GROUP SUPERVISION OF COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING IMPLEMENTING THE
AWARENESS WHEEL

A Dissertation

by

FREDERICKA RAGAN DELEE

BA, St. Mary's University, 2003
MS, Our Lady of the Lake University, 2006
MA, St. Mary's University, 2008

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

Marvarene Oliver, EdD	Kimberly Frazier, PhD
Chair	Committee Member
Michelle Hunnicutt Hollenbaugh, PhD	Philip Rhoades
Committee Member	Graduate Faculty Representative

JoAnn Canales, PhD
Dean, College of Graduate Studies

May 2014

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to contribute to the literature about group supervision of master's level student counselors. Specifically, the study examined the use of the Awareness Wheel as a mode of feedback in the group supervision process. The overarching research question of this study was: What are the lived experiences of master's-level counselors-in-training (CITs) who participate in group supervision that utilizes the Awareness Wheel as a communication tool when providing feedback? Sub-questions guiding this study included: How do CITs describe the experience of communicating using the Awareness Wheel? How do CITs describe any impact of using the Awareness Wheel on case conceptualization? How do CITs describe any impact using the Awareness Wheel on their development as counselors or persons?

The qualitative phenomenological study utilized journal entries, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group as data sources. Data were analyzed and repeatedly re-analyzed to arrive at distinct themes. Themes were illustrated using the voices of participants.

Participants included six master's-level CITs completing their clinical fieldwork at a Counseling and Training Clinic on the campus of a CACREP-accredited university located in the southwestern region of the United States. These CITs were providing clinical services to clients with various presenting mental health concerns.

Analysis of data resulted in the emergence of five distinct themes: (1) counselor awareness, with the subtheme of counselor awareness facilitating skill development; (2) confidence; (3) consistent process, with subthemes of clarity and the Awareness Wheel; (4) learning; and (5) togetherness. A sixth theme that was found throughout the entirety of the data and which ran throughout all other themes was transparency.

Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are provided. Group supervision is an appropriate modality for supervising CITs, specifically when a kinesthetic component for learning is utilized. Additionally, a model for communicating feedback during supervision benefits CITs in their development as counselors. Further investigation of the process experienced and the transparency present throughout the experience for the CITs using the Awareness Wheel in group supervision is needed to further support and expand these findings.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Sherod and Phyllis Miller. They have created a wonderful tool for helping people understand self and others.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Group supervision is an essential component of counselor training as it provides a context for professional development. In group supervision, counselors discern and master counseling skills for themselves which benefit their clients. By building their skill set, they become effective while forging bonds with clients. This leads to operative and satisfying experiences for clients and counselors. Additionally, effective communication is essential in counseling. For counselors, it is imperative to learn how to communicate and to understand what is being communicated. Building effective communication skills can occur in the context of group supervision. The Awareness Wheel (Miller, Nunnally, Wackman, 1975) provides a template for communicating that focuses on the counselor's own senses, thoughts, actions, feelings, and intentions. The purpose of this study is to comprehend the experience of master's-level practicum and internship students in group supervision that uses the Awareness Wheel as a communication tool.

Background Overview

Group supervision is required in counseling training programs that are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009). Group supervision is defined as

> . . . the regular meeting of a group of supervisees with a designated supervisor or
> supervisors, to monitor the quality of their work, and to further their understanding of
> themselves as clinicians, of the clients with whom they work, and of service delivery in
> general. (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, p. 245)

A consistent and cohesive model for group supervision that lends itself to research, evaluation, and measurement is needed. Linton (2003) addressed the lack of empirical evidence regarding group supervision and its impact on counselors-in-training. However, the limited research on this

topic has shown that group supervision has important benefits. These benefits include the opportunity for counselors-in-training to observe firsthand the application of different counseling approaches and receive helpful feedback (Linton, 2003). There remains, however, a dearth of research regarding group supervision, as well as an absence in consistent models for teaching the necessary and mandated skills.

Experiential learning has been shown to be most effective in acquiring new skills (Paladino, Minton, & Kern, 2011)**.** Utilizing the Awareness Wheel in group supervision may provide counselors-in-training with needed consistency and a more complete model in which they can practice developing self-awareness by means of an experiential process. By providing feedback to one another in an experiential format that recognizes sensory data, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions, counselors-in-training may learn to conceptualize clients, cases, and problems in an organized consistent manner.

Communication is a vital to any relationship (Ekran, S., Özbay, Y., Cihangir-Cankaya, Z., Terzi, S., 2012). For counselors, effective communication is necessary for performing the most basic of counseling skills. Basic counseling skills include the ability to listen carefully and effectively so that counselors can reflect a feeling, reflect meaning, and comment about the process of the counseling session (Ivey & Bradford-Ivey, 1999). These basic counseling skills require counselors to be cognizant of their own perspective as well as the perspective of the client.

In order to effectively communicate, it is helpful to have a healthy awareness of self (Miller, Nunnaly, & Wackman, 1975). Self-awareness has been defined as "awareness or knowledge of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and can be considered a state" (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975, pg. 522). Miller, Nunnaly, and Wackman (1975) state, "The

first step in communication is identifying information you want to communicate to others . . . this information is often information about yourself" (pg. 28). Self-awareness is key to effective communication because it requires the counselor to understand the worldview from which they operate, hopefully resulting in making more informed and clearer decisions where intentionality is apparent (Miller, Nunnally, & Wackman, 1975)

The counselors' style and the manner they are developing begin to form during their first clinical experiences in practicum and internship courses (Paladino, Minton, & Kern, 2011). Training counseling students in communication skills and developing self-awareness is a goal of practicum and internship courses. Increasing these skills and improving these abilities benefits them and improves clinical skills. Preparing counselors-in-training (CITs) to communicate in a way that accounts for their sensory data, emotions, thoughts, intentions, and behaviors has the possibility of helping them recognize the effect they have in the counseling session. Additionally, having an opportunity to practice basic self-awareness at this early stage of clinical work might help CITs with important counseling issues such as interpersonal awareness, transference, countertransference, problem identification, and intentional intervention strategies. These skills are facilitated by greater interpersonal communication skills and are mandated by accreditation.

Statement of the Problem

Group supervision is widely practiced in counselor education but yields limited research. Exploring facets of group supervision in an effort to understand this supervisory modality is warranted. The need for new counselors to develop intentionality and basic counseling skills has been stated in the literature. New counselors struggle with intentionality and basic counseling skills, even as they approach graduation and enter into the profession (Gersten et al., 2013). This

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points to the need for effective supervision and a way to teach intentionality in particular. The

Awareness Wheel provides a concrete way for the supervisor to assess the skills new counselors-

in-training are developing in client awareness, intervention goals, and communications skills. It

is important for supervisors to cultivate a relationship with the supervisee that allows for honesty

between supervisor and supervisees. Training programs for counselors-in-training focusing on

basic microskills have shown to be effective in improving clinical awareness and skill sets (Duys

& Hedstrom, 2000). Implementing a template for communication focusing on sensory data,

thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions in the context of supervision allows for an experiential

opportunity to practice effective communication in the supervision group as well as in the

counseling sessions under critique. Research exploring effective methods for providing group

supervision as well as research about the development of self-awareness and communication in

counselors-in-training is limited. Therefore, the research needs to be broadened in an effort to

augment the knowledge base of new counselors and counselor educators and provide qualitative

and quantitative evaluation. This increases the effectiveness of both.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the qualitative exploration of the

experience of masters-level student counselors who participate in group supervision using the

Awareness Wheel as a mode of feedback. As part of this study, students' experiences of giving

and receiving feedback using a model of communication that focuses on skill building and

awareness of sensory data, thoughts, feelings, actions, intentions, and future behaviors were

explored. Awareness of one's own sensory data, thoughts, feelings, actions, and future behaviors

is important to the student counselors' ability to work effectively with clients.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was:

What are the lived experiences of masters-level counselors-in-training (CITs) who

participate in group supervision that utilizes the Awareness Wheel as communication tool

when providing feedback?

Sub-questions included: a) how do CITs describe the experience of communicating using the

Awareness Wheel, b) how do CITs describe any impact of using the Awareness Wheel on case

conceptualization, c) how do CITs describe any impact of using the Awareness Wheel on their

development as counselors or persons?

Significance of Study

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

(CACREP) encourages accredited programs to implement training focused on the development

of self-awareness in order to enhance the counseling relationship (CACREP, 2009). Heightened

self-awareness on the part of the counselor has been shown to positively impact the therapeutic

relationship and effectiveness of counseling (Downs, 2000). Providing a setting in which

counselors-in-training can develop and hone this skill without the pressure of working with a

client appeared to be an important need.

Group supervision has been shown to be a helpful modality because it allows for group

members to observe and learn from their supervisors and their peers (Linton, 2003). By utilizing

the Awareness Wheel in this setting, students had an opportunity to learn via practice and

observation. Additionally, this modality allowed for students to make mistakes and learn from

those mistakes without the added pressure of being with a client.

Exploring the students' experiences when using this tool in group supervision provides

the field with rich data regarding the supervision process, ways to develop self-awareness, and

the developmental process of a CITs. In addition, it provides information about how CITs learn and use new communication skills. This information provides the profession with opportunities for continued research, as well as insight that will be useful when working with counselors-in-training. Additionally, it will add to the literature regarding group supervision practices, its significance in training, and possible quantitative measures for the future.

Population and Sample

The participants were six masters-level CITs who agreed to participate in the study and were fulfilling their requirements for clinical field work at a counseling and training clinic (CTC) located on a campus of a southwestern university in the UnitedStates. The CTC provides group and individual counseling to the public. The target number of participants was 5-7 CITs. The CITs completing their practicum and internship clinical work at the clinic met criteria for participation in the study. Those criteria were the CITs must: 1) be enrolled in a master's-level counseling program, 2) were enrolled in practicum or internship, and 3) be at least 19 years old.

Instrumentation

This is a qualitative study. A qualitative paradigm allows for an inductive process when exploring human experiences (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) states, "Phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (pg. 482). The phenomenological perspective focuses on the human experience of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). This theoretical perspective was fitting for this study because the aim of the study was to understand CITs' experience of the Awareness Wheel in the context of group supervision. Interviews, journaling, field observation, and a focus group were used to access the experience of the CITs. Exploring the process associated with awareness of self and effective communication required a

research paradigm that was inductive in nature and open to different human experiences while allowing themes to emerge which were similar across participants.

Group supervision utilizing the Awareness Wheel began during the first month of the semester and continued for eight consecutive weeks. The CITs were taught the Awareness Wheel during the first meeting and asked to use the wheel as they provided feedback to their peers and as they presented cases or issues to the group. After each group supervision meeting, the CITs participated in reflective journaling. Upon completion of the eight weeks of group supervision, individual interviews and a focus group were conducted.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the first week of the semester the students at the clinic were contacted face-to-face by the principal researcher and informed of the purposes of the study. They were offered the opportunity to participate in the group supervision study and were informed that their participation is voluntary. The students who agreed to participate in the study provided the principal researcher with days and times when they were available in order to establish a time for the group to meet. They were also provided with an informed consent to review and returned during the initial meeting. No student counselor at the clinic who was available at that time and wished to participate was excluded.

The principal researcher held an initial meeting with CITs who agreed to participate in order to review the purposes of the study and the informed consent documents. Questions were answered and the informed consents were signed and obtained. The principal researcher conducted group supervision using the Awareness Wheel for eight weeks over the course of a semester. The supervision group was held in the CTC. Each supervision session consisted of a 2-hour group supervision meeting during which the students discussed clinical issues, professional

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development, personal awareness (as it related to professional development), and any other client-related concerns. Students were introduced to and utilized the Awareness Wheel as a means of communicating with one another.

During the last 15-20 minutes of each supervision group session, participants journaled about their experience using the following prompts:

1) My experience of today's group supervision was . . .

2) How did today's group supervision impact your conceptualization of clients or cases?

