to do, but I will say you are doing it wrong" the supervisor gives the student, who has requested guidance, only vague instructions (in one case described the supervisor stated that it should be "obvious at a Master's level" when the student asked for clarification), setting him/her up for failure. Once the student does fail, the supervisor, rather than being supportive or constructive, criticizes the student's efforts.

Game 19: "Supervisor gives a vague instruction to intern. Upon request for clarification, supervisor refuses to provide additional information about her expectations, stating that it should be "obvious at a Master's level." Intern subsequently receives a poor evaluation and is berated by the supervisor for a performance that was not "up to standard," and fell short of "Master's level expectations.""

"She's just a student" is a variation of "Anything you can do, I can do better" (Hagler and Casey, 1990). In "Anything you can do, I can do better" the supervisor, in a high-handed way, quickly takes over a session if the student begins to flounder. This game falls under the heading of "meeting unfulfilled needs" and for the supervisor it is a way for him/her to assert his/her clinical prowess and to restore order

to the session. In "She's just a student," the supervisor asserts his/her superiority by undermining and/or belittling the student in front of a client or colleagues. Examples given include a supervisor taking the pen out of a student's hand saying how badly the student was doing in front of the client as the student was taking a pedigree (game 5), a supervisor interrupting the student with "NO" as the student counseled a client (game 17) or challenging outright the information given by the student during the session (game 31). Three of the 27 supervisor-initiated games described contained this theme, suggesting that this game may be a common one. The internship goals that suffer in these games are: the student's ability to learn by making mistakes; the student's ability to build rapport with clients; and general internship goals that are influenced by a poor student-supervisor relationship.

Game 5: "It was a pediatric setting. I was learning to take pedigrees and every time I would try, she would take the paper/pen out of my hand, say how wrong I was doing something with the patient there, turn to the patient and say "she's just a student.""

"You were passing until I failed you" is a variation of "Doing just fine" (Hagler and Casey, 1990). "Doing just fine" is a game that reduces the supervisor's responsibilities. The supervisor, in lieu of thoughtful or detailed feedback, tells the student that he/she is doing fine. In "You were passing until I failed you" the supervisor does not confront the student regarding his/her weakness during the internship but at the final evaluation, and rather than let the student who is not meeting internship expectations slide by, the supervisor outlines the student's weaknesses and fails him/her. This game was described three times. From the supervisor's perspective it may be played because the supervisor finds it uncomfortable confronting the student's weaknesses or giving constructive criticism, or he/she thinks that with time the student's skills or knowledge base may improve, but when it becomes clear that this is not the case, it is too late to address them in the internship. In this game the student is not given appropriate feedback in a timely fashion and as a result, does not have the option of working to incorporate feedback into his/her work.

Game 22: "Intern was told after every counseling session that she had done a great job. Intern asked several times for additional comments, etc. but most responses from the supervisors were trite. Upon review of the rotation, intern was told she was lacking basic counseling skills such as AMA; SPDS

counseling by both supervisors. At that point the supervisors had several suggestions of how to better the intern's "outline" for these cases and proceeded to make the intern feel as though she likely chose the wrong career path. Then ended by saying these are just little things to work on, your knowledge base is good. So, instead of working with the intern throughout the rotation to better her skills, the supervisors saved all criticism for the final evaluation—not too helpful!"

### Supervisor Initiated Games Not Previously Described in the Literature

Ten supervisor-initiated games described are new to the literature. Five of these games, "Letters are due yesterday," "Make this little change," "I need to sign off on that," "Of course you need to file," and "Observe me only," fall under the heading of "power"; "I'll take it from here" and "You need to work on. . ." have both components of power and image maintenance; "You are always late" and "This case will be good practice for you" are image maintenance games; and "The more cases the better" is a reducing responsibility game.

In "Letters are due yesterday" the supervisor makes the deadlines for a task (in the game described it was letter writing) earlier than originally outlined, then berates the student retroactively for being late with completing the task. In this game the student-supervisor relationship suffers and, given the new deadline, the student may not have enough time to properly complete the task.

Game 3: "In graduate school, letters were due within one week of seeing a patient. In one rotation, where the letters were simpler, the supervisor reprimanded the intern for taking the week and required the letters be completed within 5 days. From that point, all letters were completed within 5 days. In the midterm eval, the supervisor made a comment of letters being late, and then on my final eval, the supervisor made the comment that "letters were consistently late.""

