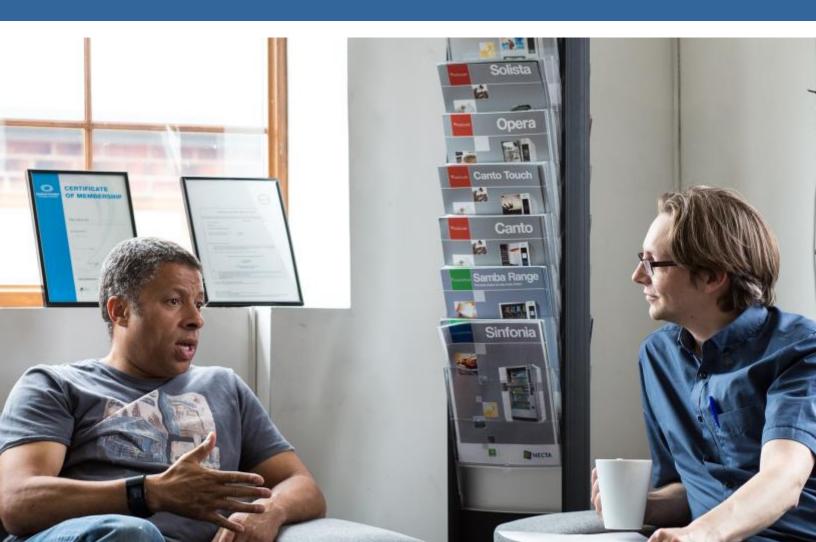# Mindful
Continuing Education

Clinical Supervision Approaches in Counseling Professions

Infusing Postmodernism Into Counseling Supervision: Challenges and Recommendations

Abstract

In this manuscript, two postmodern approaches to counseling supervision are examined: Narrative supervision and solution-focused supervision. Postmodernism is defined, key themes within the postmodern supervision literature are identified, a brief review and critique of the literature on both supervision approaches is provided, and implications for the practice of supervision and future research/scholarship areas are discussed.

Similar to the counseling process, the nucleus of individual supervision is the interpersonal alliance (Inman, 2006). As such, many processes associated with counseling are similar to those in the supervisory relationship. This includes the impact of philosophical thought, a discipline that has influenced psychological and counseling theories for decades. For instance, Dopson and Gade (1981) stated that Kierkegaard´s philosophy influenced the counseling approaches of Rollo May as well as Carl Rogers. The artful aspect of effective counseling often is guided by the broad guidelines offered by philosophical views of life and nature. In recent years, postmodern tenets have modified how clinicians and supervisors approach their roles as helper and advisor, respectively. Postmodern counseling approaches such as solution-focused therapy have shifted the attention away from problems. These strengths based methods are now also applied in supervision (Knight, 2008).

Postmodernism is based on the assumption that there is no universal "truth" in the world (Hansen, 2002). The socially formulated discussions in which a person participates leads to his or her unique view of their world (Campbell & Ungar, 2004). Unlike modernists, postmodernists do not place absolute value upon rational, objective, and positivist (i.e., empirical) traditions (Ungar, 2006). There is a focus on meaning-making at the individual level with the assumption that their culture is made up of an infinite variety of equally valid viewpoints of the world. The result is a rejection of the epistemological assumptions of several centuries of positivist inquiry (Hansen, 2002; Rosenau, 1992). Postmodernists contend that reality and truth cannot be measured empirically because they are constantly changing entities constructed by each individual through his/her language and interactions. In addition, postmodernists reason that no individual's perspective is any more truthful than another's, as both are accurate social constructions based on life experiences.

Because the field has not produced indisputable truths based on pure objectivity, counseling methods are fundamentally narrative explanatory structures (Hansen, 2002). Supervisory methods may be viewed similarly (Whiting, 2007). Although some empirical research has been conducted on the topic, the supervisory experience invariably depends on the individual characteristics of both supervisor and supervisee, as well as the unique dynamics created in their developing relationship. In both roles, helping clients or supervisees, to better identify, appreciate, and utilize their skills is a fundamental goal. Indeed, encouragement appears to influence multiple supervision techniques (McCurdy, 2006). Assisting clients or supervisees to reflect upon their acquired and inner wisdom to formulate viable solutions to clinical dilemmas, rather than providing answers, helps them to take ownership of their conclusions and to better recall the insights that led to them. According to Whiting (2007) supervision is complex and involves a multileveled dialogue, and numerous stories, which makes postmodern approaches a good fit for meeting these fundamental supervisory goals. The application of postmodernism in supervision allows supervisees to make their own meaning, while collaborating with the supervisor.

Accepting that each person's realities are uniquely subjective, and equally relevant to others' interpretations of life happenings, is essential to respecting clients' points of view (Taylor & Loewenthal, 2001). Postmodern philosophies emphasize these unique, subjective viewpoints, and thus, are well suited for counselors whose therapeutic interventions adhere to here-and-now dynamics. Due to the ever-evolving happenings of therapeutic and supervisory encounters, counselors and supervisors can benefit from the flexibility and open-mindedness offered by a postmodern approach.

Postmodern Approaches to Supervision

The counseling literature has increasingly focused on graduate supervision (Moss, 2009). As the demands for more trained clinicians and educators increase, so too does the requirement for more advanced training and effective supervisory methods. Indeed, clinical supervision is viewed as one of the most integral components of developing essential counseling skills among counselors-in-training (Hein, Lawson, & Rodriguez, 2011). Traditional models are consistently reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness. By definition, supervision involves a clear power differential between advisor and advisee (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). The supervisor's position, experience, and expertise place her/him in an elevated role. Just as postmodern counselors seek to help clients construct their own answers to life difficulties, thus encouraging ownership of solutions, postmodern supervisors harbor a similar ideal (although this is not exclusive to postmodernism).

Many supervisors take an active role in working with advisees, often asking more directive questions and more readily offering specific advice than they might with a client in a counseling setting (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). The rationale includes the need for novice clinicians to efficiently develop the tools necessary to help clients in very real need. Working with supervisees to effectively construct their professional identity includes balancing flexibility for self-exploration while allowing for more prescriptive instruction should the need arise (see Bernard's [1979] Discrimination Model). Given the evaluative role required of many supervisors, the power differential in supervision can be more pronounced than the model adapted by many postmodern counselors who strive put clients on equal power ground as themselves.

A paradigm shift has been evident in the supervision literature (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Specifically, three themes seem to emerge when examining postmodern supervision approaches. First, there is an increased focus of the importance of language in supervision, a central tenet of the postmodern paradigm (Presbury, Echterling, & McKee, 1999). Second, the value of using strength-based approaches over deficit-based techniques (i.e., highlighting and correcting mistakes) in supervision is receiving more attention (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). This reinforces the postmodern notion that no one perspective is "correct." Finally, more and more authors are arguing for the removal of hierarchy within the supervision relationship (Behan, 2003). Again, this demonstrates a belief that supervisors have no greater access to truth than their supervisees. The emergence of these themes will become clearer as the two postmodern supervision approaches are described.

Clinical Applications of Postmodernism

Clinical approaches (e.g., person-centered, systems) often are applied as a framework for the practice of supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). This is especially true within marriage and family counseling supervision, where supervisors often select systems interventions to intentionally match their supervisees' theoretical approaches, in an effort to create isomorphic learning opportunities (Carlson & Lambie, 2012). Additionally, a number of writers have examined the impact of postmodern thought on the counseling profession (Hanson, 2010; Naden, Johns, Ostman, & Mahan, 2004; Xu, 2012). This paradigm shift has prompted a variety of new models and approaches for clinical work (Davidson, 2014). As such, new strategies also are being applied to the process of supervision. Although much of this postmodern supervision has occurred within the field of marriage and family counseling, authors are applying postmodern thought and approaches to individual supervision as well (Lyon, 2006; Ungar, 2006).

Pure postmodern approaches assume that the solutions to supervisees' challenge dwell in part within his or her intuition (McCurdy, 2006). Similar to those clients whose issues may dictate more direct interventions, there are times when prescriptive approaches are vital to a supervisee's development. Intuition, while an invaluable resource to clinical decisions, may not by itself be sufficient to guide novice counselors to effective clinical responses. Expert knowledge and concrete direction are sometimes required. While this is generated through experience and continued study, supervisees need a level of mastery in order to ethically treat their client population. Supervisors must consistently balance the need to directly address potentially harmful levels of therapeutic ignorance with the great benefits of permitting supervisees to engineer their own clinical insights – thereby increasing the likelihood that they will take ownership of, and retain, their acquired knowledge (Whiting, 2007). For faculty and/or field supervisors of master's and doctoral counseling students, as with similar relationships in other professional environments, a balance between traditional supervisory standards and their postmodern counterparts such as Narrative Supervision and Solution-Focused Supervision may be effective (Moss, 2009).

Narrative Supervision

Both narrative therapy and supervision are approaches rooted in the idea that individuals define reality by the stories they live and share with others (DeSocio, 2005; Neimeyer, 1993). Practitioners empower clients and supervisees by emphasizing responsibility for life realities. According to Anderson and Vandehey (2006), narrative therapy "has extended the idea that individuals are authors of their own lives" (p. 171). This approach involves an examination and sometimes creation of stories clients tell themselves and others about who they are and how they interact with others. Counselors try to enter their clients' individualized narrative world and

offer suggestions and/or modifications that may lead to an improved story of their life (DeSocio, 2005; White & Epson, 1990). The same process can be applied to supervisory relationships.

As with other postmodern techniques, the narrative approach places emphasis on the language chosen by clients, supervisees, and supervisors. For example, narrative supervisors argue that the label "supervision" suggests a worldview of a developmental hierarchy of vision, experience, and knowledge (Carlson & Erickson, 2001; Edwards & Chen, 1999; Speedy, 2000). In addition, narrative supervisors believe that the hierarchical emphasis present in most supervision undermines the collaborative abilities of the process and inhibits the growth and creativity of the supervisee (Edwards & Keller, 1995). As a result, such supervision tends to be deficit or pathology-based which fosters dependence upon the supervisor for the "correct" answers and viewpoints (Carlson & Erickson, 2001). Narrative supervisors strive to give voice to the supervisee, drawing out possibilities from them whenever possible.

Postmodern supervisors are challenged to construct questions that are less instructive and designed to extract supervisees' knowledge (Ungar, 2006). Although there are many ways to work with supervisees' stories (all of which would constitute narrative interventions), several models and techniques have received specific attention in the narrative supervision literature. In what she labeled a "work in progress," Speedy (2000) presented her rationale for providing a discussion of narrative approaches to supervision arguing,

> The traditional literature of counselling supervision seems to lack uncertainty and timidity. It is mostly written from the supervisor's, or supervisor trainer's, perspective and seems to be full of models, structures, checklists and frameworks. It is not a humble or exploratory literature. There are few stories and little is written from the client or supervisee's standpoint (p. 428).

She challenged supervisors to adopt a stance of naïve curiosity toward their supervisees and to ask deconstructing questions to reflect on supervisee stories.

Carlson and Erickson (2001) described one such approach for supervision using this narrative perspective. The three main supervisory practices or techniques: (1) experiencing privileging practices (honoring supervisees' personal experiences), (2) re-membering practices (helping supervisees affectively and intellectually re-experience a return to membership with significant relationships in their lives), and (3) creating communities of concern (fostering networks of other counselors with whom they can shares stories and experiences). Carlson and Erickson also provided practical steps to help supervisees develop their counselor-identity stories thus helping them develop their preferred style of interacting with clients. Lists of privileging and re-membering questions, which can be used to facilitate conversation, exploration, and storying and eventually, a community of concern, accompany these "steps".

By aiding fellow counselors to identify their own narratives, while adhering to his or her chosen identity concept, postmodern supervisors model compassionate and thoughtful intervention (Ungar, 2006). Bob (1999) presented additional suggestions for the application of narrative supervision and case formulation. She argued that supervision should be approached as a dialogue examining the different realities of the client, supervisee, and supervisor. After sharing these perspectives, "a new story can be developed that will be useful to the client and helpful to the supervisee in sitting with the client" (Bob, 1999, p. 152). Because the viewpoint of the supervisee is considered as valid as that of the supervisor, the supervisee must find the new narrative to be compelling, appropriate, and useful before he/she is asked to use the story in case formulation and eventually in session.