3) How did today's group supervision impact your conceptualization of yourself as a counselor?

Each participant created a pseudonym which was used to identify the journals. The journals were collected and stored in a locked cabinet. The pseudonyms were used on all data collected during the study. Throughout the entirety of the study the researcher took field notes in order to reflect upon the process, make observations, and note actions taken as the supervisor. In addition, the researcher recorded her reactions, thoughts, and experiences in the supervision sessions.

Following the final group supervision, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each research participant. Participants were asked the following:

1) What was your experience of using the Awareness Wheel in group supervision?

2) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel help you communicate with your peers?

3) In what ways, if any, did hearing feedback that was provided using the Awareness Wheel help you to receive it?

4) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel help you conceptualize client cases/issues?

5) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel impact you as a counselor?

6) Please describe any ways in which using the Awareness Wheel might have impacted you personally.

Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Any identifying information was removed from the transcription in order to protect participant confidentiality, and pseudonyms were utilized to identify each transcript. Each interview took place at the CTC, lasted approximately one hour, and was audio recorded

Analysis is an ongoing process in which the researcher goes through the data multiple times. Creswell (2007) depicts data analysis as being similar to a spiral. At the beginning of the study, the researcher described her experience with the Awareness Wheel, a process known as bracketing (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2007). In order for the focus of the research to be on the participants and their experience, it was imperative for the researcher to bracket her experience from that of the subjects for the purpose of enhancing credibility of the study. In this case, the spiral-like nature of research analysis resembles a double helix where analysis of the subjects and researcher are separated but connected.

Throughout the study, the researcher was immersed in the data by reviewing the journal entries and making her own observations about the process. Upon completion of the 8 weeks of group supervision, and after the researcher had reviewed the journal entries, listened to the interviews and identified emerging themes, the participants were asked to participate in a focus group to review the initial themes found in the interviews and journals. The participants were asked to provide their thoughts on the initial themes. They were then offered the opportunity to discuss any questions or thoughts they had about the experience of using the Awareness Wheel as part of the group supervision process.

Following the focus group, the researcher transcribed the individual interviews and the focus group recording. Once the interviews and focus group were transcribed, the researcher engaged in a step called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994) in which the researcher reviewed the data by listening to the interviews, reading the transcriptions, reading the journals, and taking note of statements or phrases which lent insight into the lived experiences of these participants. The researcher read through the transcribed interviews, and journals and highlighted those words and phrases that elucidated the research question being asked.

The data from the group along with the individual interview transcriptions were reanalyzed for units of meaning. Then, clusters of meaning were developed in order to facilitate the researcher in detecting themes as they emerged from the data (Hays & Wood, 2011). Clusters of meaning are identified when the researcher looks for meaning that is static across the initial statements identified (Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Once the clusters of meaning were identified, then the researcher looked for textural descriptions of the phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). These descriptions were information rich and illuminated the experience the participants seemed to share (Hays & Wood, 2011). These descriptions were used to provide the researcher with a clearer understanding of the experience of the individual participants and the experience across participants. Themes in the data were constructed from the clusters of meaning and textural descriptions. Throughout the study and the data analysis process the researcher made certain to write about her own experience as it related to the phenomenon of study (Moustakas, 1994). This enabled the data to be analyzed on several concentric levels and from a variety of perspectives, both from an individual standpoint and from a process standpoint.

Moustakas (1994) discussed three important strategies utilized here to strengthen trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation of data utilizes multiple sources of data to explore the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). Having multiple sources of data provided credibility to the themes identified. This triangulation of data analysis provided the framework for the helix or spiral described by Creswell (2007). Going across data or horizontally through data provides a three dimensional mode of analysis. For this study the (three) sources of data were journal entries, the focus group, and interviews. Member checking was utilized in two ways. First, participant transcriptions were provided to each CIT in order that changes could be made that were necessary to accurately reflect experience. In addition, initial themes were presented to the focus group, which again provided opportunity for participants to add, counter, and provide additional information. The transcriptions were submitted to each CIT electronically and the CIT reviewed the transcriptions and made any changes they felt were necessary to accurately reflect their experience. Member checking served as a way to validate the interpretation of the data made by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Interviews, journals, and the focus group provided thick, rich description of participants' experiences. Finally, making certain the researcher provided thick description of the phenomenon by staying true to the participant's statements of their experience and checking that description with participants allowed for a clearer and richer account of the phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

All recordings and transcriptions were kept in a secure cabinet in the home of the researcher for the duration of the study and will be kept for three years beyond the successful defense of the dissertation. The data will be destroyed by the researcher three years after the dissertation defense.

Basic Assumption

Basic assumptions before beginning the study were that using the Awareness Wheel as a template for communication would increase counselor self-awareness and improve communication skills. The Awareness Wheel helps identify one's own sensory data, feelings, intentions, thoughts, and actions and thereby enhances effective communication, rapport, and therapeutic alliance because it takes into account the importance of the person who is doing the communicating. Further it was assumed that this experience would provoke personal and professional development within the student, in turn increasing competence and confidence for students. Additionally, it was assumed that those who elected to participate would do so fully and that they would provide honest information about their experiences.

Researcher Bias

I have implemented the Awareness Wheel in both my professional and personal life. On a professional level, I have used it when working with CITs who have verbalized issues with their co-counselor. I have found this intervention to be helpful as it outlined for the students their own data, thoughts, actions, feelings, and intentions as it related to the issue presented and helped them take responsibility for themselves and communicate with their co-counselor. Additionally, I have found this tool helped me as a clinician as I communicate via this model with my clients. I am able to build a strong therapeutic relationship with less effort and in a short period of time. Communicating and listening are both enhanced by the tool. On a personal level, I have used this tool in many areas to help with my own self-awareness as it relates to professional and personal growth, responsibility, and interpersonal meaning.

Limitations

A significant limitation associated with this study was that I, the researcher, was the group supervisor. Patton (2002) discussed how interviews can have an impact on the emotional state of the research participants, resulting in distorted responses, self-serving responses, and error in recall. I recognized that the students might have felt compelled to behave or share their experiences in an uncharacteristic manner. I tried to avoid this by analyzing numerous points of data across participants and by utilizing an external interviewer for individual interviews. Another limitation was the limited range of research participants. The research participants came from a counseling program at a university in South Texas. They were accepted to complete their practicum or internship at the Counseling and Training Clinic.

Definitions and Key Terms

Counseling and Training Clinic (CTC): The location where the study took place. Located on the university campus, the CTC is staffed by master's-level counselors-in-training and provides individual and group counseling to the community.

Counselor-in-training (CIT): Masters-level students participating in their required clinical work for their degree. These students were registered in practicum or internship courses.

Awareness Wheel (the Wheel): The communication model used throughout the study. The Awareness Wheel focuses on sensory data actions, thoughts, feelings, and intentions thus focusing on the whole person as the source of communicating and listening (Miller & Miller, 2011).

Listening Cycle: The Listening Cycle is a model used in conjunction with the Awareness Wheel and in no way is separate from the Awareness Wheel. The Listening Cycle facilitates awareness

for the person communicating their experience on the Awareness Wheel. The Listening Cycle provides a model for aiding the person on the large skill mat in uncovering their experience.

Supervision: "An intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member of the same profession" (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, pg.7).

Supervisor: The senior member of the profession responsible for monitoring the junior member in all areas of clinical work and professional development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

Group Supervision: The regular meeting of multiple supervisees with a supervisor who monitors the quality of their clinical work and assists them in developing as a clinician (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009).

Summary

This purpose of this study was to uncover the lived experience of CITs utilizing the Awareness Wheel in the context of group supervision. A qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study as it allowed for the researcher to explore the experience of the research participants in an inductive manner. Weekly supervision was provided for eight weeks during the Fall semester with the Awareness Wheel being used as the template for communicating during supervision.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study advanced the research and practice of group supervision by introducing the

Awareness Wheel (Miller & Miller, 2011), a proven model of communication that is intuitive

and readily accessible to group supervision. Chapter two is a review of the literature concerning

group supervision and is followed by a review of the literature regarding communication and self

awareness. In order to bridge the gap between the counseling profession and the model used in

this study, a review of the literature relating to mindfulness is presented given its proposed

similarities to awareness. Finally, the theoretical foundation and a description of the Awareness

Wheel are discussed.

Clinical Supervision

Bernard and Goodyear (2009) defined supervision as "an intervention provided by a more

senior member of a profession to a more junior member or members of the same profession"

(p.7). CACREP-accredited programs require all practicum and internship students to participate

in an average of 1.5 hours of group supervision per week in addition to individual supervision

(CACREP, 2009). Thus, a significant amount of CIT time is spent within the confines of

supervision, which is indicative of its level of importance in positively affecting CIT

development of counselor skills. Therefore, during supervision with the supervisee, the

supervisor takes on the roles of teacher, consultant, and counselor, intervening with the CIT for

the purposes of facilitating professional growth and increasing counselor competence. This

intervention translates beneficially for the therapeutic process involving future clients (Bernard

& Goodyear, 2009).

The literature reflected agreement that supervision played an integral role in the

professional development of the CIT and that there are many facets of supervision that are

essential to the growth of the profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Thompson & Moffett,

2010). For example, supervisors are responsible for monitoring the profession through training and screening of CITs, engaging in experiential learning activities with their CITs, highlighting ethical codes and obligations, and being involved in client welfare. According to Bernard and Goodyear (2004), "unless practice is accompanied by the systematic feedback and reflection that supervision provides, supervisees may gain no more than the illusion that they are developing professional expertise" (p. 5).

Supervision begins for CITs during their first semester of clinical fieldwork when CITs start to work with clients. For many CITs this is anxiety-inducing, as it is the first time they implement acquired skills and learning when they dialogue with clients. This requires a higher level of development on the part of the CIT (De Stefano, D'Iuso, Blake, Fitzpatrick, Drapeau, & Chamodraka, 2007). CITs tend to experiment when working with clients in order to discover what works and what does not. De Stefano et al., (2007) emphasized supervision as the modality for addressing instances when CITs see themselves as having failed, particularly as they begin to work with clients. Supervision gives CITs a place to process these experiences and develop new skills and approaches.

Group Supervision

Group supervision is defined as "the regular meeting of a group of supervisees (a) with a designated supervisor or supervisors, (b) to monitor the quality of their work, and (c) to further their understanding of themselves as clinicians, of the clients with whom they work, and of service delivery in general" (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, p. 244). It allows participants to form habits of accountability in two ways: (a) self-monitoring and (b) feedback. These two forms of accountability provide the vehicle for monitoring the quality of their work. According to Frey, Fisher, and Everlove (2009), "Feedback lies at the center of accountability" (p. 54).

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Group supervision has shown to have a positive effect by many researchers. For example, it is used in many educational settings across numerous populations and is an intimate extension of the classroom and practicum experience. "Without the benefit of an expanded view (*group*), a student's learning is limited by the range of his or her experiences. Thus, interactions with peers expand a student's aptitude for seeking new information" (Frey, Fisher, Everlove, 2009, p.14). Accordingly, the learning that group provides is more than completing a task, it is an integral component of mastery (Fisher, Frey, & Everlove, 2009).

Typically, studies surrounding group supervision have resulted in a broad understanding of the modality. A majority of the studies on group supervision have uncovered concepts like group process, peer supervision, perceptions of group supervision, and approaches to supervision (Borders, 1991; Linton & Hedstrom, 2006; Westwood, 1989; Wilbur & Roberts-Wilbur, 1994). Linton and Hedstrom (2006) explored a combination of these concepts, namely students' perceptions of group processes within group supervision. Five domains related to perceptions of group processes within group supervision emerged from the data via qualitative analysis of CITs' experiences and perceptions. The domains included (a) cohesion, (b) conflict, (c) observation, (d) guidance, and (e) feedback. Cohesion referred to feelings of comfort related to the being a member of the group. Conflict referred to unspoken disagreements between group members. Observation referred to the process of watching peers and supervisors demonstrate clinical and supervisory skills. Guidance referred to any advice or educational information provided during group. Finally, feedback referred to any ideas, suggestions, or input offered by peers, their supervisor, or from those outside of the group (Linton & Herdstrom, 2006).