In "Make this little change" the supervisor either gives unsubstantial feedback in a session, focusing on style or other "soft" components, or requires revisions of letters, sometimes many revisions, based on "picky" or stylistic changes. "Make this little change" was the most commonly cited supervisor-initiated game described, being described in 6 of the 27 supervisor-initiated games. In some cases respondents stated that the supervisor required that a letter be revised in which the supervisor changed his/her own edits by the final draft (game 21), or in one

case, the supervisor approved a "final" version of a letter, giving it an A-, in which the student actually made no corrections (game 28). Many respondents cited that many of the changes or revisions requested were not accompanied by any discussion or guidance. Apart from the student-supervisor relationship being compromised, the student may not, as a result of the game, respect the supervisor's judgment or feedback. This may lead to the student not fully taking advantage of the supervisor's experience to improve his/her skills.

Game 28: "Supervisor would ask for detailed write up, report or letter to patient by intern, but would make numerous changes, mark in red, huge criticisms really tearing a part the report, to clearly assert her role as Alpha female. This happened to interns who had been professional writers in a previous career, as well as the novice student. We figured out it was a power game when some interns simply printed it out again with no corrections, and it went through and got an A-."

In "I need to sign off on that" the student's primary supervisor's supervisor, the senior genetic counselor in the practice, requires that all of the student's work be approved, not only by the student's supervisor, but also by him/her, sometimes leading to contradictory feedback. In this game the initiator exerts power over both the student and the student's supervisor but at a cost to the internship. By requiring double-approval, the student is spending time on administrative tasks that might be better spent on achieving internship goals. In addition, the mixed feedback that the student gets makes it difficult for him/her to appropriately incorporate feedback to improve his/her work.

"Of course you need to file" was described in two of the 27 supervisor-initiated games described. In this game the supervisor required that the student do an inordinate amount of administrative duties (namely filing) or "girl Friday" work, taking away time that might have been better spent doing clinically related work.

Game 29: "Supervisor instructed the intern to complete some of her more mundane paperwork tasks (unrelated to the patients whom the intern was counseling during the rotation) because it would "give her exposure to what a real day in the life of a gc was like." The intern goes along with the game because it will make her supervisor happy."

In "Observe me only" the supervisor uses the excuse of not being board certified (only cases supervised by an ABGC, ABMG or CCMG board

certified individual can be used for the ABGC logbook requirement to sit for the ABGC certification exam) to require that the student observe only, throughout the internship. Even though cases may not be used for the ABGC logbook, experience might be gained in this situation. By only allowing the student an observational role, he/she does not expand his/her counseling skills.

"I'll take it from here," and "You need to work on..." are both games that allow the supervisor to maintain power and an image of superiority. In "I'll take it from here" the supervisor acknowledges the work the student did for a case presentation but only allows the student to present background information and not the case itself at rounds, citing that "They think genetic counselors are smart and we want to keep it that way," suggesting that allowing the student to present the entire case would reflect poorly on the supervisor and the profession. In this game the supervisor clearly wants to maintain his/her image of being professional and knowledgeable in front of his/her colleagues, but the student, as a result, is not able to learn presenting skills. In "You need to work on..." the supervisor has an area of special interest in genetic counseling and considers him/herself an expert. He/she maintains this image by letting the student know that he/she is an expert and making it a focus for the student, who by the supervisor's assessment is lacking in this area. However, the suggestions/guidance that the student receives from the supervisor are not helpful or appropriate to gaining more skill in the area. The supervisor, by identifying a fictitious weakness in the student, both exerts power over the student and maintains an image of being knowledgeable. The student, however, is not spending his/her time effectively as he/she is having to focus resources on an area that does not need as much work as an area of true weakness. This, of course, is only a game if the weakness identified is not real.

"You are always late," and "This case will be good practice for you" fall under the heading of "image maintenance." In "You are always late" the supervisor blames the student for not meeting deadlines, when it is in fact the supervisor's disorganization that is to blame, and in "This case will be good practice for you" the supervisor requires that the student research and do a case that the supervisor is secretly not prepared for, or comfortable doing. In both cases the supervisor uses the student to cover-up supervisor short comings. Also the student-

supervisor relationship suffers and the student is not getting appropriate supervision in complex cases.

Game 30: "Patient scheduled for gc for non-routine condition. Supervisor tells student "this will be a good learning opportunity for you." Supervisor has student do research on condition and see patient. Supervisor actually was not knowledgeable about condition and uncomfortable seeing patient in front of student."