In addition to these more global supervision applications, narrative techniques also have been suggested when working with specific populations. For example, Etherington (2000) recommended the use of a narrative approach when supervising counselors who work with childhood sexual abuse victims. She noted that counselors often struggle to express their feelings about, reactions to, and plans with these clients. Etherington offered narrative recommendations (e.g., "exploding" words or images on to a piece of paper) that may allow supervisee to begin investigating these areas and developing their narrative rather than demanding/expecting a coherent narrative about traumatic events right away.

Proponents of narrative supervision consistently argue that supervisors should attempt to minimize, if not remove the hierarchy within the supervisory relationship. For example, Thomas (1994) noted that supervisors should attempt to honor the request of supervisees to "supervise us or evaluate us; not both" (p. 12). Such views negate the needs of interns whose lack of experience precludes their having the intuition required to construct viable solutions to clinical dilemmas. Other supervisory models help address this deficit. Firth and Martens (2008) contended that "academic developers should restrict themselves to working with the practices that constitute the role and responsibilities of the supervisor as instituted and sanctioned by the university" (p. 287). In many situations, especially academia, clinical supervisors are charged with evaluating and/or grading their supervisees. This process serves a number of purposes, not the least of which is making sure supervisees are prepared for professional practice (American Counseling Association, 2014). This duty to the profession should not be minimized—To do so could result in unprepared and/or inappropriate clinicians harming their clients.

Moving from supervision to co-vision or another model where counselors are viewed as the equal of the supervisor (e.g., White, 1997), leads to questions such as: Why is a supervisor

necessary? What is the reason and/or value for having a more experienced clinician who has been trained in the practice of supervision as a resource? Otherwise, supervision would be nothing more than consultation. Moreover, the ethical and legal responsibilities that come with one's supervisory status could be minimized. There are times when supervisees do not have the knowledge or skills to answer their own questions, create an appropriate narrative, etc. In these cases, the supervisor has an ethical responsibility to own his/her expertise and help their supervisee (Whitening, 2007). Should they fail to do so, client welfare could be jeopardized.

It should be noted that several authors within the postmodern supervision literature have acknowledged this responsibility (e.g., Wetchler, 1990; White, 1997). Bernard and Goodyear (2014) cautioned that relying only on postmodern models will lead supervisors to miss important information about their supervisees because they will be thinking about their supervisee's therapeutically rather than in an educational manner. However, very few authors have explicitly examined when to follow postmodern models and when to move into more of a didactic mode. Prouty (2001) offered an empirically-based decision making model for using hierarchical methods versus collaborative methods within postmodern supervision. In addition, Wetchler's (1990) model contained a clinical education component for teaching skills that supervisees lacked based on assessments gleaned from first using solution-focused interventions. These approaches are examined in the following section.

Solution-Focused Supervision

Time constraints have accentuated the need for brevity in both counseling and supervision systems (McCurdy, 2006). As such, solution-focused approaches may serve as a prominent model for contemporary clinicians and advisors. As with the other postmodern approaches discussed above, much of the writing involving solution-focused supervision

originally came from the family counseling/therapy literature (e.g., Marek, Sandifer, Beach, Coward, & Protinsky, 1994; Selekman & Todd, 1995; Thomas, 1994; Wetchler, 1990). However, authors have applied the model to supervision within non-family contexts (Fowler, 2011; Thomas, 2013) and discussed the benefits of such supervision regardless of context (Juhnke, 1994; McCurdy, 2006; Presbury, Echterling, & McKee, 1999). This approach to supervision grew out of family therapy models (which also have been applied to individual counseling) termed "solution-focused" (e.g., de Shazer, 1988, 1991), "solution-oriented" (e.g., O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989), and "possibility therapies" (O'Hanlon & Beadle, 1999). The primary tenet of these approaches both in therapy and supervision is the amplification of and subsequent focus on strengths, competencies, and successes of individuals (McCurdy, 2006; Triantafillou, 1997). To quote Thomas (1994), "this model assumes that therapists have the resources to solve therapeutic dilemmas" (p. 13).

Wetchler (1990) and Marek et al. (1994) both proposed models of solution-focused supervision. Wetcher's model consisted of two components, the solution focus and clinical education. The majority of supervision is spent identifying the supervisee's successes and exceptions to patterns of difficulty. Using these positives as a base, the supervisee is encouraged to explore ways to increase these successful behaviors/interventions. The clinical education piece only is used when this solution focus alone cannot address supervisee-generated concerns (i.e., goals and questions for supervision).

Marek et al. (1994) built upon this model by adding a more practical framework consisting of goal setting, identifying exceptions, and monitoring progress through scaling questions. The authors focused on the process of goal setting noting that clear, concrete, behavioral goals are essential in this approach so both supervisees and supervisors can assess

movement and development. In addition, de Shazer's (1988) "miracle question" is proposed as a tool for identifying goals and helping supervisees envision a session where they are able to help resolve their client's issues. By exploring a detailed, behavioral picture of such a session, the supervisee can identify the aforementioned concrete goals to work toward.

Selekman and Todd (1995) reiterated many of the interventions that fall within the scope of solution-oriented supervision (e.g., scaling questions, miracles questions, doing something different). However, these authors did add a focus on presuppositional questions and language within supervision. This technique involves the intentional use forward-thinking words of success like "when" and "will" during the questioning/discussion of supervisee goals. This method has been termed "change talk" and the "language of change" within the solution-focused literature (e.g., de Shazer, 1988, 1991; O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis, 1989; Pearson, 2006). In addition, several additional techniques (e.g., future-oriented questions, externalizing the problem, pattern interruption) also were put forth by Selekman and Todd (1995). This is in keeping with the focus on technique and interventions within the body of solution-focused supervision scholarship.

Supervision from a solution-focused perspective includes the supervisor facilitating the supervisee to explore his or her attributes, skillsets, and resources (McCurdy, 2006). Marek et al (1994) noted, "all supervisees, despite their theoretical orientation, can come to understand their own unique strengths and abilities as therapists through the solution focused supervision model" (p. 60). That same year, Juhnke (1994) also argued that this approach could be applied when working with clinicians who do not take a solution-focused approach to counseling. In addition, Juhnke was the first author to propose a model of solution-focused supervision for clinicians working with clients on an individual rather than marital or family counseling basis. Although

his model and techniques do not differ significantly from those offered within the family therapy solution-focused supervision literature, this application outside of marriage and family supervision created the first explicit attempt to use solution-focused supervision in a non-isomorphic fashion.

Proponents of solution-focused supervision, like other postmodern approaches, present strong philosophical arguments for its contentions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). However, there has been a relative dearth of empirical evidence to support its conclusions. As a result, most of the writing regarding solution-focused (and narrative) supervision has been theoretical in nature. However, it should be noted that a similar lack of research has been a criticism of the supervision field in general (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). Some authors offered case studies/reports as illustrations, but sometimes there is resistance to the idea of conducting research on postmodern approaches, with some authors suggesting that since there is no "truth," it is not possible or necessary to defend their methods scientifically/empirically (Edwards & Chen, 1999). Strong and Gale (2013) confirmed this thought by reporting that there continues to be resistance within the postmodern clinical movement vis-à-vis research.

Like existentialism, postmodernism provides important philosophical theories, approaches, models, and techniques for understanding the human condition and how best to accentuate its attributes and confront its shortcomings (Hoffman, Stewart, Warren & Meek, 2009). Both approaches, however, may lack the level of pragmatic application some supervisors want and/or need to serve as independent alternatives to somewhat more established clinical and supervisory practices. Many supervisors may be hesitant to apply existential-phenomenological approaches due to the fact that they don´t provide readily available manuals (Milton, 2009).

While the lack of empirical support for its practices is apparent, postmodern thought is not alone in this limitation. According to Rayner and Vitali (2014) existential-phenomenological therapies continue to lack empirical data to confirm its effectiveness. Although the number of studies has increased in recent years, more literature is needed to examine the efficacy of supervisory practices in general. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) have noted the need for research into the supervision models that have been accepted and practiced for years (e.g., developmental models).

Postmodern philosophies can be integrated successfully into effective and meaningful supervisory experiences. There are opportunities to blend the many benefits of postmodern supervisory approaches with those from more traditional models. According to McCurdy (2006), "the supervisory process is collaborative, exploratory, developmental, and strengths-based" (p. 146). The supervisee´s intuition is considered an invaluable resource. However, in order for supervisors to accentuate the attributes of a mentorship position, boundaries must be established. Supervisor and supervisee´s roles need to be clearly articulated in order to sustain professional development (Firth & Martens, 2008). Postmodern approaches to supervision shun belief systems that include hierarchical foundations. At the same time it is acknowledged that it is impossible to completely eliminate the inequality of power between supervisor and supervisee even when adhering to postmodern practices (Behan, 2003).

Infusing Postmodernism into Supervision

Like mental health clinicians, supervisors confront time limitations due to managed care and productivity-centered work environments (McCurdy, 2006). Efforts need to be continuously employed to generate more efficient and effective supervisory strategies. One method achieving this is by accentuating the cohesive attributes of traditional and postmodern strategies. For

example, traditional supervisory practices can benefit from postmodern approaches that nurture a supervisee's processing skills, develop problem solving abilities, and bolster feelings of self-efficacy can help foster the independence necessary for efficient internship experiences. Balancing modern and postmodern approaches to supervision is essential to optimal advisory experience. Each approach has merit. In his discussion of career counseling, Sampson, Jr. (2009) argued that comprehending and valuing each approaches' contributions is valuable and necessary. The same process and importance can be generalized to supervisory practices.

Novice clinicians have engaged in academic study regarding their profession's skillsets, strategies, and approaches. Accrediting organizations create standards of excellence that help prepare students for clinical work. However, direct experience is a necessary component for knowledge to be integrated in a person's professional core. In addition, theories, ethics, and standards are also communicated through the supervisory relationship (Lemire, 2009). Moreover, there are times when supervisees desire to learn from the supervisor's experiences and to engage in consultation (Ungar, 2006). These traditional views are in contrast with pure postmodern thought, which rejects hierarchical relationships. Thus, an unwavering following of postmodern philosophies may in part negate the value of the expert status ingrained in the supervisor's role, thereby missing the needs of inexperienced professionals in search of mentorship.

Despite the potential limitations of a postmodern approach to supervision, its philosophies can enrich the experience for both supervisor and supervisee (Whiting, 2007). It can create opportunities for the burgeoning professional to call upon his or her own intuition and knowledge and can encourage him or her to take ownership of solutions. In contrast, simply supplying "the answer" without deep contemplation is unlikely to help the supervisee to fully absorb and integrate the material. A balance is artfully required. Indeed, supervision creates the

forum for supervisees to experience the synergy between assisting clients, embracing the role of professional, harboring concerns, and existing with meaning (Ungar, 2006). Each participant in the supervisory relationship contributes to the quality of professional development, which ideally occurs for both supervisor and supervisee.

Postmodern approaches to supervision clearly have appeal and have been shown anecdotally to produce positive results. As noted by McCurdy (2006), supervision is a developmental process whose small successes manifest into overall growth, development, and success inside both the clinical and supervisory environments. Permitting advisees the time necessary to construct their own answers favors the facilitating role adopted by postmodern supervisors. The ideas of honoring the supervisee's perspective, working to identify supervisee strengths, and raising supervisee awareness regarding power and gender-bias make can enrich the supervisory experience. The case studies that have been provided in the literature offer glimpses into the power of postmodern interventions.

Strict modernists would view supervisor-supervisee relationships with the former's expertise and experience as superior to those of the latter (Lemire, 2009). This format can be conducive to a mentorship relationship, which can accentuate the benefits of modeling quality professional behaviors. However, building and nurturing a collegial relationship – a natural consequence and goal of postmodern supervision approaches – can also enhance the supervisee experience. A supervisee´s feeling of connectedness can be enhanced when supervisors provide cooperative professional development opportunities (McCurdy, 2006). These cooperative experiences in turn may contribute to vigorous, substantive discussions that better both participants' skillsets.

Although the postmodernist might argue for a strict application of a particular approach, integrative supervisors can use various postmodern interventions in their work. For example, these two approaches contain interventions that fit nicely within various "cells" of the atheoretical discrimination model (Bernard, 1979). In addition, supervisors can choose postmodern interventions to facilitate growth within Stoltenberg's (1981) series of levels and Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) dimensions of development. Specifically, it seems some of these interventions, which put considerable responsibility on the supervisee, might be more appropriate as the supervisee moves toward autonomy, therefore necessitating increased accountability (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2010). Autonomy refers to the supervisee´s level of independence within the supervisory relationship.