Westwood (1989) reviewed the literature regarding the benefits and risks of group supervision. He discussed the benefits of group process and group theory when working with

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supervisees in group supervision, and she outlined a number of suggestions for improving group

supervision based on group theory. These suggestions included developing guidelines and rules

of confidentiality for the group, encouraging the group leader to model all skills to the group,

providing a structure for how group supervision will be conducted, and helping the members

identify individual goals for group supervision.

Research on group supervision is disproportionately scant relative to its actual use in

counselor education and therefore it remains a somewhat empirically ambiguous phenomenon in

the field (Holloway & Johnston, 1985; Linton & Hedstrom, 2006). Newgent, Davis, and Farley

(2004) asserted, "Very little is known, however, regarding the effects of different models of

supervision. Gaining a clear perspective on the structure and practice of supervision is critical,

especially given the demands and limitations placed on counselor education programs" (p. 66).

Prieto (1996) wrote one of the most referenced articles addressing this dearth in research. Prieto

reviewed the literature involving group supervision starting with studies performed in the 1960s.

He found that these earlier studies focused on therapy-based approaches to group supervision,

which ultimately resulted in ethical issues and did not explore the impact of the therapy-based

approaches on a CIT functioning as a clinician. Additional studies reviewed by Prieto identified

that group dynamics occurring in supervision need to be further explored and understood. As a

result of his review, Prieto acknowledged the methodological issues relating to research on group

supervision and noted that such issues make the results of such studies somewhat unreliable. He

concluded that exploratory research was needed so as to understand the different constructs

associated with group supervision. Since the release of Prieto's 1996 article, the use of group

supervision has grown and proven to be beneficial in many ways. However, other researchers

have suggested that additional exploratory studies need to be conducted to identify areas for in-depth research (Linton & Hedstrom, 2006).

Regardless of the disproportionate amount of research available concerning group supervision, many of the early studies indicated clear benefits of group supervision. These included time efficiency, vicarious learning, exposure to a variety of client issues, a greater breadth of feedback, and the opportunities for normalizing supervisee experiences and feelings such as adequacy and empathy (Axelson, 1967; Bernard and Goodyear, 2009; McKinnon, 1969; Prieto, 1996). Prieto (1996) highlighted the fact that in addition to being time efficient, group supervision increased supervisee self awareness and emotional growth by allowing for exposure of supervisees to different theoretical perspectives and offering opportunities for peer supervision, consultation, and support. In a study comparing large and small group supervision and combined individual and group supervision, Ray and Altekruse (2000) found "Group supervision provides the opportunity for peers and supervisor to interact more openly and offer support to one another in their growth" (Ray & Altekruse, 2000, p. 20).

More recent studies denoted group supervision was beneficial in other areas of the helping professions as well. For example, Nielsen, Davidsen, Dalsted, and Kousgaard (2013) explored the effect of group supervision with physicians working with patients having mental health issues. The study involved a group of general practitioners (supervisees) and a psychiatrist trained in supervision. The group met monthly, approximately ten times per year. During each meeting the supervisees would meet and present a case for supervision. Results of the study indicated group supervision motivated the general practitioners to use talk therapy to address the mental health symptoms present in their clients. Additionally, many of the practitioners claimed their psychiatric and communication skills improved during the course of supervision. Finally,

the participants stated the group format helped them become open to new perspectives and more willing to learn from their peers.

There is research regarding the use of reflecting teams in group supervision. According to Pender (2012), "The reflecting teams provide reflections that are nonjudgmental, positive in nature, and come from a wondering stance in order to promote relating to others" (p. 11). Attridge (2007) examined the use of reflecting teams in group supervision in a counseling practicum course. Results of the study indicated the three major benefits of this modality and intervention were a safe and trustworthy atmosphere, nonjudgmental feedback which was easier to accept, and the benefit of multiple perspectives on an issue. Pender explored the use of reflecting teams in group supervision. Using a grounded theory paradigm for research, themes that emerged from the four group members' experiences were learning style, cohesion, peer learning and self-learning, challenges, expectations, and meeting client needs (Pender, 2012). Kellum (2009) also explored the use of reflecting teams in group supervision of school counseling interns and found that the primary benefit of the experience was hearing different perspectives on the same case. Other benefits included vicarious learning and a building of confidence.

Del Moro (2012) examined the cultivation of self-awareness in group supervision. Del Moro recruited 53 master's-level students in a marriage and family therapy program at a CACREP-accredited university. Del Moro administered a number of quantitative measures that assessed self-awareness and group supervision. The results of the study indicated a positive correlation between self-awareness and group supervision. Specifically, group supervision oriented towards processing case and client issues, addressing multicultural competencies, and increasing self-understanding had a greater impact regarding the cultivation of self awareness

than group supervision focusing on techniques and treatment planning.

Other studies regarding group supervision have pointed out limitations of this modality, including time constraints limiting individual members when presenting their cases, confidentiality concerns, and group dynamic issues (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Brooks, Patterson, and McKiernan (2012) reviewed surveys from a community mental health agency and found that while group supervision was rated positively overall, some of the clinicians thought that the facilitator possessed an inadequate skill level, that they were offered poor feedback both in terms of the content and the process used, k), and that the process was monotonous in nature.

In a consensual qualitative research study, Borders, et al. (2012) explored student perceptions of the different supervision modalities (individual, triadic, and group). The participants discussed limitations to group supervision such as the time limitations given the group size. This issue resulted in brief case presentations preventing group members from participating in feedback. Additionally, participants complained of feedback focusing too much on the client, versus the supervisee, making it less personal (Borders et al., 2012). In a recent study, Ögren & Sundin (2009) note the need for continued research,

> The development of many psychotherapy training courses in many different countries from the 1970s and onwards, group supervision has been used to an increasingly greater extent, both in psychotherapy programs on all levels of training and in clinical practice settings. As a consequence, there is a growing need for knowledge about variables such as different usage of the group as format for supervision and teaching, and small group dynamics. (p. 130)

The extant literature points to the wide use of group supervision and the nuances of the modality which need continued research and improvement. This study adds to the current literature regarding the use of a specific modality in group supervision.

Communication

Communication is innate to any relationship. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors communicate to some degree the reality of one's feelings to another (Miller & Miller, 2011). Miller and Miller (2011) asserted that being able to communicate effectively could provide an opportunity to build relationships and improve them; therefore, the ability to accurately identify the information needed to communicate with others is an integral piece of effective communication. Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1975) contended that the ability to be self-aware allows appropriate and effective communication with others. They stated, "In interpersonal communication, this information is often information about yourself, yet frequently people have a great deal of trouble identifying all the kinds of information they have about themselves" (Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman, 1975, p. 28). Communicating self-information is often difficult and is complicated by the struggle in obtaining self-information.

For CITs, learning how to communicate effectively is imperative when working with peers, clients, and supervisors. Communication consists of many layers; becoming aware of them and unraveling them could be helpful in bettering communication. Hollands (2004) asserted, "communications between client and counselor are both conscious and unconscious, spoken and unspoken" (p. 490). Hollands (2004) highlighted the importance of supervision in terms of helping CITs to identify both their conscious and unconscious communications whether in session with clients or during supervision.

Self-Awareness and Mindfulness

Self-awareness has been defined as "awareness or knowledge of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and can be considered a state" (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975, p. 522). Self-awareness therefore is a way of paying attention to self in a particular way by focusing on thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. A key component of counselor development is personal and professional self-awareness (Tobin, 2003). According to Tobin (2003), an increase in self-awareness allows CITs to appropriately handle instances of emotional reactivity, also known as countertransference, during a session. The role of supervision in aiding CITs in this endeavor is imperative, as supervision provided the venue for CITs to address each experience of emotional reactivity and to develop an enhanced sense of insight and self-awareness as a result. Because supervision is so important to the development of CIT self-awareness, so too is the need for developing a supervisory relationship which is both transparent and reflective in nature (Tobin, 2003).

While self-awareness and mindfulness are very similar terms, the counseling profession tends to lean more toward a mindfulness perspective, which is defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). In order to examine the effect of mindfulness on attention and empathy, Greason and Cashwell (2009) performed a study which included 179 CITs. In addition to attention and empathy, the researchers examined the impact, if any, these constructs had on counselor self efficacy. The CITs were given instrument packets which contained scales and questionnaires assessing mindfulness, attention, interpersonal reactivity, self-efficacy, and demographics. Results of the study indicated mindfulness predicted empathic ability for CITs. Furthermore, mindfulness, attention, empathy, and self-efficacy were found to be intimately related to one

another (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). Additionally, mindfulness, empathic ability, and the ability to control attention were found to all play a role in CIT self-efficacy. The researchers asserted that the ability to be mindful allowed the CITs to be with the client rather than react to the client or judge the client, in turn providing the student with an opportunity to utilize their empathic abilities (Greason & Cashwell, 2009). Being mindful also allowed the students to focus on the client and their experience rather than focus on what to do next in session or how to fix the client (Greason & Cashwell, 2009).

Countertransference

According to Gelso, Latts, Gomez and Fassinger (2002), one's ability to manage personal feelings played a significant role in counselor's ability to manage the three levels of countertransference, i.e., classical, moderate, and totalistic. Classical countertransference is described as the counselor's unconscious reaction to the client (Rosenberger & Hayes, 2002). Moderate countertransference is described as "the counselor's reaction to a client based on the counselor's 'unresolved conflicts'" (Rosenberger & Hayes, 2002. p. 264). Totalistic countertransference refers to "the counselor's responses that are grounded in the shared reality of the counseling relationship" (Rosenberger & Hayes, 2002 p. 264). The totalistic definition incorporates, but does not limit itself to, unresolved conflicts within the counselor; it takes into account all emotions that surface during the counseling relationship. For the purpose of this study, a totalistic definition of the construct was utilized because it incorporated all emotions present during the counseling process. According to Peabody and Gelso (1982),

> The desire to make contact with, and partake of other people's feelings, is learned very
>
> early, and is closely aligned in the psyche with the need to be sensitive to one's own
>
> feelings. Such sensitivity would allow the counselor to deal effectively with conflicting

or irrational internal reactions to clients without acting them out against the client, (p. 241)

Additional research regarding countertransference supported the consideration that counselor awareness of feelings and countertransference are directly related to therapeutic alliance and outcomes of therapy (Tobin, 2003). As a result it is imperative CITs are trained to identify and work through this issue. Furthermore, supervisors conducting supervision, either individual or group, are encouraged to take this phenomenon seriously in an effort to help supervisees develop self-monitoring skills to utilize when they are practicing on their own. Peabody and Gelso (1982) asserted that countertransference is foreseeable. They held that, rather than focus on any negative aspects of countertransference, countertransference can have a positive impact on the counseling experience if the counselor (supervisee) has the ability to identify and manage it. However, when left unaddressed, unmanaged countertransference manifests in a variety of ways which result in inappropriate behavior via over involvement or under involvement with the client (Burwell-Pender & Helinski, 2008). Behaviors indicating over involvement include an inability to be objective, excessive praise towards the client, excessive care-taking of the client, feelings of attraction towards the client, or a desire to bend the rules for the client (Burwell-Pender & Helsinki, 2008). On the other hand, behaviors indicating under involvement included avoiding specific client issues, feelings of boredom, and feelings of disconnection (Gelso & Hayes, 2007).