Finally, "The more cases the better" is a new "reducing responsibilities" supervisor-initiated game. In "The more cases the better" the supervisor, who is overworked and needs a break, gives more of his/her case load to the student to reduce his/her work load, under the guise of expanding the student's experience. The student, as a result, does not get appropriate supervision in each case, and may not be learning as much in the internship as he/she should.

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

### Limitations of the Survey

Given the anonymous nature of the survey, the fact that no demographic information was asked of participants, the fact that an individual could submit as many descriptions of games as he/she liked, and the fact that an individual could also submit descriptions of both supervisor and student initiated games, it is impossible to make any inferences about characteristics of students or supervisors who are likely to initiate games, under what circumstances game-playing takes place, how often game-playing occurs, or how common certain games are from this study. In addition, because only one member of the supervision dyad described the game (and in all cases but one this appeared to be the non-initiator), the game descriptions submitted should be viewed cautiously. Finally, assessing the core content of a game and assigning it a game heading is somewhat subjective. We, as authors, have tried our best to be thoughtful in our assignments, but one person's idea of a "power" game may be another's idea of an "image maintenance" game. For this reason, the headings assigned should be viewed as the authors' idea of "best fit," subject to varying interpretation by others.



### **Destructive Games in Live Clinical Genetic Counseling Supervision**

Our survey shows that destructive games in live clinical genetic counseling supervision do occur. However, given the limitations of the study, apart from gaining insight into what some of these games are, no other inferences can be made.

Many, but not all, of the games reported in the survey have been described in live clinical supervision in other health care professions, suggesting that there may be games common to all supervisory relationships, but that, in addition, each profession may have games unique to it. The motivations and payoffs, however, of these games may not be unique with only the details of how the game is played being profession-specific. For instance, the game “make this little change” has not been described in the literature but was described six times in our survey. It is a supervisor-initiated power game in which the supervisor gives picky feedback, especially relating to letter writing. While increasing one’s power over a student by exerting one’s authority as a supervisor is not new, using letter writing as a means to exert this authority may be unique to genetic counseling. For this reason, profession-specific games are likely to reflect the differences of the professions in their requirements and training of students. In addition, not all games previously described in the literature were reported in the survey. It is possible that with additional research additional games in live clinical supervision in genetic counseling may be uncovered.

### **Supervisor-Initiated Games**

The majority of respondents outlined games initiated by supervisors rather than students. Given that most games appeared to be described from the point of view of the non-initiator (in these games, the student), this may reflect the fact that nearly all surveys were completed by individuals who had been genetic counseling students (while only a subset had also supervised genetic counseling students). This may also relate to the power differential of the supervisor-student relationship. Supervisors are in a better position to initiate and continue game-playing than students because students, who are often reluctant participants, acquiesce to playing because of their vulnerable positions; they like the supervisor; they want to pass the internship or get a good recommendation; and/or they recognize the element of reality

of the situation (Kadushin, 1968; Hawthorne, 1975). For these reasons students are unlikely to confront or challenge a game. This is supported by our survey results in which the reasons for students to play supervisor-initiated games were often that the student did not want to confront the supervisor and had no other options.

Supervisor game-playing may also be a symptom of the lack of training of supervisors. It is reported that most supervisors in genetic counseling have less than 5 years of supervisory experience and learned how to be supervisors by trial and error (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Lindh *et al.*, 2003). This lack of supervisory training may translate into insecurities and anxieties surrounding supervising, thereby creating a fertile ground for game-playing. The most commonly reported motives for supervisor-initiated games in the survey related to: increasing a supervisor’s power, control or superiority over a student; avoiding giving negative feedback to students; and reducing the supervisor’s workload. These motivations suggest that supervisor training and supervisor participation in supervision groups may be helpful to reduce game-playing. These activities may build confidence in supervisors so that anxieties surrounding supervision and the authority that goes with it are lessened, thereby minimizing the need to engage in gamesmanship (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2002; Jones, 2001; Kennedy, 2000; Lindh *et al.*, 2003). In addition, the most common games cited involved giving feedback, either regarding counseling skills or documentation. In the games reported feedback was unsubstantial, vague or unhelpful, or it was negative and given in front of colleagues or clients. Given this data supervisor training with an emphasis on how to give balanced, effective and helpful feedback may be particularly useful in promoting supervisor confidence in this area.