Future Research and Scholarship

Ungar (2006) advised the following: "In practice, the postmodern supervisor demonstrates sensitivity to the uniqueness of each person being supervised" (p. 67). This approach is the core tenet of two postmodern approaches – narrative, and solution-focused – that has received significant attention in the psychotherapy literature. It is one that is appears compatible with traditional supervisory models, but further research is necessary to quantify its effectiveness. The idea of conducting empirical research about postmodern supervision approaches may sound counter-intuitive. However, less doctrinaire postmodern supervision practitioners and/or researchers interested in examining postmodern approaches have a wide variety of areas worthy of study. Given the large number of models and techniques associated with these two postmodern approaches, it seems that exploration of the effectiveness of these interventions is warranted. This could involve studies of counselor development (e.g., Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth, 1982, Stoltenberg, 1981) resulting from postmodern interventions within

supervision. In addition, qualitative studies examining the differences between postmodern and non-postmodern approaches as perceived by supervisees also could provide valuable information. For example, might beginning supervisees find narrative supervision lacking in terms of directives/structure? Is the relationship/rapport within supervision affected by the choice of a postmodern versus a non-postmodern approach?

Additional attention is warranted in the area of evaluation within postmodern approaches. Although many postmodernist supervisors resist evaluation, addressing it is imperative in order to engage ethically in supervision. Specifically, case studies exploring how to supervise an impaired counselor would be one way to help non-postmodern supervisors understand how some of their concerns around ethical issues might be resolved. An exploration of when the postmodern approaches may and may not be appropriate would be a welcome addition to the literature.

In conclusion, this article investigated narrative, and solution-focused supervision. These two models represent broader clinical trends that have characterized the transition of counseling and clinical supervision into the postmodern era. This movement has resulted in a new body of theoretical development. However, little empirical evidence has been offered to date as to the utility of postmodern supervision. Although these approaches offer a greater appreciation for personal meaning-making and individual perspectives, it has yet to be determined whether or not these approaches will result in improved counselor supervision and training when compared to other methods. Rather than potentially resisting either the postmodern or modern/positivist perspective, supervisors can heed the words of compromise posed by Mills and Sprenkle (1995) who noted, "therapists have weathered [the] transition well, working hard to integrate valuable traditional perspectives within a new collaborative, constructionistic paradigm that is better

suited to the shifting value systems of the present world" (p. 375). Continuing to add postmodernism to the body of researched supervision knowledge and literature seems an appropriate next step rather than throwing out any previous results as false "truth."

Lessons from Triadic Supervisors: Maximizing Effectiveness

Abstract

Through this hermeneutic-phenomenological qualitative study, 10 supervisors of a CACREP accredited program identified emergent themes and challenges of triadic supervision: relationship dynamics, feedback, time management, contextual learning, and matching of supervisees. The researchers offer specific methods to approach these challenges within triadic supervision to maximize effectiveness.

As an essential aspect of counselor preparation, supervision calls for models that demonstrate consistent effectiveness (Borders, 2012; Kemer, Borders, & Willse, 2014). As of 2001, the standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016) have endorsed triadic supervision as a suitable training and supervision practice. With greater numbers of state counseling licensing boards accepting triadic supervision as an alternate to individual supervision (Oliver, Nelson, & Ybanez, 2010), researchers continue to explore this model which consists of a supervisor and two supervisees meeting simultaneously (Goldberg, Dixon, & Wolf, 2012; Hein & Lawson, 2008). As triadic supervision receives growing attention in the literature, guidelines for how to make best use of this model are critically needed. Although the model itself seems clear, the overarching structure and process of triadic supervision appears to vary widely in practice. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate and understand practicing supervisors' experiences, with a goal of identifying commonplace challenges faced in triadic supervision, and offering pragmatic ways to address those challenges

Background

Since the 1900's, mental health professionals have recognized clinical supervision as crucial for their professional development and effective work with clients (Kemer et al., 2014; Tomlin, Weatherston, & Pavkov, 2014). Across social work, psychology, and counseling as well as couples and family therapy, various supervision modalities are used (Hein & Lawson, 2009). Researchers carefully investigate core components, and new structured models are brought forward to enhance supervision practice (Oliver et al., 2010).

Several promising models of triadic supervision have emerged in the counseling field (Goldberg et al., 2012; Lawson, Hein, & Getz, 2009; Stinchfield, Hill & Kleist, 2007). Lawson

et al. (2009) drew on group supervision techniques to structure triadic supervision identifying collaborative relationships as central for supporting appropriate feedback exchanges. Goldberg et al. (2012) emphasized structuring sessions to pay particular attention to relationship dynamics, the ability to be vulnerable and understood, among members of the triad. According to Nuttgens and Chang (2013), differences in attitude and behavior that may be most likely to affect relationship dynamics revolve around ethics, gender, sexual attraction, power differentials, strength of skills, and emotional maturity. Stinchfield, Hill, and Kleist (2007) also concentrated on structure, using reflecting teams as a basis for feedback and understanding. Thus, similarities exist across models, most particularly related to the focus on thoughtful structuring of relationship dynamics, feedback and time management.

Overall, several empirical studies (Borders et al., 2012; Goldberg et al., 2012; Stinchfield, Hill, & Kleist, 2010) have identified a number of advantages, although challenges also exist in triadic supervision. Stinchfield et al. (2010) discovered triadic supervision fostered a degree of trust among the participants that often led to meaningful and productive working relationships. As a result, members of the triads were able to understand the perspectives of the others and did not have to defend or explain themselves. Triadic supervision generally has resulted in insightful, valuable, challenging feedback while supportive to the growth of supervisees (Borders et al., 2012; Goldberg et al., 2012). Triadic supervisors have noted that feedback between and among the triad often complemented each other and created a dynamic synergy that enhanced learning and fostered a sense of community within the time constraints of a supervision session (Oliver et al., 2010).

Another benefit of triadic supervision is peer role-modeling (Borders et al., 2012). Lawson, Hein, and Stuart (2010) found the additional perspective of another supervisee helped

bring forward ideas that neither supervisors nor the other supervisee had considered or tried. This diversity of views, along with the potential for indirect learning and peer support, are advantages found in group supervision (Lee & Everett, 2004), leading Borders (2012) to recommend that triadic supervisors recognize and understand the relationship dynamics and issues pertinent to group work. However, Lee and Everett (2004) noted that group supervision, with the greater number of supervisees, suffers from increased challenges to develop a safe climate, and to provide significant time and focus for each supervisee. Triadic supervision may avoid some of the drawbacks inherent in a group format, while still retaining some of the benefits.

Recent studies have also identified some challenges with triadic supervision. Triads of supervisees with disparate skills and personalities might fail to build sufficient trust and inhibit feedback, thus impeding progress and stifling the potential of both supervisees (Hein, Lawson & Rodriguez, 2011). With mismatched supervisees, power differentials also emerged as a concern. Specifically, the supervisor's power, combined with the social or academic power potentially held by a higher-functioning supervisee seemed to affect relationship dynamics and the balance of time spent focused on each supervisee (Hein & Lawson, 2008; Hein et al., 2011; & Stinchfield et al., 2010).

However, the primary challenge may be role confusion and uncertainty affecting supervisors who attempt to apply the norms and philosophy of traditional individual supervision to a triadic supervision model (Borders et al., 2012). As such, numerous researchers (Borders et al., 2012; Goldberg et al., 2012; Hein & Lawson, 2008; Hein et al., 2011; Stinchfield et al., 2010) identified overall structure as a major concern among the majority of supervisors and

supervisees. It appears crucial that participants create an effective structure that clarifies roles, process and goals in triadic sessions.

The current study was guided by two related questions: 1. What challenges and opportunities do triadic supervisors experience in the shift from individual to triadic supervision? 2. What guidelines for successful triadic supervision emerge in the meaning of those experiences?

Methods

Research Paradigm

Since our goal was to understand supervisors' experiences and derive meaning from those experiences, a hermeneutic phenomenological frame (Packer, 2011) guided our data collection and analysis. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for close examination and illumination of experience through interpretation of meaning in participants' narratives (Newman, Cashin, & Waters, 2010). In their review of Paul Ricoeur's work as it pertains to hermeneutic phenomenology, Charalambous, Papadopoulos and Beadsmore (2008) rejected the idea of researchers as objective, passive recipients of knowledge. Rather, knowledge or meaning is constructed at the intersection of the participants' narratives and the researcher's own prior knowledge and setting. The focus shifts from merely understanding others' experiences, to understanding the meaning of their experiences.

According to Doyle (2007), Heidegger believed that the researchers' perspectives are integral to understanding the meaning of phenomenon, and so analysis seeks convergence between the perspectives of the participants, as well as the reflections of the researchers. In doing so, researchers must identify their own prior experiences, context and expectations of the data as these will influence their reflections (Wojnar & Swanson 2007). We acknowledge that

each of us had experience with triadic supervision and believe triadic supervision offers valuable training experiences but recognize that other modalities are also important. Contextually, we are located within a university counselor preparation program that makes extensive use of triadic supervision, as well as some individual and group supervision. Thus, we are aware of some bias in favor of the triadic approach. With this study, we expected to learn both positive and challenging experiences to help us identify meaningful suggestions for other professionals.

Given the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, attention to issues of trustworthiness are critical. Morrow (2005) noted that trustworthiness reflects the credibility of the collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data. To enhance trustworthiness, we sought participants who represented our intended audience – supervisors in counselor preparation programs who were engaging in triadic supervision. Additionally, we employed a prolonged immersion with the data using a hermeneutic cycle, two rounds of member checks with all participants, and researcher self-reflection. Further details of these efforts to support trustworthiness are given below.

Participants

Following IRB approval, 10 individuals who provided both individual and triadic supervision in a CACREP accredited counseling program and adhered to The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision best practices in clinical supervision (ACES, 2011) at a medium-sized Rocky-Mountain university were invited to participate in the study. These participants were recruited because they were recently integrating the triadic model to supervise practicum students at the university training clinic. All 10 agreed to the full data collection process. Participants were eight women and two men. Four were advanced doctoral students (all women), and the other six were program faculty (three each associate and assistant professor

rank).   One participant was African-American, two were of mixed Hispanic and Native American heritage, while the remaining seven were White of European-American descent. Ages of participants ranged from the mid-20's into the mid-50's.

Six participants were new to triadic supervision, having never received it and only having provided it in the semester prior to data collection. The other four (who were all faculty members) had varying previous experience: one had only provided triadic supervision a few times in previous semesters. One had received triadic supervision in graduate school and also had several years of experience providing it. The final two had over 15 years of experience including both receiving and providing triadic supervision. All participants provided triadic supervision at 1.5 hours per week in the semester prior to data collection. We did not differentiate participants by any theoretical approach or individual style. Although we are certain such differences did exist, these were not the focus of the current study. Our focus was on how supervisors experienced the triadic format and we believed that the natural variation among participants' style would give us a broader perspective from which to build our understanding.

Procedure

Data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews conducted and audio recorded by a research associate who was neither an author nor a participant in the study. This individual was a counseling professional who also had training in supervision and data collection and who was instructed to follow the interview protocol we established, while also having flexibility to use her counseling skills and research understanding to help participants clearly articulate their thoughts and experiences. Drawing upon the literature and personal experiences, we designed seven initial questions to invite participants to reflect on the unique opportunities

and challenges of triadic supervision as compared to our usual program experiences of individual supervision. These initial questions were as follows: 1) Please describe your format/process for individual compared to triadic supervision. 2) Talk to me about your satisfaction with individual supervision as compared to triadic supervision. 3) What do you think of the effectiveness of individual compared with triadic supervision regarding the clinical success for the supervisees? 4) How about the demands on you as a supervisor during individual as compared to triadic supervision (for example, managing feedback and relationship dynamics)? 5) Please compare individual and triadic supervision regarding challenges for you as the supervisor. 6) Let me hear about advantages of individual as compared to triadic supervision. 7) What else would you like to offer related to individual and triadic supervision? Follow-up questions emerged within each interview to clarify and expand participants' responses.

Data Analysis

We employed a hermeneutic circle (Rennie, 2012) in our data analysis, which began with the raw transcriptions, incorporated our experiences and ideas as well as the literature, and returned to the data itself to begin again. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer, and each participant reviewed her/his transcribed interview to verify that the transcription accurately conveyed the participant's words and intended meaning. We then immersed ourselves in the transcriptions over the course of several weeks, with multiple readings. In a line-by-line analysis, the lead author identified key words and phrases that appeared to capture the meaning of participants' experiences as triadic supervisors (based on repetition, participant emphasis, or apparent salience to participants). These were grouped according to similarity into initial themes with representative quotations for each. To improve the trustworthiness of the initial coding, the second author independently coded a randomly

selected transcript, and this analysis was compared to the first author's coding of the same transcript. There was a high level of agreement between both versions, and the reflective discussion among all three of us about the few minor differences as well as points of agreement improved our thinking about the data, and our awareness of the meaning that we were bringing to the process based on our own experiences.