Gelso, Latts, Gomez, and Fassinger (2002) hypothesized that there are five attributes contributing to managed or unmanaged countertransference. These include self insight, self integration, anxiety management, empathy, and conceptualizing skills. Self insight refers to a therapist's awareness of his or her personal feelings and the energy that drives those feelings

whereas self integration refers to the therapist's understanding of the boundaries between himself or herself and the client. Anxiety management concerns a therapist's ability to manage his or her anxiety, while empathy refers to the therapist's ability to intuit the client's emotional world. Finally, conceptualizing skills involve the therapist's ability to conceptualize the therapeutic dynamic between the therapist and the client as well as the client's dynamics in session. Gelso, Latts, Gomez, and Fassinger (2002) conducted a study including 32 doctoral students enrolled in a practicum course to examine these five attributes of countertransference. Doctoral supervisors were also included in the study and met with the students weekly. The semester-long study required that students complete packets of measures assessing client functioning, client outcomes, and countertransference behaviors in the supervisees. The clients of those supervisees who managed their feelings of countertransference exhibited improvement at the end of therapy. Of the five countertransference attributes, self-integration, anxiety management, and conceptualizing skills were positively correlated with positive client outcomes. In a later text, Gelso and Hayes (2007) noted that countertransference can be either managed or unmanaged. Managed countertransference implies that the five attributes hypothesized were used to their fullest potential, whereas unmanaged countertransference means the opposite. In a study regarding countertransference training, CITs identified their programs as inadequate in terms of addressing the experience and management of countertransference (Pope & Tabachnick, 1993). Tobin (2003) highlighted the point that there is a lack of research examining the use of training models designed for CITs to handle this phenomenon.

The research concerning countertransference makes evident the need for educating CITs about this therapeutic phenomenon. Supervisors are encouraged to expose their supervisees to identifying and working through countertransference feelings given their impact on the

therapeutic relationship and process (Burwell-Pender & Helsinki, 2008; Schaeffer, 2007). Burwell-Pender and Helsinki (2008) encouraged supervisors to be transparent with their supervisees and model to them their own ability to share their experience and awareness of feelings. Given the benefits of self-awareness, specifically in regard to tempering countertransference, it is necessary for programs to implement ways to address this during practicum and internship experiences.

Awareness Wheel

The Awareness Wheel (the Wheel) has been used as a communication model for couples since the 1970s. Research on the use of this model of communication has been conducted on couples since the early 1980s. Findings suggest the use of this communication model improves the quality of the couple's relationship, improves their problem solving abilities, and has a positive impact on communication within the family ("Research", n.d.). The Awareness Wheel has also been used in university settings and taught at the university level since its inception in the 1970s (S. Miller, personal communication, August 15, 2013). The Awareness Wheel is a tool used for focusing and explicating a person's experience of a situation or issue (Miller & Miller, 2011a). The Awareness Wheel was developed in an attempt to help people gain self-awareness and communicate their experiences effectively by providing them with an atmosphere of support and understanding during interactions with others as well as by providing an opportunity for understanding self in relation to issues (Miller & Miller, 2011a). According to Miller and Miller (2011a),

> Building the capacity to be self aware empowers the individual to be proactive rather than
> reactive, to care rather than harm, and to focus personal power with thoughtful, consistent

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purpose. The sense of being an effective self creates respect and integrity both from within and from others. (p. IV-8)

It is ethically necessary and in the best interest of both the client and the counselor for the counselor to possess skills such as proactivity, care, appropriate use of personal power, and consistency discussed by Miller and Miller (2011a). The ACA Code of Ethics (2005) supports this idea, as evidenced by eight sections devoted to these characteristics which provide a template for consistency and proactivity. The ACA Code of Ethics (2005) is accepted as the standard of behavior required by all professional counselors. These eight sections include: (a) the counseling relationship, (b) confidentiality, privileged communication, and privacy, (c) professional responsibility, (d) relationships with other professionals, (e) evaluation, assessment, and interpretation, (f) supervision, training, and teaching, (g) research and publication, and (h) resolving ethical issues (ACA, 2005). Awareness and ethical behavior are therefore intimately related since the capacity to be self aware allows practitioners to be prepared when working with their clients. Given this, providing an opportunity for CITs to develop these skills is necessary in counselor education programs.

The Awareness Wheel is divided into five distinct areas, or zones, that encompass a person's experience: sensory data, thoughts, feelings, desires (or intentions), and actions (Miller & Miller, 2011). These five zones are also based in psychological theories: perceptual, cognitive, affective, motivational, and cognitive-behavioral (Miller& Miller, 2011a). The Awareness Wheel provides a structured model for communicating one's own experience in a full and complete manner. In addition, a facilitative portion of the Awareness Wheel, the Listening Cycle, provides structure for a second person to assist an individual using the wheel to clarify their experience (Miller & Miller, 2011b). The Listening Cycle is a crucial aspect of the Awareness Wheel. Miller

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and Miller (2011a) described it as "a guide for tracking someone else's disclosure" (p.IV-30). The Listening Cycle provides an opportunity for the listener to practice dispassionate empathy. Miller and Miller (2011a) commented on the relationship between the Awareness Wheel and the Listening Cycle, and stated that, "With practice, this interaction around the zones serves to build both self awareness and other awareness simultaneously" (p. IV-30).

The theoretical basis for the Awareness Wheel can be found in the combination of systemic and communication theories. According to systemic theory, "all relationships can be examined and understood in terms of a common set of system properties" (Miller & Miller, 2011a, p. IV-3). Systems are "moving, living entities, balancing stability with change in these properties" (Miller & Miller, 2011a, p. IV-5). Systemic communication, therefore, can be understood as "the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the system members toward each other in maintaining stability or bringing change communicates the dynamics of their relationship" (Miller & Miller, 2011a, p. IV-5). Utilizing the Awareness Wheel in the context of group supervision implies systemic change in a variety of modalities (systems) to include (but not limited to) the supervisor-supervisee relationship, peer relationships, group supervision, the client-counselor relationship, and the personal relationships of the supervisees.

Sensory Data

Every human being receives information the same way, through seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. This information informs the sensory data portion of the Awareness Wheel. Building on the five senses, a person can receive information from sources such as time, surroundings, and context. In essence, sensory data includes the facts of the experience, which can be either internal or external (Miller & Miller, 2011b). An internal fact or source could be a memory a person experiences or a physical sensation, whereas an external fact

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or source could be another person's facial expression or even the time or date of the experience (Miller & Miller, 2011b).

Thoughts

Thoughts come from the meaning or interpretation one makes from sensory data. Thoughts can be divided into a multitude of forms, such as beliefs, assessments, assumptions, interpretations, or expectations (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Miller and Miller (2011b) pointed out that thoughts are interpretations of the sensory data and may not always be logical interpretations. However, what's important about the Awareness Wheel is that it clarifies a person's own perspective of an issue or experience. For example, from a clinical perspective, thoughts can be understood as the clinician's assessment (diagnosis) of the client or the clinician's interpretation of the client issue. Thoughts significantly affect decision-making and behavior and therefore need to be identified and clarified (Miller & Miller, 2011b).

Feelings

Feelings are automatic responses to interpretations of sensory data (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Miller and Miller (2011b) asserted that emotions can be "a reliable reading of your situation" (p. 54). One of the most difficult aspects of identifying emotions is that sometimes people claim their thoughts as emotions (Miller & Miller, 2011b). One example of this occurs when an individual says, "I feel betrayed." Rather than being a feeling, "betrayed" is an interpretation of the sensory data. If someone thinks they are betrayed, they might feel sad, angry, or afraid. Miller and Miller (2011b) stated, "confusing the two limits the clarity of your awareness and the effectiveness of your communication" (p. 55). Distinguishing the difference between these two zones provides a significant amount of clarity about a situation.

Intentions

Also known as wants, intentions indicate the person's agenda or goal as it relates to the experience at hand (Miller & Miller, 2011b). The intentions portion of the Awareness Wheel focuses on personal wants as well as wants for the other person. It is incredibly important to consider wants for the other because it allows for a "foundation of collaboration" as described by Miller and Miller (2011b, p. 58). By building a foundation of collaboration, opportunities for developing solutions are easier to come by because both parties are considered (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Additionally, it tempers the tendency for a self-centered way of solving problems. That is, if the Awareness Wheel focused solely on wants for self, there is no opportunity for collaboration. It is also necessary to consider wants or intentions for others as it tempers against a one-sided relationship or narcissistic tendencies (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Miller and Miller (2011a) stated, "in intimate relationships, consideration builds the foundation for trust, commitment, and safety and empowers the relationship to become a source of encouragement and joy" (p. V-9).

Actions

The actions zone of the Awareness Wheel encompasses past, present, and future verbal and nonverbal behavior (Miller & Miller, 2011b). This portion of the Wheel fosters responsibility, as it requires the person to be accountable for what they did in the past, what they will do in the future, and what they are currently doing. Additionally, this zone allows for the person to verbalize their commitment to a future action.

Listening Cycle

A portion of the Awareness Wheel is devoted to the Listening Cycle. The Listening Cycle is a map that provides structure for a secondary person to assist the primary person in

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understanding their experience and aid them in their walk through the Awareness Wheel. The

Listening Cycle promotes an awareness of others, which is a vital component to developing

relationships (Miller & Miller, 2011a). According to Millerand Miller (2011a), " . . . disclosing

accurate self awareness and listening attentively to understand another creates potential for

interactional process with incredible power for generating trust and productivity, as well as

intimacy and joy, in relationships" (p. IV-29). Miller and Miller (2011b) highlighted that the

importance of the Listening Cycle is simply to understand, comprehend, and hear a person in a

pure way. The Listening Cycle creates an opportunity for consideration and collaboration

because it provides the listener with a way to communicate and explore without focusing on their

own interpretation but rather on the person sharing their experience.

The Listening Cycle is divided into five parts: attend, acknowledge, invite, summarize,

and ask (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Attending requires the listener to observe, track, and note (but

not verbalize) any missing parts of the wheel. Acknowledging is a simple two- or three-word

response that indicates to the other that they are following and tracking the conversation.

Examples of this include "you are sad," "it is hard," "seems tough," "you are confused." Inviting

is a short, open ended statement encouraging the primary person to continue sharing. Examples

include "say more," "tell me more," "keep going." Summarizing involves a brief summarization

of what has been stated by the individual on the Wheel. When summarization occurs, no

additional interpretations should be added; rather, it is a summarization of what is being told to

the listener. Asking is the opportunity for the listener to explore the experience of the person on

the Awareness Wheel. The best way for this portion of the Listening Cycle to be carried out is to

ask open-ended questions, which aim to fill in any missing pieces of the Awareness Wheel or

clarify aspects of the Wheel.

Experiential Learning and the Awareness Wheel

Experiential learning theory is based on Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget's work surrounding learning processes (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). These researchers noted that active interaction with one's environment is an integral aspect of learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In a study utilizing experiential exercises for the purpose of suicide prevention and gatekeeping training, the participants noted that those experiential exercises which focused on empathic awareness and responding helped the participants (in this case, resident advisors) develop and improve their crisis responding skills (Pasco, Wallack, Sartin, & Dayton, 2012).

The Awareness Wheel is a structured model utilized for developing self-awareness (Miller & Miller, 2011b). Additionally, it aids in communicating awareness to self and others. (Miller & Miller, 2011b). One option of the Awareness Wheel is to utilize large skills mats that outline the five zones of the Awareness Wheel and the five areas of the Listening Cycle. These mats are approximately three feet by three feet and made of canvas with the zones of the Listening Cycle and the Awareness Wheel printed on them. The purpose of utilizing the large skills mats is to provide an experiential way to develop skills for self-awareness, which in turn will strengthen the neural connections in the brain (Miller & Miller, 2011a). According to Miller and Miller (2011a), as we habitually engage in some behavior, the stronger those neural connections become in the brain. When conscious, unconscious, adaptive, or maladaptive responses recur consistently, their development is fortified in the human brain. The process is analogous to exercise in that the more you work an exercise movement, regardless of whether or not the movement is functional, the muscles used to create that movement become bigger, stronger, and accustomed to the movement.