### **How a Student Can Stop a Supervisor-Initiated Game**

As mentioned before, students who are on the receiving end of a supervisor initiated game are not often in positions in which they can control and/or stop supervisor game-playing. In fact, the two most common reasons cited for why students play supervisor-initiated games are that they avoid confronting the supervisor and increase their chances of doing well in the internship. Although clearly difficult to do, one option to counteract

supervisor-initiated games is for the student to make his/her needs known to his/her supervisors in an explicit, persistent and non-threatening way (Kadushin, 1968). This, however, requires self-awareness, self-confidence and a willingness to confront the supervisor. Getting others involved who appreciate that a game is being played may be a student's only other option.

Some have suggested that meeting a supervisor-initiated game with a student-initiated counter-game may be a solution (Hawthorne, 1975). This strategy, however, does nothing to stop destructive game-playing and although it may have enticing short-term pay-offs, in the long-term it is akin to putting out a fire with gasoline- only serving to create more barriers to an open, honest and trusting student-supervisor relationship.

### Student-Initiated Games

Student-initiated games were also described; the majority related to taking more control of the supervisory experience by either reducing expectations of the student, or controlling feedback or conferences. This is consistent with student-initiated games reported in other professions (Bauman, 1972; Hawthorne, 1975; Hagler and Casey, 1990; Kadushin, 1968; Sleight, 1984) and is also in keeping with anxiety being the motivating factor for students to engage in game-playing.

The most common student-initiated game reported in the survey, "Poor me," has been described many times in different health care professions (Bauman, 1972; Kadushin, 1968; Sleight, 1984) suggesting that it may be common to all supervisory relationships. The need for the student to minimize criticism and responsibilities speaks to the insecurities and fear that students deal with in live clinical supervision and suggests that supervisors, in order to minimize these anxieties, should be very sensitive to the learning climate that the student experiences.

### How a Supervisor Can Stop a Student-Initiated Game

In the supervisor-student relationship, supervisors have the upper hand, and as a result may have more control over identifying and stopping destructive game-playing. Declining to play games, however, demands that the supervisor be aware of, and comfortable with, what he/she is doing, and who he/she is.

The less vulnerable the supervisor, the more impervious she/he is to gamesmanship (Kadushin, 1968). Supervisor self-awareness is key to decreasing a supervisor's vulnerability (Gizynski, 1978). Stopping student initiated games requires not only supervisor self-awareness and self-confidence, but also a willingness to confront and expose the game in a compassionate and mutually face-saving way (Kadushin, 1968), and implementing a "colleagueship" approach [also known as the "consultant role" of supervisor (McCarthy and LeRoy, 1998)] to live clinical supervision whereby the student and supervisor work together as colleagues to achieve internship goals (Sleight, 1984). Other strategies include "interpretation" in which the supervisor confronts the student with a description of his/her behavior, "feedback" in which the supervisor points out the behavior and tells the student how it makes him/her feel, and "role-playing" in which the supervisor and student reverse roles to showcase the game playing behavior (Bauman, 1972).

Supervisors should also strive to create an open and safe learning environment, also known as a "holding environment" (Kennedy, 2000), in which students may feel less threatened and anxious. Other strategies to reduce student anxiety related to supervision uncertainties include implementing a document to outline and define internship expectations and goals early in the internship (sometimes referred to as a Student Learning Contract), and providing feedback and evaluation regularly throughout the internship.

Live clinical supervision is a positive experience for most students and supervisors; however, less positive experiences do occur, and this may in some part be related to destructive game-playing. Understanding that these games occur, how they are played, and how they might be minimized or stopped are important considerations for the training of genetic counseling students. Little is known about this topic and we hope that our results will stimulate further research in this area.

## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS ON THE SURVEY

Questions about Clinical Training/Supervision:

1. How many clinical internships have you completed (or did you complete) as part of your Master's level genetic counseling

training? Answer options were: zero; 1-2; 3-5; 6-10; 11 +

2. How many Master's level genetic counseling interns have you supervised in a clinical internship? Answer options were: zero; 1-2; 3-5; 6-10; 11 +

#### Game Description:

3. Who initiated the game? Answer options were: GC intern; Supervisor
4. Briefly describe how the game was played (please do not provide identifying information; refer to the supervisor as "supervisor" and the intern as the "intern", etc.). Open-essay response.
5. What motivated the initiator to play the game (what was in it for them)? Open-essay response.
6. Why did the non-initiator of the game play (what was in it for them)? Open-essay response.
7. How was/were internship goals undermined or interfered with as a result of the game? If possible, please be precise about what goals were not properly achieved as a result of the game. Open-essay response.
8. How could the non-initiator have stopped the game? Open-essay response.

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