We met together several times during the data analysis as an intentional part of the hermeneutic circle. These discussions extended analysis beyond participants' words and transcript themes to include the existing literature on triadic supervision and the contribution of our own experiences and biases to our understanding. From these reflective discussions, we found new meaning emerging at the intersection of the transcribed interviews, the literature, and our own experiences. This circular process continued through data analysis and later writing. Themes and quotes were reflected upon, considered in light of our own experiences and the literature, and then the full transcripts were reread to make sure that the emerging meaning was consistent with the overall interviews. With each successive transcript, both convergence and divergence in emerging themes and meaning was sought. There were multiple iterations of this circular movement from participants' interviews and themes to the literature, our experiences, and back again.

Once a draft of the manuscript was completed, we shared it with all 10 participants in an additional member-check used to close our hermeneutic circle back with participants themselves. Each was asked to reflect on the results, discussion and implications, and to share with us any omissions, misinterpretations or additions they wished to make. Only five chose to respond to our invitation, and none of them suggested any substantive changes to our interpretation of the

data. Some minor wording changes and editorial suggestions were offered, which were incorporated in the text to the extent possible.

Results

Similar to the literature, supervisor-participants in the current study identified relationship dynamics (Borders, 2012; Hein & Lawson, 2008), feedback (Borders et al., 2012), time management (Borders et al., 2012; Hein et al., 2011), and matching supervisees (Hein et al., 2011) as challenges that required thoughtful adjustment in the shift from individual to triadic supervision. In addition, the theme related to contextual learning, which was not found in previous literature, arose from the interviews. We explore these challenges and themes and present representative participant quotes in the following sections.

Relationship Dynamics

One clear theme emerging from the interviews was the shift in relationship dynamics from the addition of another supervisee, and that this change presented both benefits and challenges. Participants reported a distinctive new "energy" in providing triadic supervision, which came from the change in relational dynamics compared to an individual approach. Supervision became more of a collaborative experience which several participants found "refreshing." Participants also felt more at ease in triadic supervision because of the presence of the second supervisee. The additional person affected the power in the room such that relationships felt less hierarchical, and the atmosphere was more collegial. One participant shared:

The three of us working together, takes away one piece of working with individuals that I didn't realize…the potential for tension that I'm the 'all knowing' supervisor and that the student is not…the student is simply there to be conferred of your wisdom. What I

discovered was that it was so much easier for me in triadic to abandon that position and to hand over power to the students…they could actually grow [from] each other.

At the same time, however, participants saw the additional relationships as a challenge, with the potential to constrain both the process and content of supervision. A participating faculty member with several years' experience providing triadic supervision stated: "I think relationship building is the most important piece…If the relationship [between the two supervisees] is not a strong one, it may actually impede a person's ability to share the situations that they need assistance on." Another faculty participant who was new to triadic supervision agreed that attending to the relationship is different in triadic supervision.

I think the triadic experience for a mindful supervisor is going to be more intense than the individual, because you're dealing with the dynamic of the client, two supervisees, and the process that's going on between two supervisees… So you have a lot more variables going on, a parallel process to couples counseling vs. individual counseling.

A junior faculty member who was experienced in triadic supervision suggested that supervisors must attend to these expanded relationship variables with intentionality – remaining aware of how the relationships are evolving and working to nurture their development and health. Such extra effort is required to insure that the relationships promote supervisee competence and clinical development.

Feedback

A second theme that emerged from our analytic process was that feedback also changed in triadic supervision, again with some benefits and some new challenges. Several participants indicated that they may find themselves more willing to offer challenging feedback in a triadic format. Participants saw the additional supervisee as a co-witness to the skills and development

of the other, and thus as someone who would validate and support an appropriate challenge. A very experienced faculty supervisor offered a strategic idea: "It's easier in some ways [for the supervisor] to give challenging feedback in triadic because in most cases, the other person is going to concur. So it's not just my opinion, and the other person can offer the same things I am."

Participants also noted that addressing a supervisee's personal vulnerabilities in triadic supervision was problematic. Each suggested that exposing a supervisee to a peer in a very vulnerable way might violate the supervisee's confidentiality and right to consent. The participants, even those who strongly favored triadic supervision, believed it would be most appropriate to address more personal supervisee concerns in an individual session. A faculty member experienced in using triadic supervision in mental health agencies remarked: "I think that individual over triadic might be more beneficial if you have a person who is at an impasse, or who might have an impasse, or they need more of that one-on-one assistance." When the focus is not so personal, participants agreed that the different perspective of the additional supervisee in triadic supervision greatly enhanced feedback. Participants were also in agreement that supervisors must use professional judgment to determine what feedback is most appropriate in triadic sessions and when an individual session would be warranted.

Time Management

The biggest challenge noted by participants in the current study was effective management of time in triadic supervision. Because individual supervision is typically an hour, and the triadic model followed by participants was one hour and thirty minutes, supervisors were faced with balancing their time and attention between two supervisees with less time per supervisee. One faculty participant who was providing triadic supervision for the first time

stated, "You know, the clock sort of becomes an entity in the session itself, because you want to make sure that everyone has addressed what they want to address." Another faculty participant shared, "There seems to be a sense of hurry...I'd probably look at a two hour triadic session in the ideal world."

Meeting supervisees' needs, providing equal time and transitioning between supervisees were common concerns noted by participants. Furthermore, participants identified having larger caseloads, additional paperwork, and reduced time per supervisee as potential threats to adequate time for reviewing video, discussing cases, and focusing on clinical skill development. A faculty participant member expressed the following:

I believe the time got sacrificed in having two people in a 90 minute period for the level of feedback that I would like to give both in watching the tape, doing check-in, doing the various topics they're focusing on, theory, well-being, client progress, note taking. And in that time period when you've got two people, you're also looking at signing the charts and all those pieces.

Participants agreed that supervisors needed to be intentional in their balance and management of time but were somewhat stymied about how to best accomplish this. Some suggestions offered by participants include alternating which supervisee received attention first, dividing the time equally in half, or alternating the focus each week between supervisees. Although participants varied in their approaches and recommendations for managing time, they agreed that any strategy should remain focused on insuring that supervisees' clinical and professional development needs are being met. A doctoral student participant stated: "...my challenge as a supervisor is to structure my time enough so my supervisees are getting the clinical help they

need from me" showing the difficulties that come with managing time and focusing on clinical development.

Contextual Learning

Although participants encouraged the use of individual supervision for addressing supervisees' personal concerns, they also recognized how triadic supervision offers learning opportunities not found in individual models. In particular, participants believed that supervisees in triadic supervision benefit from exposure to additional clinical cases and client presentations, various ways to conceptualize cases, and different treatment approaches that they would not receive in individual supervision. Participants added that this exposure allowed supervisees to consider their own approach and interventions, examine the skills of a colleague, and explore additional options with a supervisor and fellow counselor to help assure proper, ethical services for clients. An experienced triadic supervisor and faculty member shared how learning is ongoing in triadic supervision.

> Triadic is probably better for clinical skill preparation than individual just because you get the opportunity to process not only your own cases and your own dynamic, but you get the opportunity to be an observer… While we're talking about someone's case, the other supervisee is thinking, 'Well, what would I do in that situation? How would that look? I can learn and do that as well.' So I think they just get an extra layer of learning.

Another experienced faculty member who was relatively new to the triadic format compared this extra layer of learning to the expansion of opportunity and complexity present in counseling sessions with more than one person. She said that in triadic supervision

> …you have a lot more variables going on, a parallel process to couples counseling vs. individual, or family counseling vs. individual counseling… At the same time, as a

clinician or a supervisor, you've got to be dynamic, aware, and mindful of all the factors

that are going in the room.

Participants noticed that the triadic format offered some expanded learning experiences that did not occur in individual supervision. Several noted that the triadic format might be ideal for supervising co-counselors who worked with couples or families, particularly to work on the relationship between the counselors. The faculty member with triadic experience in mental health agencies reported how in triadic supervision with co-counselors "…you get a lot of parallel process conversations – so what's going on here and what's going on in the couple or family."

Furthermore, triadic supervision invites supervisees to come together, collaborate, and support one another, further enriching their personal growth and clinical development. The experienced faculty member albeit new to triadic supervision offered:

The relationship building and the camaraderie and the insight provided in triadic has the supervisees feeling a little bit more confident and supported, and they maybe move a little faster in their personal growth which makes their clinical effectiveness move a little faster.

This collaborative experience allows for "peer modeling" and "peer supervision" which creates a new learning dynamic for personal and professional growth. The peer supervision that occurs in triadic supervision, as noted by a very experienced faculty member, "can help prepare masters' students for a future role as a supervisor…a role many will likely take at some point in their career."

Matching Supervisees

One final theme consistently mentioned by participants was the need for intentionality in pairing supervisees for triadic supervision. Participants expressed how the matching of supervisees can play a significant role in the success or struggle of a triad. A new faculty member stated:

> I worry that sometimes, with their peer there, they may be less willing to share… So I think that's really choosing the supervision pair in triadic very intentionally…think intentionally about the relationship that those two people will have and pair them up in a way that's most helpful for them.

Two participants, one a doctoral student and the other a faculty member, both suggested that all supervisors in a counselor preparation program could meet together to work on matching supervisees. However, in many cases those doing the matching may have only limited knowledge and experience with the supervisees on which to base their decisions. This may result in a poor match, complicating the balance of time and attention to each supervisee, or in which supervision attention shifts away from professional development to address the difficult relationship between the triadic partners.

Discussion

As illustrated by our study, supervisors realize both advantages and challenges in triadic supervision. Participants in the current study echoed many of the obstacles found in previous research including relationship dynamics (Borders, 2012; Hein & Lawson, 2008), feedback (Borders et al., 2012), and time management (Borders et al., 2012; Hein et al., 2011), and matching supervisees (Hein et al., 2011). The theme of additional learning opportunities, which has not been discussed in previous literature, also emerged as an important component in our

study. Participants not only drew attention to these issues but consistently shared a belief that success in triadic supervision requires awareness and intentionality when addressing these components.

Triadic Relationships

Results from the current study support the findings of Borders et al. (2012) that the centrality of relationships is an important variable in triadic supervision as well as the unique relationship challenges posed by this supervision format. Participants identified the need to attend mindfully to the relationships in triadic supervision. Gazzola, De Stefano, Thériault, and Audet (2013) noted that supervisors who are unable to effectively nurture supportive connections may spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy vigilantly overseeing sessions and working to resolve relationship issues. Participants' experiences also support the idea that familiarity with group dynamics or couple's counseling (Borders, 2012; Gazzola et al., 2013; Oliver et al., 2010) may help triadic supervisors avoid potential problems and maximize the potential benefits from the additional supervisee in triadic supervision. Several participants seemed to suggest that merely applying the skills, organization and thinking that they used in individual supervision failed to take full advantage of the possibilities offered in the triadic format. Understanding relationship dynamics among individuals is a fundamental element of supervisor training for group supervision (Borders, 2012; Hein & Lawson, 2008), and similar training will benefit triadic supervisors. Preparation in small group work and/or couples counseling may help supervisors incorporate the benefits of supervisee diversity across age, gender, religion, ethnicity and other factors (Hein & Lawson, 2009). However, much like the findings by Oliver et al. (2009), participants believe individual sessions are sometimes warranted to work on personal issues and address major presenting concerns.

Matching Supervisees

Consistent with the findings of Hein et al. (2011), several participants mentioned that a key variable in the success or struggle of a particular triad is the degree of fit or match between supervisees. The same has been true in our experience, and thus we encourage as much intentionality as possible in how triads are created. Involving all supervisors and instructors who have past interactions with the supervisees, as well as those that will be supervising can help in the matching process.

Consideration of supervisees' skill level, emotional maturity, and general psychological well-being is crucial in creating healthy, functioning triads that do not become immersed in power struggles or remediation work that become roadblocks to the goal of successful client work (Stinchfield et al., 2010). In this study, supervisors' experiences show that when triads are not picked with intentionality much of the focus in supervision is solely on relationship building and restoration rather than client care and counselor development. Thus, we emphasize that understanding of supervisees' self-awareness, interactions with peers, classroom presence, and performance practices should be a consideration when assigning triads. Meanwhile, we realize that occasionally some supervisees need individual sessions due to personal issues or circumstances.