Summary

This study focused on the lived experiences of counselors-in-training who participated in a group supervision that used the Awareness Wheel. This chapter outlined research that supports the use of group supervision as a positive and helpful experience for CITs. Additionally, this chapter pointed to the need for qualitative research in order to facilitate further exploration of group supervision. In the review of the literature, the management of countertransference emerged as an important issue to address in supervision with CITS. The importance of awareness was highlighted. The following chapters detail the methodology, findings, and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this exploration was: What are the lived experiences of masters-level counselors-in-training (CITs) who participate in group supervision that utilizes the Awareness Wheel as communication tool? Specific sub-questions include: How do counselors-in-training: (a) describe the experience of communicating using the Awareness Wheel? (b) describe any impact of using the Awareness Wheel on case conceptualization? and (c) describe any impact of using the Miller Awareness Wheel on their development as counselors or persons?

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

There has been a growth in the research on group supervision; however, there is a call for more exploration in an effort to identify concepts within this phenomenon to study (Linton & Hedstrom, 2006). Research regarding interventions or models used within supervision are also limited; thus, there is a need to study the implementation of models and interventions in the group supervision process. Exploring the lived experiences of CITs who participated in group supervision using the Awareness Wheel is a first step in adding to the extant literature and knowledge about group supervision.

Qualitative research explores the meaning individuals attribute to an identified issue (Creswell, 2007). The inductive nature of this paradigm allows for constructs to develop from the bottom up (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative methods are appropriate for studying phenomenon where there is limited information because qualitative research is concerned with exploration and discovery (Patton, 2002). Thus, a qualitative approach was appropriate. Phenomenology,

specifically, was chosen as the methodological approach for this study since phenomenology is aimed at understanding the lived experiences of a group of people who experience an even or situation. Utilizing a research approach that was inductive in nature by beginning with observations and gradually finding general patterns, a trademark of qualitative research, was necessary for this study (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological data analysis steps were implemented to explore the participants' experiences. Imperative to this process is going through the data several times (Creswell 2007).

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2007) described the researcher as the key instrument in qualitative studies. Throughout the study, I lived different roles, which included group supervisor, observer, and co-creator. As a group supervisor, I facilitated the group supervision session. This required me to be attentive to group dynamics, ensuring the group was a safe place to share and moving the group through any impasses. I acted as teacher, counselor, and consultant (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). This required me to provide psyhoeducation regarding certain clinical issues that were brought up, address any behaviors or thoughts of the CITs which were impeding progress with their clients or in the group, and provide assistance to more advanced CITs when working with difficult clients. It is important to note that the evaluative nature inherent in supervision was limited in this modality.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC-S), I was required to uphold ethical and legal standards related to my license. What made this experience different was that I did not report to anyone directly regarding CITs progress in the group, a typical process in an academic setting during the clinical portion of the CITs program, and did not provide evaluation. I was not serving as a site supervisor or instructor. Had there been ethical concerns regarding the

CIT, I would have been required to report them to the appropriate person, however no such issue occurred. I did meet regularly with my immediate supervisor and dissertation chair to discuss the study. I also made sure to relay any client issues that were brought up during supervision to the doctoral supervisor at the CTC. Group supervision participants were aware of my responsibility to report ethical concerns and to provide information to the doctoral supervisor at the CTC; however, they were also aware that I was not evaluating tapes or providing information to faculty instructors for grading purposes. This group mimicked a more natural experience of supervision post-graduation.

As an observer and co-creator I was attentive to the group supervision experience during each supervision session. I observed interactions between group members taking note of verbal and nonverbal behaviors. I documented my experiences and my reactions to the group supervision sessions in an effort to fully understand the participants' experiences. I participated in the process by using the Awareness Wheel when communicating with the group members making me co-creator of the process. Additionally, I remained transparent and open about my interpretations of my observations during group supervision. At times, I shared these interpretations using the Awareness Wheel, another instance of co-creating.

Study Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants and the site of the study as this type of sampling lends itself to exploring information-rich cases and a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Because the choice of site where the study was completed provided easy access to study participants who met criterion for the phenomenon being explored, the sample was also one of convenience (Patton, 2002). The research participants were master's-level CITs who were enrolled in either Practicum or

Internship courses, fulfilling their course requirements for the clinical portion of their program. The CITs were completing their clinical work at the on-campus training clinic at a CACREP-accredited university located in the southern region of the United States. The CITs were introduced to the study at the Fall 2013 semester clinic orientation. CITs were not required to participate in the study. All participated on a volunteer basis and chose to be a part of the study. Six CITs participated in the study from start to finish.

All six participants were female master's-level students. Five of the six participants ranged in age from 22-25 years old, with the sixth participant being 44 years old. Fifty percent of the participants were non-Hispanic Caucasian, with the remaining fifty percent being Hispanic. Three of the participants were in their first semester of clinical work (practicum) and the remaining three were in their third and final semester of clinical work (second internship). Four of the participants had earned a bachelors degree in psychology, one participant had earned her bachelor's degree in journalism, and one participant declined to respond.

Setting

The site at which the study was conducted was the Counseling and Training Clinic (CTC) located on campus at a CACREP-accredited university in the southern portion of the United States. The CTC is part of the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department and is supervised by a faculty member who operates as Clinic Director. Additionally, two doctoral students were assigned to directly assist the Clinic Director in supervision of CITs and administrative duties related to the clinic. During the Fall 2013 semester, the number of CITs overall providing counseling at the CTC varied from 16-17, and the number of doctoral students providing supervision varied from 2-7.

The supervision group met every Tuesday for eight weeks from 9am to 11am. The group met in one of the more sizeable counseling rooms in the CTC. Prior to the beginning of the group session I would set up the room so as to facilitate a group supervision format. The chairs were set up in a circle with two large skills mats outlining the Awareness Wheel and Listening Cycle. Group supervision lasted between one to one and a half hours each week. At the conclusion of each session the participants spent time journaling.

Group Supervision Process

Group supervision met weekly for eight weeks. Two hours was allotted for supervision. On average, group supervision lasted between one and one and a half hours, with the remaining time used for journaling. The first session focused on teaching the Awareness Wheel. Part of this discussion included the introduction of the large skills mats that were placed in the center of the supervision circle. This portion of the group supervision lasted about 40 minutes. The large skills mats are a trademark of the Awareness Wheel and it was suggested the CITs utilize the mats when presenting their cases or issues. Additionally, I discussed with the CITs the purpose of supervision and encouraged them to share openly regarding any issues with clients or professional development. The remainder of the first session focused on presenting cases and learning how to use the Awareness Wheel.

In session two, the CITs were given their own training manual for the Awareness Wheel. Poster boards were created which outlined each of the different zones of the Awareness Wheel and Listening Cycle and were set alongside the large skills mats to better aid the CITs as they navigated the mats. The typical group supervision session started with the CITs sitting in a circle with the two large skills mats in the center of the circle. One CIT would present a case or issue by standing on the Awareness Wheel mat while another CIT would stand on the Listening Cycle

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mat. The CITs observing were allowed to provide feedback even if they were not on the mats. They followed the principles of the Awareness Wheel when giving their feedback. At the conclusion of each session, the students responded to prompts (Appendix 2) in their journals. The journals were returned to me at the end of each session and kept in a locked cabinet inside the CTC. There was no time limit designated for writing in journals.

Data Collection

Creswell (2007) stated that "the backbone of qualitative research is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information" (p. 43). Sources of data included participant journals, field notes and researcher observations, interviews, field notes made by the external interviewer, and a focus group. Participants responded to journal prompts after each group meeting. Throughout the study I took field notes and documented my observations and personal reflections after each group meeting except for one. Following the eight weeks of group supervision, individual interviews were conducted by an external interviewer for the purpose of providing the participant with an opportunity to discuss their experience without feeling pressured to respond positively due to my presence. Interviews were taped, and the external interviewer also took notes during each individual interview. Following the completion of individual interviews, I conducted a focus group. The external reviewer attended this group in order to take notes and observe. In addition, the focus group was audio taped and I took notes during the group.

Participant Journals

The main focus of this study was to capture the lived experience of CITs using the Awareness Wheel in group supervision. Moustakas (1994) stated, "Individual perceptions, memories, judgments, reflections are core and figural in our developing understanding of things

and people" (p. 94). Participant journals were used to capture those memories, judgments, and reflections immediately upon having experienced the supervision group. Each CIT was provided a spiral notebook at the beginning of the study. Upon completion of each group supervision session, the CITs spent time responding to journal prompts which had been stapled to the inside cover of each spiral notebook. The prompts were: (1) My experience of today's group supervision was . . . , (2) How did today's group supervision impact your conceptualization of clients or cases?, and (3) How did today's group supervision impact your conceptualization of yourself as a counselor? Counselors-in-training spent an average of 15-20 minutes on average writing in their journals after each supervision session. In an effort to maintain each participant's confidentiality and to maintain a level of trustworthiness in the data collection portion of the study, each CIT was asked to pick a pseudonym to be put on their journal. The journals were returned to me at the end of each session and stored in a locked cabinet in the CTC. I did not read journals until the end of the eight weeks.

Observation and Field Notes

Creswell (2007) discussed the important and arduous task of observation and emphasized the need for the researcher to attend to intuitive thoughts and hunches and document them for the purpose of protecting against any type of deception. Following each group supervision session, I spent 10-20 minutes writing my own thoughts, feelings, and observations about the session. Additionally, I documented any administrative details I believed to be noteworthy such as a participant missing the session or the group beginning later than scheduled. This practice helped when reviewing the observations and field notes and recalling events that occurred during the study. Finally, other observations I documented included group dynamics that appeared to be inadvertently affecting the group supervision process, process-oriented trends in each session,

my own reactions to the participants, and my own thoughts and feelings about the process overall.

Individual Interviews

The purpose of interviewing is to discover from the participant information that cannot be learned through the observation process (Patton, 2002). Interviewing allows the interviewer to enter into the world of the participant (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews were conducted following the final group supervision session. An external interviewer completed each of the interviews. Participants contacted the external interviewer and interview times were scheduled based on the availability of both the participants and the interviewer. Each interview lasted between 15 and 29 minutes and took place at the CTC. The participants utilized the same pseudonyms used for their reflective journal. Two of the participants who used numbers as their pseudonyms for their journals chose names for their interviews. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 3) was used to provide uniformity across interviews while also allowing for some flexibility to ask follow-up questions in an effort to explore the experience of the CITs. The interviews were audio taped, and the external interviewer also took notes during the interviews.

Focus Group

Upon completion of the interviews a focus group was conducted which included the participants, external interviewer, and myself. Focus groups are beneficial for providing the participants with an opportunity hear one another's experience and add more information than they might have shared in the individual interview (Creswell, 2007). Participants have the opportunity to hear what others say and then add their own thoughts that might not have been considered in an individual interview (Patton, 2002).

During the focus group, I asked a series of questions which I developed following an initial analysis of the data from journals and individual interviews. All six CIT's and the external interviewer were present. The focus group was audio recorded. Both the external interviewer and I took notes on the process and documented anything the CITs stated that explicated their experience of group supervision using the Awareness Wheel. Participants were encouraged to share openly regarding the questions I had, clarify any misinterpretations I might have made, and elaborate on the process overall.

Data Transcription Methods

Both individual interviews and the focus group audiotapes were transcribed following the completion of data collection. Patton (2002) says of recording interviews, "Nothing can substitute for these data: the actual things said by real people" (p. 380). I chose to complete the transcription on my own in an effort to become fully immersed in my data (Patton, 2002). I started by listening to each interview and the focus group, repeating it slowly, typing it, replaying it, and typing it again. I transcribed one full interview in this manner. I found this to be time consuming and I had difficulty being present in the data as I was so focused on stopping, typing, replaying, and typing again. I chose to use Dragon Dictate software for the remainder of the interviews. First, I would listen to the interview, and then I would speak into the Dragon microphone what I just heard. This decision saved time and allowed me to listen to bigger portions of the interview at a time and gain a better sense of what participants were saying. Once interviews were transcribed, I verified the accuracy of transcriptions by listening to the audiotapes and reading the transcriptions.