Feedback and Learning Opportunities

Building on the supervisory relationships, triadic supervisors can take advantage of unique opportunities for learning and feedback. Findings from the current study parallel past research (Borders et al., 2012; Oliver et al., 2010) in which triadic supervision fostered a sense of community. Through collaboration and shared responsibility, all triadic members may provide enhanced authentic feedback, encouraging supervisees to move forward in their counseling

work.   Supervisors that are able to move thoughtfully beyond an individual-supervision paradigm and find ways to incorporate all participants may discover new learning opportunities in triadic supervision.

Despite the potential learning opportunities, some challenges exist in ensuring that feedback from the supervisees is helpful and supportive.   Good working relationships, established early on and maintained throughout, can help the triad address these kinds of concerns.   Stinchfield et al. (2010) outlined distinctive roles for each member of the triad, providing a structured format for all members to actively participate throughout the process. Lawson, Hein, and Stuart (2009) suggested triadic supervisors may need to check-in with the non-presenting supervisee to identify links between the supervisees' learning processes. If both supervisees have been invited to play an active role in the supervisory process, whether they are presenting or not, they not only develop clinical and conceptualization skills, they begin to develop the skills to be an effective consultant and supervisor.

Time Management

Supervisors using any model must manage time effectively to best support supervisee growth and client services. Many of our participants mentioned how time management took on a prominent role as they provided triadic supervision. CACREP standards (CACREP, 2016) allow both individual and triadic as acceptable for clinical supervision and only stipulate that supervision must average one hour per week. Typically, the time for triadic exceeds that of individual supervision session but is not twice that of an individual session (Lawson, Hein, & Getz, 2009). Thus, triadic supervisors must meet all the supervisory needs of two counselors in

less time than if they were seen individually, including attention to client safety, clinical documentation, clinical skills, theoretical development, and other supervisory tasks. Supervisors must use time carefully in all supervision sessions, especially in terms of addressing priorities and meeting supervisee needs (Borders et al., 2012). However, disparate client needs may also pull the attention, energy, and time balance toward one supervisee over the other. Carefully attending to build supportive relationships among and between participants in triadic supervision can assist supervisors with time management (Hein et al., 2011).

Implications

Our hermeneutic-phenomenological framework allowed us to combine the expertise of the participants, past literature and our own experience and knowledge as researchers. Most importantly, the meaning that emerged suggested pragmatic approaches for addressing the challenges of triadic supervision and capitalizing on its potential. Before discussing specific implications, we want to mention a general one. We are aware that each of the participants, and we as well, approached the study, and triadic supervision itself with an open mind, eager to see possible benefits. Not surprisingly, we found some benefits, balanced with a number of challenges. As we reflected on our findings, we were aware that this positive mindset might have played a role in the experiences participants shared. Therefore, we encourage those who work with the triadic model to keep an open mind themselves to the possibilities it holds. It may be that such openness and flexibility allowed our participants to identify ways to take effective advantage of the model with their own supervisees. We now offer practical suggestions related to the relationships in triadic supervision, feedback and new learning opportunities, time management, and matching supervisee pairs.

Triadic Relationship

We suggest that in the initial meeting, supervisors clearly explain limits of confidentiality and inform supervisees that personal issues and dynamics may be discussed in the triad. This may be included in a contract that is specifically tailored to the triadic model. Additionally, establishing the expectation that both supervisees actively participate throughout each session should be discussed. As such, we recommend that the triad devote time early on to discussing the relationships. We believe this should include identifying the four simultaneous relationships (the supervisor with each supervisee, the two supervisees, and all three together).

Because it is likely that supervisees will compare themselves to each other (Lawson et al., 2009), supervisors should discuss this early on, reminding supervisees that counselor development is individual and varies based on myriad characteristics of the counselors and their unique case-loads. Each should be invited to discuss concerns they have about the relationships, and together make plans for regular evaluation of the relationships, so any needed adjustments can be made.

To help facilitate relationship development, we believe that supervisor familiarity with and use of principles for clinical work with groups and couples can help in managing the relationship dynamics. Supervisors are encouraged to use immediacy and transparency in identifying, acknowledging and working through concerns related to feedback and relationships.

If the triadic supervisor merely applies an individual focus to triadic work, much will be missed. The supervisor must account for and intentionally take advantage of the presence of the other supervisee to improve the outcome for both. With this in mind, we acknowledge the importance of individual sessions under certain circumstances. Although supervisors may request such sessions, we recommend that supervisors make explicit that such sessions are for

work that ethically requires confidentiality and not for avoiding difficult triad concerns or for individualized supervisory attention.

Feedback and Learning Opportunities

As mentioned in the discussion section, Lawson et al. (2009) suggested triadic supervisors check-in with non-presenting supervisees to keep them engaged, however we believe much more can be done to capitalize on the model. Supervisors can check-in at the beginning of each session and invite supervisees to bring up any major pressing issues, including relationship and feedback concerns. Additionally, supervisors can invite the non-presenting supervisee to notice and share observations about client dynamics, about counselor skills, possible interventions and conceptual understanding, and to reflect on application to personal case load and professional development. Differences of opinion become opportunities for additional learning and discussion. Purposefully involving the supervisees in both feedback and in calling attention to concerns may relieve some of the pressure supervisors face. In this way, all three people in the triad are actively participating regardless of who is presenting.

Time Management

Supervisors may choose to conduct weekly supervision sessions of one hour, biweekly of two hours, or weekly of one and one half hours, or some other combination. Some supervisors appear to divide the time of each session equally between the supervisees, and other supervisors choose to focus on one supervisee during one session and the other supervisee the next session. Without any evidence to support any single approach for managing time, we suggest that supervisors adopt three guidelines for managing time.

First, we encourage supervisors to facilitate an open conversation early in the triadic process to discuss how time will be managed equitably. Each should have the opportunity to

discuss needs, desires, and procedures that may help the group effectively allocate time to address each supervisee's needs. The triad should settle on an initial plan for how time will be allocated during each session – who will go first, if time will be divided equally each session, or will alternately favor one supervisee. We found that some supervisees want to get right to business, while others prefer to ease into supervision with a little conversation, a check-in, or perhaps some mindfulness activity. Since those preferences may differ between triadic partners, supervisors should acknowledge different styles and the triad come to some initial agreement about how sessions will begin and end. Second, we believe that flexibility by all three members of the triad should be encouraged in those early discussions and then used over the course of supervision. As the triad works together, one or several may decide that the initial plan for time management isn't satisfactory, and the group should be open to revisiting those arrangements. Client emergencies, other client or supervisee circumstances, and perhaps just a need for change requires flexible management of time. Supervisees should be encouraged to ask for extra time when warranted, while keeping in mind the legitimate needs of the other. The supervisor must then attend to how time is being used, and make sure that both client cases and supervisees are receiving the attention they need. Finally, we suggest that the triad regularly discuss time management to make sure that each supervisees' needs, along with the obligations of the supervisor are being met, and then make adjustments as needed. This kind of check-in can accompany those suggested earlier to review the supervisory relationships.

Matching Supervisees

Supervisors, especially those that have yet to meet the supervisees, may consider a pre-group screening process to further help with the matching process. Some factors that might be considered in matching supervisees include supervisee developmental level. While a less

advanced counselor may benefit from participating in supervision with a more advanced counselor, we believe that the difference should not be so wide that the less advanced supervisee ends up receiving all of the attention.

In addition, supervisees may be matched based on theoretical approach. For those newly identifying with a theory, perhaps a theoretically similar supervision partner will be best. More theoretically secure counselors may experience more personal growth when matched with a supervisee from a different orientation. The same may be true for other counselor demographic variables. In some cases, being paired with a partner who shares gender, cultural, or other variables may help to solidify an insecure identity, while others may benefit from close work with a partner who is different. Some supervisees with unique needs may be served best by a particular pairing.

In making this recommendation, we acknowledge that these decisions may have to be made before much is known about the supervisees and what might best serve their growth. This is true in our own program, where students have only had two courses before they are paired for supervision. Although we have only limited information, we choose to make those decisions with as much intention as possible. Then, after one semester (and additional information about supervisee strengths and needs), triads are changed with the goal of maximizing learning, expanding perspectives and responding to supervisees' needs.

Limitations and Future Research

Results of the current study suggest that triadic supervision can be a helpful adjunct to other forms of supervision, and indeed may offer unique benefits for counselor preparation not available through other supervision approaches. However, in considering these results and our suggestions, several limitations must be kept in mind. All of the supervisors interviewed were

faculty or doctoral students of a counselor education program at one mid-sized university in the Rocky Mountain region. It may be that supervisors outside of academia and outside of the Rocky Mountain region may have different experiences. Additionally, a greater number and diversity of supervisors will refine the field's understanding of when and how triadic supervision may best be used. This study did not consider supervisors theoretical approaches to supervision and how that can influence the triadic experience. The current study also did not obtain supervisee perspectives. Finally, our bias toward the potential benefits of this approach led us to focus more on the benefits and to not deeply explore potential disadvantages of triadic supervision. Future research should seek to address these limitations.

In addition, incorporating experienced supervisors using triadic supervision in clinical settings and other geographic regions may provide additional insight into the triadic model. Future research that incorporates both supervisor and supervisee perspectives and experiences can further enrich our knowledge of the strengths and limitations of triadic supervision, and help pinpoint under what circumstances supervisees find it most helpful. With increasing literature supporting the contribution of triadic supervision, we encourage scholars to examine the impact of gender and cultural variables on the process. Both the literature and the results of the current study suggest that there are important parallels between small group and couple dynamics and triadic supervision. Further studies could explore and identify the key elements from each that support effective triadic work and the extent to which these elements provide helpful guidance to triadic supervisors.

We make a number of recommendations here based on the meaning that emerged from participant interviews, a review of the literature, and our own experiences. Further research should seek to validate or correct those recommendations with additional empirical data.

Through the use of case studies, researchers may gather a much richer, yet individualized, understanding of supervisor and supervisee experiences. Additional study through the use of multi-case study or group comparison to identify both the advantages and limitations of each supervision modality (individual, triadic, group) may prove useful to the field. Additionally, attempts to identify best practices supported by empirical data for each can provide direction for supervisors and supervisors-in-training as they seek to best meet supervisee's needs. One possible way of assessing best practices may be to incorporate client outcomes into future research.

Conclusion

Ethically, supervisors must be prepared to use each of the different supervision formats (Gazzola et al., 2013). Results from previous and the current research suggest that the triadic format holds both promise and challenge for supervisors. The supervisors in this study found that triadic supervision offered unique learning opportunities not found in individual or group supervision, particularly related to changes in relationship dynamics and feedback. Participants reported that supervisees in a triadic format have greater opportunities to learn through observation and interaction with a peer. At the same time, our participants noted challenges that must be addressed with this format.

Intentionality in the creation of supervision pairs was suggested but doing so can be challenging. In addition, each triad must negotiate how time is divided, how the non-presenting supervisee can remain engaged in the process, and how personal issues that arise for either supervisee can be addressed ethically. Future research can help pinpoint the specific practices that support supervisee growth and competent practice. When choosing a supervision model, whether it be individual, group, or triadic, supervisors must consider which creates the richest

learning environment and offers the best professional development for supervisees while supporting the client.

The Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

Preplanning for Feedback in Clinical Supervision: Enhancing Readiness for Feedback Exchange

This article makes the case for preplanning for feedback in clinical supervision. Preplanning for feedback can help supervisors maximize the positive benefits of feedback delivery by building and solidifying a supportive supervisory climate that enhances supervisee receptivity to corrective feedback. The Corrective Feedback Instrument-Revised (CFI-R) is introduced as a major tool to facilitate preplanning. Additional resources that derive from the CFI-R are presented to assist supervisors in the preplanning process.

Feedback is at the core of effective clinical training (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014) and is emphasized in the ACA Code of Ethics as a continuous feature in counselor training programs (2014). In order to provide effective feedback, openness to feedback is essential. Openness to feedback is assessed in admissions decisions (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010) and encouraged throughout the counselor training process (Swank & McCarthy, 2013). Historically, others have noted the importance of the working alliance between the supervisor and the supervisee (Bernard & Goodyear; Ladany, Ellis & Friedlander, 1999; Mueller & Kell, 1972). In their extensive writing on the topic of supervision, Mueller and Kell (1972) noted that the supervisory relationship was unique in that the supervisor had access to knowledge about the counselor in ways that were limited to few people. If supervision was to be successful, the supervisor had a responsibility to understand the counselor and gain the trust of the counselor. Preplanning for feedback can provide a foundation for supervisors to enhance counselor development. Training programs have found that "feedback is an essential skill for learner improvement" (Bing-You & Trowbridge, 2009, p. 1330).

There is evidence of potential barriers that can interfere with openness to receiving feedback. For example, Eckstein and Wallerstein as cited in Bernard and Goodyear (2014) emphasize that a favorable supervision climate is necessary to help supervisees stop asking, "how can I avoid criticism," and start asking, "how can I make the most of this supervision time?" (p. 226). Bing-You and Trowbridge (2009) observe that when learners view negative feedback as a personal attack they do not find the feedback useful; in fact devalued and discounted feedback does not lead to improved learner performance. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) and Bing-You and Trowbridge (2009) further note that defensive reactions to corrective feedback and past experiences with authority figures are a few examples of factors that may impede a supervisee's ability to receive feedback. These examples mirror ones identified by

Hulse-Killacky and Page (1994) when they explored reactions to corrective feedback in counselor training groups and could well exist for supervisors and supervisees.

Bernard and Goodyear conclude that without favorable conditions for evaluation and the delivery of feedback the supervisory relationship can be compromised. Training programs have maintained that learner defensiveness also interferes with a supervisor's desire to provide constructive feedback (Gigante, Dell, & Sharkey, 2011; Swank & McCarthy, 2013; Raspisarda, Desmond, & Nelson, 2011). In the context of medical training rounds, Cantillon and Sargeant (2008) mention that barriers to giving constructive feedback are rooted in supervisors' lack of instruction in giving feedback and their fears of damaging their relationships with learners. Data from a study examining doctoral students' transition from supervisee to supervisor pointed out that one of the "steep learning curves" for new supervisors was learning "the skill of how to structure not only supportive but evaluative feedback for supervisees" (Rapisarda, Desmond, & Nelson, 2011, p. 119).

As counselor educators and supervisors we recognize the importance of clinical supervision to the profession and to the welfare of clients and realize the challenges inherent when barriers exist on the part of supervisors and supervisees to making feedback work effectively in clinical supervision settings. That recognition drives our attention to the matter of preplanning for feedback in supervision as a means for creating necessary and favorable conditions for evaluation. Preplanning for feedback in supervision is a competency we believe will help the supervisor prepare for the first session with the supervisee and activate an effective feedback process in clinical supervision.

What We Know About Feedback

Knowing how one is perceived by others is a necessary ingredient for enhancing interpersonal learning in counseling and therapy groups. Over the years knowledge about self in relation to others has extended beyond therapeutic settings to teams, classrooms, boardrooms, and other venues where people come together to address tasks and work together to achieve designated goals (Hulse-Killacky & Page, 1994). In previous decades much attention was directed to best practice for delivering effective feedback in counseling groups. Research findings led to the identification of concepts and guidelines to maximize the delivery and receptivity of feedback, especially feedback of what was early on referred to as negative feedback (Morran, Robison, & Stockton, 1985; Morran, Stockton, & Bond, 1991; Morran & Stockton, 1980). Even with clear guidelines and appropriate language, however, individuals often indicated hesitation and discomfort in giving and receiving feedback. In their 1994 article Hulse-Killacky and Page defined corrective feedback as feedback intended to encourage thoughtful self-examination and/or to express the feedback giver's perception of the need for change on the part of the receiver (Hulse-Killacky & Page, 1994). This definition is similar to Swank and McCarthy's (2013) definition: "Corrective feedback addresses behaviors that have undesirable consequences" (p. 100). In 1983 Yalom expressed the view that hesitations to engage in feedback are rooted in social norms. He wrote,

> Feedback is not a commonplace transaction. As a matter of fact, there are very few situations in life when one feels free to comment directly on the immediate behavior of another person. Generally such direct feedback is taboo; virtually the only place it is permissible is the parent-child relationship and, occasionally in an exceedingly intimate (or exceedingly conflicted) relationship (p. 187).

Yalom's quote highlights potential barriers that can interfere with giving, clarifying, and receiving feedback, especially feedback of a corrective nature.

If, as Yalom writes, feedback is not a commonplace transaction and yet is a central component in clinical supervision as evidenced by the placement of "evaluative" in Bernard and Goodyear's (2014) definition of the supervisory relationship, then how does a supervisor begin to address potential roadblocks that make it hard for supervisees to accept and use feedback to full advantage in supervision?

In the context of group work, Robison and Hardt (1992) recommended that group leaders and members could benefit by participating in structured conversations focused on the value of feedback, the importance of leaders modeling openness to feedback, and any concerns that members might have about receiving corrective feedback. Such discussions were viewed as necessary preplanning activities to normalize and encourage feedback exchange in group settings. Transferred to the supervision setting, preplanning discussions can help normalize feedback, promote a supervisor's understanding of self, and provide a way for the supervisor to learn about the supervisee.

The Corrective Feedback Instrument-Revised (CFI-R)

The Corrective Feedback Instrument was developed as a tool to encourage the type of conversation recommended by Robison and Hardt (1992). At the time of its publication the 55-item CFI was seen as one means for helping to address concerns that members of counselor training groups might have to giving, receiving, and exchanging corrective feedback (Hulse-Killacky & Page, 1994). Hulse-Killacky and Page observed that the reactions to corrective feedback uncovered in the development of the CFI mirrored concerns expressed by members of personal growth groups in earlier research studies and supported Yalom's (1983) statement.

After its use as a discussion tool for 10 years, the CFI was further examined and revised through exploratory factor analysis procedures. This decision was made with the belief that a shorter instrument might be an even more user friendly tool for use in education, clinical, medical, business, and community settings. In 2006 the Corrective Feedback Instrument-Revised (CFI-R) was introduced (Hulse-Killacky, et al, 2006). The revised instrument consists of 30 items, presented in a 6-point Likert format of response choices: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree. The CFI-R items load on one of six factors that together provide comprehensive information on a person's preferences for and reactions to giving, receiving, and clarifying corrective feedback. The language of the CFI-R reflects its initial focus on groups, group leaders, and group members. For the purposes of preplanning for feedback in supervision these terms can easily be changed to supervision, supervisors, and supervisees.

Overview of the CFI-R by Six Factors

The following presents the CFI-R through a focus on the six factors. A representative item from each of the factors is provided. The six factors are Feelings, Evaluative, Leader, Clarifying, Childhood Memories, and Written.

- The *feelings factor* with 5 items taps emotions associated with corrective feedback. This factor includes items like, "I worry too much about upsetting others when I have to give corrective feedback."

- The *evaluative factor* includes 5 items that suggest corrective feedback is criticism and features the item, "It is hard for me not to interpret corrective feedback as a criticism of my personal competence."
- The *leader factor* includes 7 items that refer to the leader's encouragement of norms that support the exchange of corrective feedback. One item reads, "When the norms of the group support the exchange of corrective feedback, I will be open to receiving corrective feedback."
- The *clarifying factor* emphasizes the need for clarification so that all parties understand the message being sent. Three item comprise this factor. One reads, "I am usually too uncomfortable to ask someone to clarify corrective feedback delivered to me."
- The *childhood memories factor* with 6 items captures the reality that many reactions to feedback can begin during one's early years; a function perhaps of culture or family influences that create memories which then may serve as barriers to either giving or receiving feedback. A sample item reads, "Receiving corrective feedback as a child was painful for me."
- The *written feedback factor* includes 4 items that provide information on preferences for written versus spoken feedback. For example, "It is easier for me to write down my corrective feedback than to speak it."

Preplanning for Feedback with the CFI-R. *If*, a goal of supervision is to create a climate where supervisees will more likely shift their attention from avoiding feedback to accepting feedback as a means for building therapeutic competence and improving their professional performance, *then* preplanning for feedback using the CFI-R serves as an intervention to encourage this shift (Hulse, 2013).

Discussions on potential barriers to receiving corrective feedback in supervision have extended beyond clinical supervision to include law enforcement training (McDermott & Hulse, 2014b; McDermott & Hulse, 2012) and medical and health professional education and training (Archer, 2010; Gigante, Dell, & Sharkey, 2011). Consistency exists across these literature sources supporting the need to make feedback a reality in supervision by addressing thoughts and feelings that may impede a supervisee's ability to receive and apply feedback for professional competence in those areas. In our counselor training program we notice the benefits from intentional preplanning with the CFI-R to help supervisees reframe their view of feedback and prepare for feedback in supervision. When students engage in structured discussions on the topic of feedback we observe that they can better listen to, absorb, and apply feedback, and be motivated to change as a result of the feedback received. At our institution we have also observed that using the CFI-R in clinical supervision moderates negative reactions to feedback, minimizes dispositional issues in clinical supervision, and maximizes the possibility that supervisees will more likely engage with feedback rather than avoid or disregard the feedback (Robert & Hulse, 2014; Robert & Hulse, 2013). Through structured dialogue the supervisor and supervisee can each increase self-awareness and gain knowledge and understanding about the other.

Preplanning activities with the CFI-R. The CFI-R is a flexible tool that can be used in totality, in a shortened version, or with items organized by clusters and factors. Conversations on the topic of feedback can take place one-on-one, in small groups, or in movement activities

based on responses to selected items. In the following discussion we will present various uses of the CFI-R to emphasize versatility and to demonstrate that even with time constraints, supervisors have many options on how to adapt the CFI-R for maximum benefit.

Activity 1: Working with all items on the CFI-R. In this example the supervisor asks the supervisee to complete the 30 items on the CFI-R. The supervisor reviews all responses and then meets with the supervisee to discuss his or her responses. The supervisor could also have this type of conversation with a group of students in a practicum class. In this situation the supervisor can tally the responses for each student across the 30 items and present the frequencies in a grid format where students can review how they responded to each item while seeing the responses of others in the class. Questions posed by the supervisor could include, "Were you surprised by how others responded? How are your responses similar to or different from others in the class? What did you learn by completing the CFI-R and reviewing all the responses?" A conversation on the various ways supervisees interpret and manage feedback helps the supervisor and supervisees learn about each other, develop an understanding of different perspectives, which can eventually lead to increasing self-awareness and the emergence of empathy for different perspectives.

Activity 2: Group movement activity. In this activity the supervisor can select certain items that represent each of the 6 factors. Supervisees can be asked to stand in one place if they agree with the item and stand in another place if they disagree. In this activity supervisees can actually visualize where they position themselves in relation to others. Questions to encourage conversation can include, "If you agree with the item, *I feel criticized when I receive corrective feedback,* what might be the consequences of being paired up with a supervisor who disagrees with this item?" Back and forth conversations using different items on the CFI-R help build self-awareness on the part of the supervisor and supervisees and validate the merits of this type of preplanning activity.

Activity 3: Exploring responses on the CFI-R. The purpose of this activity is to provide supervisees opportunity to review their individual responses on the CFI-R within three clusters: Cluster 1: Receiving Corrective Feedback, Cluster 2: Clarifying Corrective Feedback, and Cluster 3: Giving Corrective Feedback. (See Appendix A for a copy of Exploring Responses on the CFI-R). As supervisees review their responses to items in each cluster they discuss which responses indicate a level of comfort or confidence and which responses reflect a level of discomfort or concern. Once items have been discussed within each cluster supervisees are asked the following questions to facilitate transfer of learning: "What was the value in talking through these various responses? What did you learn about yourself? What are your next steps to increase your comfort and confidence for receiving, clarifying, and giving corrective feedback?" In our work with this activity students report that this type of discussion lowers their anxiety and helps them normalize the topic of feedback. Supervisees report that they begin to see that they are not alone in their concerns. They state that the conversations create in them a willingness to engage more frequently in giving, receiving, and clarifying corrective feedback.

Activity 4: CFI-R: Items matched with factors. In this activity the supervisor can examine supervisee responses by factors and decide if responses require further exploration. For example, as illustrated in McDermott and Hulse (2012) the supervisor might observe that the

supervisee agrees strongly with all 5 items on the evaluative factor. The supervisor might then decide to gather more information on what appears to be concerns about evaluation. An example would be how a Field Training Officer responded to a recruit in the McDermott and Hulse (2012) article where the supervisor could take time to clarify the supervisee's feelings and hesitations in order to help the supervisor understand where roadblocks might exist to receiving and incorporating the feedback. Exploring responses to items by factor can also illuminate the positive impact a supervisor can have. If, for example, supervisees tend to agree with the 7 items on the Leader factor they are indicating that the supervisor's behavior and acceptance of feedback can positively shape the feedback process (See Appendix B for a copy of the CFI-R: Items Matched with Factors).