Member Checks

According to Creswell (2007), member checking involves "taking data, analysis, interpretations, and conclusion s back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy of the account" (p. 208). Once the transcriptions were complete, each participant was contacted via email to review the transcription. The purpose of this was to ensure I accurately transcribed the participant's interview and to add or correct any information in it, thus adequately reflecting their experience. This procedure was utilized so as to contribute to the credibility of the study. In addition, initial themes were presented to the focus group in order to add to or correct my initial analysis.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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Moustakas (1994) stated, "Organization of data begins when the primary researcher places transcribed interviews before him or her and studies the material through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis" p. 118). According to Creswell (2007), going through the data several times is imperative for analyzing data from a phenomenological perspective. Due to the different sources of data, it was imperative to implement appropriate organization in an effort to ensure a precise audit trail. Each participant's interview was printed on a specific paper color. Copies of the journals were made and after units of meaning were identified from the journals, they were typed and printed out on color of paper assigned to them. The focus group was given its own separate color of paper as well.

I first reviewed the interviews and journal entries and identified initial themes emerging from the data. These initial themes helped create questions for the focus group and provided some direction to the focus group. Upon completion of the focus group I went through a process called horizontalization in which I went through all the data sources (journal entries, transcribed

interviews and focus groups) and identified units of meaning. Once units of meaning were identified, clusters of meaning were developed and textural descriptions, which explicate the participants' experience, were established from the clusters of meaning.

Horizontalization is a process whereby every piece of data pertinent to the topic of interest is regarded as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994). This process of data analysis began once I transcribed the semi-structured interviews and focus group and reviewed each of them along with the journal entries. I initially read through each source of data fairly quickly so as to get an overall feel for the data. I then went back through the data again and identified words or phrases that seemed important. I underlined each of these statements with a pencil and wrote notes in the margins about the statement. I then went through the data a third time to ensure I accounted for all phrases and statements that seemed important. I went back through the data looking at the statements and phrases I underlined and then identified units of meaning emerging from these statements. Units of meaning emerge from the statements highlighted in the horizontalization process (Moustakas, 1994).

Once I completed this process, I extracted each word or phrase I had underlined and typed it on a separate piece of paper with a code that identified the source of the word or phrase. I then printed out the words and phrases and cut the printed material so that each word or phrase was on a separate piece of paper. This process allowed me to sort and re-sort the data into clusters of meaning.

Clusters of meaning are categories or themes emerging from the identified meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). By extracting the words and phrases from the transcript, typing them on a separate piece of paper, and cutting each of the phrases out, I was able to move the data around, looking at each of the meaning units and placing it into a cluster with other identified meaning

units. This initial grouping resulted in approximately 34 categories. I took a break from the analysis and then reviewed the initial categories and their content. This resulted in moving some of the initial meaning units to other categories. Once I was satisfied with the broad categories, I went through the data and categories again and identified overarching themes into which other categories were collapsed. This process of re-examination was repeated until I was satisfied that the overarching themes were reflective of the participants' experience.

Once the categories and themes were identified, I reviewed the data in each cluster. This allowed me to write a description of each cluster, called a "textural description" of what the participants experienced (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Both the clusters of meaning and textural descriptions make up the themes of the phenomenon.

Data Organization

Given the significant amount of data, organization was imperative so as to ensure a precise audit trail. Once the study ended, and the journals were returned to me, I made copies of them and kept them in a secure location at my house. I chose to make copies, as it was easier to read through the data and make notations without ruining the original copy. Each of the participants' interviews, using their pseudonyms, were given a paper color and the transcriptions were printed out on their specific color of paper. Once units of meaning were identified across all data sources, they were typed out and printed on the appropriate color of paper. I then cut them out so as to allow for easier handling of them. Because each participant had an assigned color to the pseudonym I was able to trace back which statements belonged to the specific participant. Additionally, each statement had the page number of which it was found on, and a "J" was used to note if the statement came from the participant's journal.

The focus group was transcribed; however, the transcription does not include names or pseudonyms of the speakers. Initially this was frustrating as I was unable to identify who said what. However, the benefit of this was it allowed the students to share openly during the group since I did not attempt to identify participants with pseudonyms. The focus group was transcribed and printed on a different color of paper so I was able to recognize that it came from the group rather than a specific participant.

Trustworthiness

A number of methods were utilized to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility demonstrates that research is conducted in a way that the phenomenon under consideration is accurately described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the purposes of this study, triangulation of data, member checking, and the use of an external interviewer were used to demonstrate credibility.

Triangulation is the use of multiple different sources for the purpose of providing support for common themes across data sources (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2009) stated, "If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding validity to the study" (p.191). In this study I chose to use three different sources of data to accomplish this task. Participant journals, individual interviews, and one focus group provided different modalities for collecting data.

Two instances of member checking occurred during this study. First, the focus group was designed to discuss emerging themes, elucidate any areas of data that were unclear to me, and ensure I accurately reflected the experience of the participants. Once the interviews were transcribed, a copy of the interview was emailed to each participant. They were asked to review

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it for the purpose of accuracy and the option of providing any additional comments they believed they needed to expand upon to accurately capture their experience.

During the eight weeks of group supervision I kept a personal journal reflecting on group process and taking note of any questions for my supervisor. At the end of the eight week group supervision sessions, I became immersed in the data. I read the CITs' journals and listened to the transcribed interviews for the purposes of discerning reactions and identifying any initial themes. I personally transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and focus group and reviewed the transcriptions repeatedly. In addition to reviewing the transcriptions, I re-read all data multiple times, identifying units of meaning and then clusters of meaning. I spent extensive time engaging with the data.

Using an external interviewer strengthened the level of trustworthiness in this study. The external interviewer holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education, maintains a license as an LPC-Intern, and has completed qualitative research coursework. She is required by her license to abide by ethical codes of conduct regarding research and confidentiality and has had training in supervision and counselor education. The addition of an external interviewer allowed for the participants to have a space in which they could share openly without the primary researcher being present. Additionally, her participation as an external interviewer during the focus group allowed for an objective observer to note the nuances of the focus group.

In addition to multiple data sources from participants, I maintained my own journal throughout the study helped bracket my experience and clarify my own bias regarding the study and the phenomenon being explored. Creswell (2009) highlights the importance of clarifying researcher bias and states, "This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate with the readers" (p. 192). In addition, identification of my personal experiences and

biases allows the reader to assess whether analysis of data is overly influenced by researcher bias, and provides information useful to determining the dependability of the findings.

Prolonged and Persistent Engagement

During the eight weeks of group supervision I kept a person journal reflecting on group process and taking note of any questions for my supervisor. At the end of the eight week group supervision sessions, I became immersed in the data. I read the CITs' journals and listened to the transcribed interviews for the purposes of discerning reactions and identifying any initial themes. I personally transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and focus group and reviewed the transcriptions repeatedly. In addition to reviewing the transcriptions, I re-read all data multiple times, identifying units of meaning and then clusters of meaning. I spent extensive time engaging with the data.

I also met regularly with my dissertation chairperson to reflect on the supervision process and later, during data analysis, to discuss each step of the analysis process. She served as an auditor of the process, verifying that full engagement was present in each part of the analysis process. She also listened and reflected my ideas during each re-visioning of the major themes, making suggestions and asking questions as needed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine CITs' experience of group supervision while implementing the Awareness Wheel. Participant journals, semi-structured interviews, and one focus group were used to grasp the experience of the CITs throughout the study. Five overarching themes were identified using the data collected from participants over the course of eight supervision groups, individual interviews, and one focus group. These themes included: (1) counselor awareness, with the subtheme of counselor awareness facilitating skill development; (2) confidence; (3) consistent process, with subthemes of clarity and the Awareness Wheel; (4) learning; and (5) togetherness. Finally, a sixth theme that was found throughout the entirety of the data and which ran throughout all other themes was transparency. The table below provides a graphic representation using the initials for each theme.
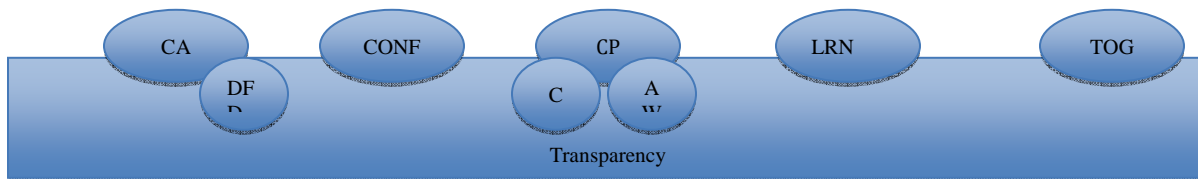
Lens of the Researcher

Creswell (2007) stated,

> All researchers bring values to a study . . . In a qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value -laden nature of information gathered from the field. (p. 18)

It is important to explicate my values and beliefs about the Awareness Wheel and counseling in general because I believe it will help the reader understand why I am so admittedly passionate about the topics.

I always tell people I have been empathic and attentive to other people's feelings since a young age because I am a twin. Twins are designed to do that. We worry about each other, we care about each other, and we *feel* for each other. I grew up with a crash course in countertransference because I shared a womb with someone else. Since we were little, my twin sister and I have been empathically aware of one another. When she was having a difficult time, I would feel it. When I was sad, she would experience it. We learned about feelings very early on. When I was growing up, my mother knew I would be a counselor. A story she shares with me often occurred when I was no more than eight years old and my family was having a discussion. I contributed to the discussion, and at the end of my contribution asked, "May I have feedback please?" Although it is a running joke in the family, I think it is key to understanding my own involvement in the process and the study.

My mother is a counselor. She learned the Awareness Wheel and used it with all of us. As a result, I indirectly learned the Awareness Wheel as a child. I have been exposed to this communication style since my teenage years and believe it has contributed significantly to my work as a counselor. Additionally, I have a degree in theology. During my theological studies I found the philosophical and systemic facets of theology to be the most interesting as they

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provided an academic rationale for principles that are difficult to grasp for the secular person. I found these philosophical and systemic facets resembled the Awareness Wheel. For me, the Awareness Wheel has been a tool I have been exposed to throughout my life and I believe has facilitated my interest in both counseling and theology.

After I graduated with my master's degree in counseling, I still felt unprepared for handling cases on my own. I struggled in identifying a theoretical perspective, and although trained in postmodern approaches, never really found my niche with these theories. My first job as an LPC-Intern was at a residential treatment center for those suffering from substance use disorders. I found myself drowning in the severe mental health issues my clients presented. I began using elements of the Awareness Wheel in many different ways in an effort to navigate the confusion and find my footing. I started by conceptualizing the client issues with the Wheel internally and this evolved into using elements of the Wheel as an internal compass in session with clients. The Wheel helped me stay grounded with difficult cases, deal with my own emotions as well as the client's, and confront clients in a way that was kind and accountable.

I have also used elements of the Awareness Wheel in supervision. A portion of my experience as an LPC-Supervisor has been in a clinical setting with CITs. This modality required students to work with co-counselors, monitor live sessions, and receive one hour of supervision a week. In this capacity, I utilized elements of the Awareness Wheel to provide feedback to the CITs. Often the CITs would come to me with concerns regarding their co-counselors. In instances such as these I would encourage the CIT to speak directly with their co-counselor and would encourage them to use the elements of the Awareness Wheel when discussing their issue with their peer. I would help them identify the sensory data about the situation. Then I would help them identify their thoughts, feelings, and wants (for self and their co-counselor). I then

would encourage them to commit to an action that would facilitate resolution of the issue. Often the CIT would tell me the process was helpful because it allowed them an opportunity to share their experience with their peer in a way that kept them accountable for their feelings and thoughts while also considering the other person. I began to use the Wheel regularly in supervision to assist my students in handling difficult cases. Watching my students as they developed self awareness was a fulfilling experience and one that I have not forgotten. It prompted me to change my dissertation topic completely because I could see the Awareness Wheel working for others.