Activity 5: CFI-R items organized in categories to encourage puzzling. This activity (Hulse & McDermott, 2014b) was designed to encourage puzzling and hypothesizing on the part of the supervisor. This activity includes the phrase, "Knowledge→ understanding→ empathy." We believe that such puzzling can only enhance knowledge on the part of the supervisor which leads to understanding and then to the development of empathy for a supervisee's feelings and reactions to feedback. The four categories selected for discussion in this activity are criticism, conflict, modeling, and role of past experiences. These categories use different descriptors than the CFI-R factor names to encourage creative exploration on the part of supervisors. Under the heading of criticism the statement is made, "If a supervisee agrees with Item #1 (I feel criticized when I receive corrective feedback), then you might hypothesize that the supervisee will agree with items

- #9, *I think negative thoughts about myself when I receive corrective feedback*
- #10, *It is hard for me not to interpret corrective feedback as a criticism of my personal competence*
- #20, *When I am not sure about the corrective feedback message delivered to me I do not ask for clarification*
- #26, *When I am given corrective feedback, I think my skills are being questioned* and
- #29, *It is too scary for me to ask other group members to clarify their corrective feedback if it is unclear to me*."

Through engagement in this activity the supervisor develops hypotheses to guide future discussions about the extent of the supervisee's feelings on the topic of "criticism." Supervisors interested in this type of puzzling can develop additional categories and include other items in different combinations. Questions for supervisors to reflect on include, "What are the implications of observing these responses? How might you use this information in supervision?" This activity also illuminates the many ways that one can tailor items on the CFI-R for use in particular supervision circumstances (See Appendix C for a copy of CFI-R Organized by 4 Categories for Discussion).

Conclusion

In our discussion of the CFI-R as a tool to facilitate preplanning for feedback in supervision we have emphasized the importance of taking time first to know oneself as the supervisor and to then to know the person of the supervisee. One way to learn about self and others in the context of giving, receiving, and clarifying corrective feedback is to begin

answering the questions of: who am I, who am I with you, and who are we together? (see Hulse-Killacky, Killacky, & Donigian, 2001). Taking time to answer the question, "who am I?" can prompt experienced and novice supervisors to reflect and engage in critical thinking about their role as supervisors. The Self-Assessment of Feedback Skills (see Appendix D) is a tool for facilitating this type of reflection. By taking upfront and focused time to develop a climate for successful supervision, supervisors increase chances that supervisees will more likely engage with feedback rather than avoid or disregard feedback.

We offer these points to consider:

- The practice of supervision is intentional
- Feedback is at the heart of supervision
- Supervisors need to engage in self-reflection early on about their own preferences, concerns, and barriers to delivering effective feedback
- Supervisors have a responsibility to convey early on their openness to feedback as a tool for learning; to lead by example
- Supervisors need resources to help them facilitate conversations early on with their supervisees to identify concerns, expectations, and fears about receiving feedback, especially of a corrective nature
- The supervisor is always charged with helping supervisees move from avoidance of criticism to an acceptance of feedback; to view feedback as an impetus for professional growth and development

Preplanning for feedback is one way to help develop the trust that Mueller and Kell advocate. Preplanning for feedback also helps make the full impact of feedback in supervision valuable for supervisees who are dedicated to building their therapeutic competence and enhancing their professional growth.

Integrating Continuous Client Feedback into Counselor Education

Researchers show that the integration of continuous client feedback mechanisms provides many benefits to treatment including enhanced effectiveness and a reduction in early terminations. Although practitioners in the field are increasing their use of this evidence-based practice, counselor educators may not be promoting it. The author suggests that as counselor educators introduce evidence-based practices to their students, they should examine the potential benefits of teaching and practicing continuous client feedback. The article provides both the reasoning behind and recommendations for integrating continuous client feedback into the curriculum of counseling programs

Keywords: Counselor Education, Pedagogy, Supervision, Evidence-based Practice, Client Feedback

The conversation about the extent to which counselor educators should integrate evidence-based practices (EBPs) continues in the profession. The argument no longer is *if* EBPs should be incorporated, but rather *how* and *to what extent* (Sexton, 2000; Young & Hagedorn, 2012). Counselor educators focused on bringing EBPs into the classroom are confronted with some challenging questions: Where should these efforts belong in the curriculum? Will this take away from the emphasis on basic training so necessary for developing the professional client-counseling relationship? (Young & Hagedorn, 2012). As students work with multiple populations, how can counselor educators provide them with training in EBPs for all populations? Therefore, this article reviews the importance of one EBP, deliberate and continuous client feedback, suggests that it should be adopted as standard practice within counselor education with a specific focus on supervision, and describes specific courses in which it can be easily integrated.

While there are challenges involved with integrating EBPs into counselor education, there are a number of best-practice recommendations that can be directly integrated into training programs. Emphasizing the skills and attitudes necessary to enhance the therapeutic relationship is a best practice counselor educators emphasize strongly. Another recent best practice involves the use of deliberate and continuous client feedback (Norcross & Wampold, 2011).

Continuous Client Feedback

In its review of studies of best practices in 2001, the APA Interdivisional Task Force on Evidence-Based Therapy Relationships (Norcross, 2001) suggested multiple positive–outcomes

for the potential effectiveness of psychotherapy and outlined the critical aspects of the therapeutic relationship and how counselors and psychologist promote it. These reviewers also recognized that a consistent feedback dialogue between the therapist and the client about the therapy relationship itself was a vital part of effective clinical work (Lambert & Barley, 2002). In 2010, the same task force set out to review published studies completed during the previous 10 years (Norcross, 2011). Based on a series of meta- analyses, a panel of experts concluded that four elements of the therapeutic relationship were effective and therefore recommended for practice. One of these four elements encouraged practitioners to "routinely monitor patients' responses to the therapy relationship and ongoing treatment" (Norcross & Wampold, 2011, p. 98). The authors state that this type of, "monitoring leads to increased opportunities to reestablish collaboration, improve the relationship, modify technical strategies, and avoid premature termination" (Norcross & Wampold, p. 98). Therapists and researchers have been and continue to refer to this recommended practice as collecting continuous client feedback.

Client Feedback in Practice

Collecting client feedback consists of systematically monitoring treatment progress through the viewpoint of the client and utilizing the information gained to determine the appropriateness of the current therapeutic approach (Anker, Duncan, & Sparks, 2009; Howard, Moras, Brill, Martinovich, & Lutz, 1996). These efforts entail more than simply asking the client questions verbally. Mechanisms in use seek to gain client perspectives on both the provision of treatment as well as the developing client-therapist relationship. This type of real-time data enables practitioners to better inform their treatment, discuss progress or lack thereof with the client, and inform the process of supervision (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001). Researchers measuring the incorporation of these mechanisms by counselors and psychologists have found them to be a statistically significant predictor of positive client change (Harmon, et al., 2007).

Client Feedback Research Evidence

Mental health practitioners have increased their use of continuous and direct client feedback mechanisms in response to the growing body of evidence supporting their use in treatment (Anker et al., 2009; Duncan & Miller, 2008; Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011; Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sorrell, & Chalk, 2006; Reese, Norsworthy, & Rowlands, 2009a; Reese et al., 2010). Utilizing continuous client feedback leads to fewer premature terminations, improved outcomes for clients at risk for termination (Brown & Jones, 2005; Whipple et al., 2003), increased opportunities to repair alliance ruptures, and improvements in the therapeutic relationship (Ackerman et al., 2001). Clients, both individuals and couples, using feedback mechanisms with their counselor demonstrate significantly greater treatment gains than those not receiving feedback (Anker et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2006; Reese et al., 2009a; Reese, et al., 2010). Reese and colleagues (2009a) reported that the feedback condition clients in one study achieved reliable change in fewer sessions than those in the no-feedback condition. Results of research studies have shown effect sizes double for individual clients engaged in continuous client feedback (Miller et al., 2006).

Client Feedback in Training

Considering the research supporting the use of continuous client feedback (Reese, et al., 2010) and the clear recommendation from the task force, the next step for counselor educators may be to incorporate such practices into the training of counselors. Utilizing continuous client

feedback in the counselor education curriculum can encourage students to integrate professionally recommended practices and should enhance the objectivity of the supervision process. Additionally, based on the research evidence showing enhanced treatment effectiveness when these methods are incorporated in the field, students may also improve their treatment outcomes during their field experiences.

Client Feedback Mechanisms

Two systems of incorporating feedback have been used more often in research and practice settings: the Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ45; Lambert et al., 1996) and the Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS; Miller, Duncan, Sorrell, & Brown, 2005). OQ45 is a 45-item self-report instrument designed for repeated administration throughout treatment and at termination. The instrument measures mental health functioning in three areas (symptoms of psychological disturbance, interpersonal problems, and social role functioning) and includes an evaluation of the client-therapist relationship (Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011). Research has shown the OQ45 to be a psychometrically sound instrument (Lambert et al., 2004; Whipple et al, 2003) used to enhance treatment and to predict treatment failure.

The PCOMS employs two brief scales, consisting of four items each. The first scale, the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) given at the beginning of each session, is focused on mental health functioning and monitors treatment (Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sparks, & Claud, 2003). Specifically, the ORS assesses change in individual functioning, interpersonal relationships, and social role performance. The second scale, the Session Rating Scale (SRS), given at the close of each session, seeks to evaluate the therapeutic relationship (Duncan & Miller, 2008). More specifically, it considers the quality of the relational bond and the degree of agreement between client and therapist on the goals, methods, and the overall approach to therapy. Like the OQ45, multiple research studies have shown that practitioners' use of the PCOMS is related to multiple positive therapeutic outcomes including fewer premature terminations and increased effectiveness in clients attaining reliable positive change over the course of treatment (Anker et al., 2009; Lambert & Shimokaw, 2011; Reese, Toland, Slone, & Norsworthy, 2010).

Application of Continuous Client Feedback in Counselor Education

Some counselor educators gather feedback from clients to inform treatment interventions as an important aspect of clinical training and clinical work (Paladino, Barrio Minton, & Kern, 2011) and incorporate client feedback methods into particular courses (i.e. practicum & internship) (K. Hixson, personal communication, October 19, 2013; S. Williams, personal communication, September 28, 2012). However, the use of client feedback for the purposes of training was not found in the counselor education literature. As researchers continue to show the relationship between client feedback mechanisms and positive client outcomes, it behooves counselor educators to incorporate their use into counselor training. Additionally, incorporating client feedback into counselor training could also enhance the process of supervision and therefore counselor trainee development.

Counselor educators have historically placed a high value on the process of supervision and its powerful role in developing well-prepared counselors (Lassiter, Napolittano, Culbreth, & Ng, 2008; Newfelt, Karno, & Nelson, 1996; Stinchfiled, Hill, & Kleist, 2007). A body of literature evaluating the supervision process helps clarify areas within which our supervision process could improve, specifically with regard to the type of feedback trainees receive from

their supervisors (Worthen & Lambert, 2007). In studies of clinical supervision both counselors and supervisors overestimated client progress and underestimated client deterioration (Grove, Zald, Lebow, Snitz, & Nelson, 2000; Najavits & Strupp, 1994; Walfish, McAlister, O'Donnell, & Lambert, 2010). Supervisors gave overly positive trainee evaluations and held back giving feedback regarding performance (Hoffman, Hill, Holmes, & Freitas, 2005). Ladany and Melincoff (1999) found that 98% of supervisors of graduate student counselors withheld feedback from supervisees. While supervisees valued feedback, supervisors stated that they were reluctant to give negative feedback because of potential negative consequences (Hoffman et al., 2005).

Additionally, research indicates that therapists tend to overestimate their own abilities (Hannan et al., 2005). Hence, there is risk in having counselors in training using self report alone to inform the supervisory discussion. Doing so limits opportunities for setting goals, reaching new developmental mile markers, identifying specific areas of need, and reinforcing a student's emerging strengths (Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011). Bringing the perceptions of the client to supervision will not only help minimize this risk, but also further inform the supervisory discussion. These findings help focus on the areas in which counselor educators might enhance the process of supervision. In agreement with others (Worthen & Lambert, 2007), this author suggests that the integration of continuous client feedback could be a tool through which the process of supervision can be improved.