The Awareness Wheel has helped me throughout my entire life. Since I was 23 years old it has contributed to my ability to communicate clearly as a counselor and later as a supervisor. Because of my personal and professional experiences with the Wheel, I had high expectations that the Awareness Wheel could assist students as they experience transference and countertransference and help them recognize how to manage both as they develop their counseling skills and counseling styles in group supervision. I believed this study would be another step towards positively affecting the process of group supervision.

Counselor Awareness

All participants described a feeling or sense of counselor awareness. The participants described counselor awareness as the ability to be self aware, gain awareness, and be mindful. Statements such as "more aware," "has renewed my awareness," and "really understand what's going on" point to this. The data revealed awareness was a newfound attentiveness to and recognition of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, actions, roles, data, and perspectives of the counselor and the client. Counselor awareness included development of empathy, being able to understand the role of the counselor and the role of the client, identifying countertransference,

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taking into account the perspective of others, and recognizing counselor issues. The subtheme of

counselor awareness facilitating skill development explicated the overarching theme of counselor

awareness and the ways that counselor awareness was experienced. Skill development facilitated

by counselor awareness included statements regarding the ability to separate thoughts from

feelings, the ability to track and attend to conversations more efficiently, the capacity to gather

information, and the competence to work through issues.

All participants discussed the sense of counselor awareness extensively. Counselor

awareness encompassed awareness of the client; awareness of themselves; the role and

perspective of the counselor; and awareness of self, including emotional responsibility, instances

of countertransference, and the development of empathy. Carmen stated, "Personally, I am more

aware of my thoughts and my feelings." Maude claimed, "I have an increased sense of personal

awareness because of today's group."

Experiences of self-awareness that involved distinguishing self from clients seemed to

uncover hurdles in the counseling process that could not otherwise be identified. For example,

when talking about separating herself from the client, Ashley stated, "I realized most of the time

the wants that I thought I wanted for the client weren't really wants for the client, they were

wants for myself." Eleanor discussed how the experience helped her identify one of her own

issues in the counseling process. She said, "I have a tendency to take on the feelings of my more

difficult clients, although this helped me find my own truth." Bethany also commented on her

own self-awareness stating, "I gained a better understanding of my own thoughts and emotions

regarding my client."

Five of the six participants commented on their own reactions when working with

difficult clients. This recognition was facilitated by self awareness. For example, Carmen

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discussed a difficult client and her tendency to blame herself for the client's behavior. Carmen was struggling while with working with this client and found she was accepting responsibility for her client's behavior. Her awareness assisted her in not taking responsibility for her client's behavior. She stated: "I was able to realize that disorders have certain characteristics that manifest during session and those characteristics are not about me—they are the disorder." Bethany also described an incident in which her newfound awareness helped her identify a maladaptive way of working with a difficult client. She stated, "I realized that by trying to avoid a specific behavior, I was actually feeding into it."

Participants discussed counselor awareness in regard to perspective and perception. Being able to manage one's own perceptions and recognize the client's perspective enhanced counselor awareness. Sarah wrote, " . . . it helped me understand them a little better . . . it gave me a different perspective of looking at the client/issues which helps me progress with them." During the focus group, one participant commented that the experience helped her manage her own perception of the client and the issue at hand.

Counselor awareness incorporated a sense of empathy on the part of the CITs. All six participants described a sense of empathy that was developed throughout the study process. Although the participants did not describe how they knew they were more empathic, what emerged from the data was many of the participants noted they were becoming more empathic. As CITs described their increase in awareness (counselor awareness), they simultaneously discussed empathic ability. Ashley described her responsibility as a counselor and recognized she needed to be more aware of the client's needs, indicating a building of empathic awareness. She stated, "I was able to see that my client needs to be confronted; however, I need to really

think about what's in her best interest." Maude discussed her experience of building empathy as it related to becoming aware of herself. She stated:

> I think it has helped me realize all those different parts of me and all those different parts of my client and it makes it, I guess, easier to relate almost because I can see that, I think it helps to build empathy . . . So I think it has made me more empathetic, and being able to just see like the different parts of a client when they come in.

Sarah stated, "Today's supervision made me feel empathy towards my client and it helped me understand them a little better with the help of this group."

Finally, all six participants discussed awareness of their own issues that inadvertently seep into the counseling or supervision process in some manner. As CITs developed greater counselor awareness, they disclosed the struggles they were having. For example, Eleanor stated, "So I mean . . . Like I am the type of person where I get, I get caught up in details a lot and I think I lose track of . . . the point I'm trying to get across." As she discussed an impasse in supervision, Ashley stated, "I'm having this issue but I don't know what I want to change or what I want to happen." Bethany stated, "being able to sit back and just take a step back and think about the problems I have in my personal life . . . I think it kind of decreases the times that I overreact to situations." Finally, Maude discussed her own impasse stating, "It's really good and helpful for talking about whatever you're dealing with because personally, for me, I get stuck in thoughts about stuff." This level of transparency across members also facilitated a sense of togetherness and understanding discussed later.

Counselor Awareness Facilitating Skill Development

According to participants, counselor awareness facilitated skill development. This subtheme encompassed phrases such as "helped me pace myself," "filling in the gaps," "easier to

communicate," and "separating thoughts and feelings." The development of counselor awareness brought about the ability for CITs to appropriately implement basic counseling skills with intention. Additionally, each participant described the willingness to work through and process different client/case issues on the large skills mat; this enhanced counselor awareness by facilitating the implementation of the appropriate use of basic counseling skills. Sarah shared,

> I am extremely happy that I was given the opportunity to join in this because it has helped me in more ways than I could imagine and it is giving me the skills I can use now and later to process my thoughts more clearly.

Eleanor discussed her ability to now practice immediacy with her clients and said, "I am able to clarify better with my clients and practice immediacy with my clients now in a way that I'm confident about."

The skill that was written about and discussed the most was the ability to separate thoughts and feelings. Developing the skill of separating thoughts and feelings was new for the CITs and proved to be helpful as they engaged in clinical work and case conceptualization. Bethany stated, " . . . a lot of times before I would confuse what I'm thinking with how I'm feeling. And so now, I'm able to break those two up, which makes a huge difference." Bethany shared her experience with being on the large skills mat and working through thoughts and feelings in an attempt to conceptualize a case and formulate a plan of action for working with the client. She stated, " . . . by helping me pinpoint and work through my thoughts and feelings, it showed me that I do know what needs to be done, and helped me figure out how to do that."

Several participants talked about benefits of distinguishing between thoughts and feelings. One of these benefits was the ability to apply that skill in another modality. For example, one participant stated, "Learning the difference between it for myself, I guess it

impacted me in my personal life as much as it impacted me as a therapist being able to distinguish those two things for my clients." Ashley discussed a similar experience of being able to apply this ability outside of the group stating, "being able to distinguish between what my thoughts and what my feelings are, I was able to do that in session as well."

Carmen elaborated on the benefits of this separation stating, "It allowed me to separate data from thoughts and emotions and made it clear where I need to go with my client." Some of the participants discussed their ability to not only separate thoughts and feelings, but also to catch themselves and others confusing the two. Ashley mentioned, " Still even now I catch myself between saying 'I feel' and 'I think' . . . I even catch our professors doing it and I think it's really cool that I can tell the difference."

Confidence

Overall, the participants discussed feelings of accomplishment, competence, and confidence following the group supervision experience. Confidence emerged as an overarching theme across the participants and was tied to many of the other overarching themes (feedback, self awareness, the Wheel, the group experience). All the participants acknowledged they had become better counselors. For Ashley, the skills needed for communicating effectively were tied to her feelings of confidence. Ashley described how she views her on-going development of confidence when she stated:

> As a counselor I think knowing how to communicate with a client will help me to feel I
> appear more confident with how I communicate . . . I feel like I learned today that I am
> knowledgeable about what I am doing. I just need to gain more confidence.

Bethany shared her experience with a difficult case at the end of the eight-week study. She admitted being more confident and asserted that her confidence was a result of knowing what to do in session, implying she had the skills to proceed. She said:

I am more confident in what I have to do . . . It showed me that I do know what needs to be done and helped me figure out how to do that . . . I now know how to work through this as a counseling student. I am more confident in my ability to help clients.

Maude directly tied personal awareness to the facilitation of her growing confidence. She indicated, "I think I have an increased sense of personal awareness . . . I am so thankful that my own process/behavior was pointed out to me, because it helps me be a better counselor and feel more confident."

Similarly, Sarah spoke about her experience of group supervision and how it increased her confidence. She described how her experience helped her identify some of her own issues as well as all aspects of the client's issues and this realization contributed to her confidence. She explained:

Today's supervision gave me the confidence I was lacking to face my clients. It helped me realize that my issues can be worked out and I just need to take a step back and look at all the aspects of the issue. My confidence was boosted from today's supervision group.

Maude also discussed how the group experience helped her notice how she is a competent counselor and that her confidence is building. She stated,

I was also affirmed in my ability to be helpful to the practicum students, and have more confidence in myself to be helpful . . . I am beginning to feel even more confident in myself as a counselor as a result of being in this group. I am realizing how much I

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actually do know, and recognizing the contributions I do make to both clients and other

student counselors.

Eleanor described her sense of confidence originating from her improved ability to provide

feedback and related that to using the wheel outside of the group scenario. She realized she has a

"a lot more answers" for others and stated, "When they (friends) are struggling with

communicating with their spouse or their boyfriend/girlfriend, like I said . . . I feel more

confident in my ability to give them advice or suggestions."

Carmen wrote about confidence in herself when she stated, "I am feeling more confident

with my skills and ability to help others . . . It has given me confidence in knowing what I need

to do and that I have the skills to do it." She went on to discuss how case presentations helped

reassure her in her abilities and in turn boost her confidence. She stated, "By presenting my case

and getting feedback, my thoughts about the case are often confirmed and therefore gives me

more confidence as a counselor."

Consistent Process

A third theme that emerged from the data was a consistent process. Participants discussed

the fact that the process used in the group was consistent and that the consistent process in

general was helpful to them. Having a set format to follow in how they would participate in the

group and communicate with one another helped the CITs feel more comfortable in group and

made it easier for them to participate. Eleanor stated, "I guess just the structure of it, I mean I

wasn't just sitting here talking about my case and everything. I really had to put all the pieces

together about my cases that I spoke about." Some participants commented specifically on the

consistent process of group supervision. Sarah pointed out that receiving feedback in the same

manner client issues were discussed was helpful for her and stated, "it's also easier because you

know where it's coming from and so that helps." The consistent process of supervision also helped the CITs know each week what was required of them. One CIT stated, "I knew what was expected of me, nothing was a surprise." Another participant commented on the consistency of training on the Awareness Wheel using the large skills mats across group members, "We all had the same training with it and it was on you . . . I knew how they would be listening." Case conceptualization was another way in which participants noted the importance of a consistent process. Ashley stated, " . . . it helped for me to be able to present my issues in an informative manner as opposed to, 'I just believe these are the way things are'."

Awareness Wheel

The Awareness Wheel facilitated the consistent process throughout group supervision. Participants described facets of the Awareness Wheel throughout their descriptions of their experiences. Participants discussed facts (sensory data), feelings, thoughts, wants, and actions of their clients, their peers, and themselves. Additionally, there was a heightened sense of attentiveness towards the zones of the Wheel. For example, one member stated, "I think sometimes you forget to think about what you want or what you want for other people. What I want for both of y'all, I know I forget sometimes because I get so caught up in other things." The structure of the Awareness Wheel helped her identify what she was missing and in what area she needed to focus. Ashley discussed how the data zone of the wheel helped her make sense out of her thoughts and feelings. Ashley shared, " . . . backing up those thoughts and feelings with information that was relevant, it wasn't just assumptions, it was actual facts." She later discussed intentionality in her own process as a counselor and a supervisee. She stated, "I find myself stopping more and thinking about what I am going to say and how I want to say it."