To date, one research study was found that integrated client feedback into the training of psychologists. Reese et al. (2009b) found that clients of those students receiving continuous feedback over the course of therapy demonstrated better treatment outcomes (as perceived by the client) than the clients of those students not receiving it. Additionally, the supervisors reflected that utilizing the feedback data during supervision made the process of delivering critical feedback easier and it allowed them an entry point for giving more specific feedback. Worthen and Lambert (2007) suggested that using continuous client feedback in training provides five important contributions for both training and treatment. First, it standardizes the process of feedback and therefore removes some of the subjectivity. Second, it allows supervision to focus on the client's experiences and not the trainee's perceptions; this is important given the fact that the counselor's insights are often incorrect (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001). Additionally, doing so can provide relevant information that the trainee did not recognize or overlooked. Fourth, it gives the trainee and the supervisor the opportunity to intentionally locate hindrances to treatment and therefore allow exploration of additional intervention techniques. Lastly, utilizing client feedback in supervision allows for collaboration on information brought from the client, which goes beyond information brought through the trainee's training or intuition.

As more counselor educators integrate evidence-based practices into the training of counselors, teaching and utilizing continuous client feedback will provide an additional method as to *how*. The following sections begin to provide an answer for *to what extent*, and the PCOMS feedback mechanism is suggested for program implementation due to its clarity and ease of use.

Integrating Continuous Client Feedback into the Curriculum

Introductory coursework. In order that students feel confident and comfortable with utilizing client feedback in practice and supervision, it should be introduced early in their program of studies. A professor attempting to have students utilize the PCOMS during their

internship course for the first time might find that this adds an extra and potentially unwanted element to what can be an anxiety provoking experience for some students. First, students should be introduced to client feedback within coursework that explicitly emphasizes best practices in the field. Some professors have chosen to introduce client feedback during courses concentrating on theory, research, and/or a course focused on an introduction to the profession as a whole (C. Yates, personal communication, September 27, 2012). Doing so allows for discussion on sound research-based practices directly applicable to the student's future work. Second, because client feedback mechanisms direct explicit attention to the value of the counselor-client relationship, it offers another opportunity for professors to reinforce this critical element of the counseling process (Grant, 2006). Specifically, it gives students an objective reference point for the critical variable within the counseling process.

The introduction to counseling skills course is the most opportune place to engage students with the PCOMS early in their program of studies. It is suggested that instructors introduce this concept halfway through the semester in order that students have gained comfort with the basic attending skills. The SRS (Session Rating Scale) can be easily integrated into student practice sessions. This scale focuses on the quality of the relational bond and the level of agreement between the student-client and the student-counselor on the goals, methods, and the overall approach to the practice session. While in-class practice sessions may be short in length, students will have enough time to receive helpful feedback on the SRS and more importantly, to allow the SRS to be the starting point and a guide for an honest, collaborative discussion of the practice session.

Providing students with a structured format for receiving and delivering feedback during these experiences is helpful to their development in three important ways. First, utilizing the SRS reiterates to students the importance of developing alignment with a client on both an emotional and cognitive level (Lyons & Hazier, 2002). Second, the practice encourages students to be authentic with one another about their skill development and therefore gain comfort with the support and challenge necessary for moving through the stages of counselor development (McAuliffe, & Eriksen, 2000). Third, all participating students gain experience with initial characteristics of the supervisory process. The structure allows students to practice using skills such as confronting, pointing out discrepancies, and inquiring as to the internal reasons for particular interventions with one another. This peer-to-peer interaction enhances the level of safety within an evaluative process and encourages the student-client to provide counseling as the "more knowledgeable other" offering developmentally appropriate feedback (Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998). While feedback is a critical element in any counselor training program, the additional intent here is that the structure of client feedback is similar across coursework and therefore familiar to the student. This familiarity increases the likelihood of novice counselors feeling equipped with the skills and experience necessary to introduce these concepts to their clients in their fieldwork.

Experiential coursework and supervision. During experiential coursework, counselors in training enter the clinical world for the first time as the primary provider of services and are in need of feedback (Bernard & Goodyear, 2013; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003; Worthen & Lambert, 2007). Reese et al. (2009a, 2009b) suggest that this feedback should come directly from clients. Data based evaluation of student progress or remediation is instrumental to enhancing student development; this is preferred over attempts to use inflated or inaccurate

reassurances from self or supervisor that serve little educational or developmental ends (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995).

Practicum and internship. When the use of SRS extends to more experiential coursework, the measure has the potential to facilitate feedback exchange between a number of key participants: site supervisor to trainee, client to student counselor, counselor educator to student counselor, site supervisor to counselor educator, and student to student. Feedback, previously experienced as a more static or one-way direction of information, can be re-conceptualized with increased potential for growth and change (Ankler, Duncan, & Sparks, 2009). This information comes directly from the client without imprecise references as a result of taping restrictions or supervisees' self-report, which fall prey to subjective inaccuracies (Grove et al., 2000; Najavits & Strupp, 1994; Worthen & Lambert, 2007). Additionally, client feedback creates teachable moments and occasions for conversations aimed at deeper understanding and self-reflection; ultimately, the outcome of those supervisory conversations loop back from the therapist in training to benefit the client in the form of tailored clinical interventions (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001).

Practicum and internship students are starting to grapple with the realities of theories in practice, experimenting with treatment modalities and techniques, and deepening their understanding of the therapeutic alliance. Since students are now putting theoretical knowledge to practice, it is an intuitive place to integrate fully the use of the PCOMS client feedback mechanisms. Their prior exposure to and familiarity with the SRS & ORS in skills and theory classes will facilitate a smoother transition for them to use the measures with actual clients and within the process of supervision. Yet, the use of client feedback can be both a practical and personal challenge (Hoffman et al., 2005) for novice counselors as well as for supervisors (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003; Skovholt, Ronnestad, & Jennings, 1997). Thus, this process should be introduced with sensitivity to ensure the loop of feedback remains intact and effective.

Additionally, establishing goals with trainees in advance of the feedback opportunities makes feedback easier to give and enhances student receptivity (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001). Feedback should be grounded in observable factors so that supervisors can avoid the pitfalls of personal opinion or personality clashes entering the feedback arena (Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011). As clinical supervision already exists both to aid in the development of clinical competency and to ensure the promotion and protection of client welfare (Falender & Shafranske, 2004), the use of client outcome feedback supports these goals and provides direct, observable data from which to have growth maximizing conversations.

Elevating Student Potential

A primary objective of counselor educators is to prepare students to "improve the provision of counseling services in all settings of society" (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], n.d.). Therefore, this author suggests that integrating client feedback practices into counselor training can enhance the ability to develop counselors in training in the most critical areas: skill competence, cognitive complexity, and client matching models that include the identification of appropriate evidence based practices (Sexton, 1999). Each of these can be fostered and enhanced over time both through pedagogical approaches within the classroom that target cognitive complexity and reflective practice (Granello, 2010; Welfare & Borders, 2010), systematic and routine delivery of feedback from a more knowledgeable other

(Schmidt & Adkins, 2011), as well as a classroom culture that allows for support and challenge (McAuliffe, & Eriksen, 2000; Wheeler, 2000).

Integrating deliberate feedback mechanisms into clinical training allows for additional opportunities for students to grow in their skill set while being reminded of their need to be open to critique, remain dedicated to quality care for clients, and continually enhance their ability to separate professional insight from personal affront (Hoffman et al, 2005). The process of skill competence enhancement inherently involves the improvement of cognitive complexity, a concept frequently found in the literature to be a key element of counselor development (Little, Packman, Smaby, & Maddux, 2005).

Counselor cognitive complexity refers to a counselor's ability to identify and integrate many ambiguous pieces of knowledge in order to gain an accurate understanding of the client's needs, the interpersonal dynamics, and the treatment implications (Welfare & Borders, 2010). The process of growth in this area is developmental; students begin their studies at variable levels of complexity and educators seek to support and challenge their progression throughout their time in the program. Because an instrument like the SRS explicitly gathers information in each of these important areas, it can be used as a tool for encouraging this critical component of student growth. For example, when students see data showing their clients' progress, or indicators that clients are not experiencing positive growth, the feedback may offer insight into therapist factors that impact progress such as the chosen treatment modality, strength of the therapeutic alliance, or lack of cultural competency. Each area becomes a target for student reflection, which can be guided by both peers and supervisors. Additionally, employing real-time client feedback can compensate for the therapist's potential limitations to detect accurately client progression or lack thereof (Lambert & Shimokawa, 2011).

Since cognitively complex counselors provide more effective services, educators and students need to be held accountable for meeting this developmental progression. The use of client feedback data increases accountability for the therapist and, in the case of interns, it also increases the accountability of supervisor effectiveness. Lambert et al. (2004) point out that therapists are more able to address problems with the alliance quickly when they are aware of issues; outcome data with a clinical tool such as the SRS increase this awareness and accountability to respond to problems as they arise.

Encouraging the development of cognitive complexity simultaneously involves enhancing self-efficacy. If students are not supported and encouraged through challenging developmental progressions, they may become discouraged or remain stagnant. According to Worthen and Lambert (2007), nearly all therapists (90%) consider themselves to be above the 75th percentile in delivering treatment; thus, self-efficacy may not appear to be an area of concern for counselors. However, a genuine and informed sense of self-efficacy is important to the developmental potential of counselors in training. Thus, while therapists may have an inflated or overly optimistic sense of their effectiveness, client feedback data are able to measure the strength of the alliance as well as gauge client outcomes, potentially increasing genuine therapist self-efficacy (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001).

In summary, the instruments included in the PCOMS can be integrated throughout the counselor education curriculum. An instructor of a course on theoretical approaches to counseling can introduce it as one of the strategies proven effective without regard to clinical orientation. The research instructor should discuss the research on client feedback mechanisms and engage students in a discussion critiquing one of the many studies utilizing the PCOMS. Most importantly, the SRS scale can be easily integrated into the introductory counseling skills

course and required for use in practice sessions and individual supervision meetings. Faculty can utilize the students' familiarity with the PCOMS during their practicum experience by requiring the use of the SRS with clients. As students establish a client base during their on-site internship experiences, both the SRS and the ORS may be used with each client seen. Faculty may need to discuss the PCOMS with the on-site supervisor during their introductory meeting and explain how it can and should be used during supervision. Students then integrate the findings of the PCOMS into their clinical presentations, classroom discussions, and most importantly, their individual supervision sessions both on and off campus. Ultimately, this allows students to move into the profession having familiarity with an evidence-based practice that encourages their development as a counselor and enhances the treatment outcomes of their clients.

Conclusion

The use of client feedback not only integrates evidence-based practices in order to better prepare counselors, it also promotes developmental growth in light of the current professional challenges and therefore appears essential to meet the high demands of practicing counselors (Harmon et al., 2007; Hawkins, Lambert, Vermeersch, Slade, & Tuttle, 2004; Miller, et al, 2005). Counselor educators' goal to promote student development requires real data not student assumptions, and on-site supervisors' goal to assure premium client care and client retention requires concrete evidence, not personal perception (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001).

Appendix A

About the Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision

The Journal is a service of the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselors and Supervisors. The mission of the Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision is to provide a comprehensive platform for research, theory and practices of counselor educators, counselor supervisors and professional counselors. The journal chronicles current issues, concerns and potential solutions that enable counselors to continue to grow and develop as practitioners, educators and human beings. The journal publishes high-quality articles that have undergone a thorough and extensive double blind peer-review twice a year.

Aims & Scope of the Journal

JCPS provides manuscripts that enhance the practice of counselor education, counseling and supervision. There are six general categories that help focus the content of the journal.

Research. These articles focus on research (qualitative, quantitative, mixed) in counselor preparation, professional development, supervision, and professional practice.

Techniques. These articles focus on professional models for teaching empirically grounded techniques used by professional counselors, as well as teaching and supervision techniques used in professional preparation programs.

Counselor Development. These articles include insightful commentary on means by which professional counselors can continue to develop professionally. Effective teaching strategies for counseling students as well as continuing education for experienced counselors will be highlighted.

Supervision. These articles specifically target ideas, research, and practice related to counselor supervision. These articles should investigate and discuss supervisory issues from a perspective applicable to site supervisors, counselor educators and/or clinical supervisors (e.g., supervising professionals working toward a professional counseling license).

Issues, Concerns and Potential Solutions. These articles identify and discuss significant issues facing the field of professional counseling with particular focus on issues in counselor preparation, professional development, and supervision. Exploration of these topics should include elaboration of the concerns as well as an examination of potential remedies or effective responses to the issues.

Clinical Supervisors Stories. These articles describe current issues in counselor preparation and supervision from the perspective of site supervisors. The emphasis on these articles should focus on the story of the issue, potential solutions and the uniqueness of the message. Authors are encouraged to forgo significant literature review and attend directly to the intended message to the field.