Carmen shared her experience with using the Wheel as a format for eliciting information from a client. Carmen's statement pointed to an ability to implement a structure that worked for her and that she used when working with her clients. She stated,

It helped me a lot . . . elicit the same information from the client: ask *them* what their needs are, separating the thoughts and the feelings, you know, maybe exploring. What did you do in the past? What are you currently doing? What do you want for you future? Stuff like that.

Maude described her focus on discovering what is true and accurate about the issue via the zones of the Awareness Wheel. The Awareness Wheel helped Maude pay attention to the different facets of the client issue in a new way. She goes into detail stating:

So you give the issue and then you give data, which is helpful because it's like---you have to actually come up with things that are true about whatever the situation is. It gives you, I don't know, whenever I was in *data* it's talking about all of the facts I had about the situation, and sometimes we get the facts out when you move over to *thought* you are like wow there's a lot of stuff going on in this thing and I have a lot of thoughts about it.

One participant spoke to the different zones of the Wheel and how they helped facilitate a process for looking at the issue, " It kind of gives you an opportunity to take a step back and really think about what is going on . . . Like Oh, no, I don't really feel like this, this is what I think."

Over time, participants began to use statements that indicated the consistent, repetitive use of the Awareness Wheel was having an impact. Examples of such statements included "this is what I think," "you get to think it through," "what do I want from others," and "this is what I have seen in the past." Overall, the statements indicated each participant began to use the Wheel

to structure how to understand issues and process them. The Awareness Wheel was beneficial in helping the participants "think about what is going on" and "consider what your client wants, what your co-therapist wants."

Another component of the Awareness Wheel that emerged from the participants' experience was their ability to discern what necessary data was missing. Carmen described how separating the details of the issue helped her take them time to look at each individually. She stated:

Help to map it out. To separate the different aspects of the case, the client's case, the presenting issues. It separated it . . . you know, the sensory data, my thoughts, my feelings, my wants, my actions. And so it helped set apart each you know . . . to separate each one of those facts inside the whole case. So I could look at them individually.

Looking at the different zones facilitated the counselor in gathering information while looking at the parts of the case separately. Sarah wrote, "I need to take a step back sometimes and look at the whole picture and my feelings and thoughts that come along with everything which can help me to find out what I most need to focus on or if I have missed any."

The participants noted their improved communication skills by using the Awareness Wheel. Maude stated,

Overall I think the awareness was very useful for talking about and looking at the different pieces of the client's issue or even your own issue in being able to communicate about it in a way that covers all the bases.

She later discussed her struggle with knowing how to talk to clients before using the wheel. She stated, "Doing client maps is helpful to conceptualize clients and stuff, but it didn't give you the nitty-gritty of how to talk to somebody about it."

Ashley shared, "I think through the Awareness Wheel demonstrations. Today I was able to understand how to communicate with a person." Ashley shared her experience working out problems and stated,

I think it comes off more, more effective in communication if I'm trying to talk to someone, working out a problem can get . . . it comes across better . . . The communication is better because it doesn't put people on the defensive.

Bethany discussed how using the Awareness Wheel provided a structure that helped her communicate better with her peers. She stated,

I think that by using it I was able to kind of voice what was going on in my head and kind of, a more structured manner, so people could understand . . . so that I could really get feedback on whatever the problem was. And not only that, but I think being able to use it in everyday life and not just thinking about clients helped me communicate with peers in the workplace and stuff. I could just kind of visualize it and be like 'okay, let me state this clearly enough to where they can understand.'

Bethany expanded on how the structure of the Awareness Wheel helped her conceptualize the cases that she needed to present and effectively communicate them to the group. She indicated,

Teaching me the structure . . . because a lot of times when I get so much going on in my head it's hard for me to explain it to somebody else...visualizing it in my head helped me to communicate it better."

Clarity

Clarity was closely interwoven with the experience of a having a consistent process of how the group was conducted and using a model for communicating with one another. Clarity for these participants meant being clear about what they were doing as well as about

understanding and being understood. Additionally, clarity seemed to bring about direction and ease for the CITs. Eleanor stated, "I think it gave my peers clarity in what I was trying to say, and even when I spoke, it gave me . . . well for one thing it clarified my thoughts." Carmen shared, "I guess it gave direction. We knew what the person who was giving feedback, where they were going, what direction they were going." When talking about the structure of the Wheel, a group member stated, "we kind of laid it out here and then it kind of made it clearer." During the focus group, the participants discussed the different zones of the Wheel. One participant discussed the want zone and stated, " It gives you direction" while another stated, " it gave purpose to other parts of the wheel." For these members, the structure of the Wheel provided purpose and direction.

Bethany acknowledged she had a solid direction when conceptualizing cases, and said, "I can think about it more clearly . . . Like, when we conceptualize cases . . . I know where to begin whereas before I was kind of like, how do I start this?" Carmen stated, "It helps me have a better understanding of the case" and later added, "It kind of maps it out so you can see it clearly instead of just one big jumbled mess . . . it kind of distinguishes everything." The consistent process is again highlighted and points to feelings of clarity for the participant.

Learning

Many of the participants commented on the group as a whole, making statements such as "supervision was helpful" and "getting supervision is part of being a counselor." Broad comments regarding feedback were also made during the focus group, such as "feedback was helpful" and "feedback was insightful." More importantly, however, were the more detailed aspects of feedback, the learning process, which became the foundation of the group experience, and in turn an overarching theme.

Feedback was given student to student and supervisor to student using the format of the Awareness Wheel. The Wheel format was also used by participants commenting on the learning process involved in group supervision. The kinesthetic, physical process of being on the large skills mats as well as watching someone process an issue on the mats affected the participants and contributed to their own learning and understanding. The repetition of use of the mats in each group supervision session also facilitated learning. Many of the participants talked about "seeing," "visualizing," "listening," "walking," and "practicing" in regards to using the mats in supervision.

Carmen stated, "practicing on the mats helps me to have a map of what to do in session with my clients." Ashley stated, " . . . really being able to walk through every single thing . . . really helped a lot to process it." Maude shared her experience of watching people use the mats, which in turn helped her clarify the emotions that were present in the room. She stated:

> I think that what helped me do that the most was watching other people get on the wheel
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> and talk about their cases . . . If I can watch them stand in feelings and say, 'I am
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> frustrated' or 'I'm pissed off about this' I guess it's a visual learning thing, like, 'no,
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> that's not my feeling, that's their feeling, I'm watching them have it right now.' So that's
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> been really helpful for me . . . just being able to look at it.

Watching others was also helpful in the learning process for students in other ways. Eleanor stated that, "it's not even so much knowing how to use it, but just the fact that people had to gather around and use it" and indicated, "I'm happy that other members set the stage, and I hope I continue to feel this much freedom . . . " Ashley wrote, "I really enjoyed seeing and hearing my peer work through her issue." Sarah added, "I learned so much just by observing.

Even though I have not seen clients yet, I gained knowledge by listening to others and by seeing all the parts of the wheel laid out like this."

Having the supervisor participate in the same process as the supervisees contributed to students learning the process as well as feeling comfortable receiving feedback. Additionally, it provided participants with the validation they needed to trust the process, enabling them to be willing to use it. Bethany stated, "To actually have it in front of us and then coupled with having somebody be able to explain it was probably the best combination." Ashley commented on how the supervisor would help the participants walk through their issue by modeling the Awareness Wheel, and noted "the supervisor would walk us through how to do that by using it." During the focus group a member discussed how it was helpful for the supervisor to participate because it aided them in recognizing areas on the mat they missed. She stated,

> And I think that there was also a comfort in knowing that if we missed something, your [supervisor] feedback would cover an area that we might not have talked about when we were presenting issue . . . like we could kind of trust in you that you were going to do that for us.

These statements also pointed to the importance of the supervisor participating by being a part of the same learning process the CITs were utilizing. Another member stated:

> You are willing to do the same thing as supervisor that I am doing as a supervisee so it makes it easier to receive feedback because it's the same process. I guess it makes it feel more equal . . . you know where it is coming from. You can like . . . I mean we watched you do it, work your way around it so, it was easier to sort it out, whatever you were saying.

Togetherness

A major theme that emerged from the data was togetherness. Participants gave credibility to the profound impact of togetherness among group members and how togetherness facilitated comfort in the group supervision process while normalizing feelings. For example, one member of the focus group simply stated, "a major part of it was the group." Bethany stated, "This group was the most helpful of all the supervision." The central ingredient of group was the sense of togetherness which enhanced relationship building and a sense of comfort among one another and with the group.

Sarah articulated her experiences of togetherness when she wrote, "It is helping me build a better relationship with other counselors I work with, which is only building my confidence more because I know that I have their support." Her statement lends itself to this notion of togetherness that emerged during the group. Ashley shared her positive feelings about her group members stating, "I am happy that I was able to experience being in the group with these amazing girls." Another member stated during the focus group her feeling of being "really comfortable with each one of these ladies."

These experiences of togetherness bolstered feelings of safety and comfort within the group. Sarah acknowledged, "the group we had, it was a very safe place." Bethany described a similar experience when she said, "I am comfortable enough in the group to say what's on my mind." Eleanor elaborated on this experience of togetherness and comfort:

I don't know, it just normalized my feelings a lot, my experience as a counselor . . . I think it brought people in the program that I'm not, I mean I'm semi-close with, I think it brought us together a lot . . . Knowing that I had people that listen to me and aren't afraid to express their personal problems in front of me it made me feel like . . . or it made me

think that I'm more of an approachable person, it made me be more comfortable in my

own skin.

The relationships and sense of togetherness that emerged among group members were integral to

sharing openly and honestly. Statements of being "reaffirmed," "not judged," and "feeling safe"

were scattered throughout the three data sources and could be traced back to the building of

relationships with other group members. Maude elaborated on this when she said, "I really

enjoyed just commiserating with my fellow interns. It really normalized my stress and I think we

will all make it through this together. Our group is getting really cohesive and supportive of one

another." Ashley talked about the process putting her at ease. She stated, "Just everybody being

able to share their story, and knowing again, knowing that everybody had struggles."

Transparency

"A communication 'in reality' can serve to strengthen the

therapeutic alliance" (Hollands, 2004, p. 497)

Transparency was a theme that ran through all the overarching themes and was

mentioned by all participants across data sources. The Awareness Wheel format supported

participant willingness to be emotionally accountable. This accountability provided the

foundation of transparency across participants throughout the experience. Using the Awareness

Wheel as the model for providing and receiving feedback allowed participants to communicate

in a way that was honest and transparent. Participants commented they felt comfortable telling

their truth and hearing the truth of others, correcting others and being corrected, and expressing

their feelings in group supervision. These statements hinted at the underlying concepts of

transparency and congruence. There was an obligation for emotional accountability that resulted

in transparency across themes. Bethany wrote, "I have learned that I need to accept others and speak the truth without the expectation of change."

The participants and the supervisor gave and received feedback using the Awareness Wheel. Using the Wheel assisted participants in focusing on their experience of their own data, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and actions, while giving and receiving of feedback. As a result, the feedback came from a position of emotional accountability because the participants were "owning" their experience. This fostered transparency as they gave feedback and accepted it from each other. Sarah described her experience of being on the wheel and receiving feedback. An ability to be vulnerable and transparent is present in her statement:

> I was being heard and understood because of the people on the other side of it. And when they did give feedback it was everything from what I said. They understood where I was coming from, and if they didn't we got to clear it up . . . it made me feel there is, somebody always has my back and somebody can always work through it with me if I can't handle it myself. It kind of forces you to ask for help because you have to get on there and you have to work out the issue and somebody has got to be on the other side listening so you can't handle it by yourself and that is good.

Maude also described this level of emotional integrity when communicating with those close to her. She indicated:

> . . . especially with intimate relationships, my mom or my boyfriend or something, if I have an issue that I want to talk about, it keeps me responsible for my role in it . . . That way I can just lay it out there in a kind way.

Participants described instances in which their own self-awareness gave them permission to be accountable for their emotions and thoughts. Maude discussed how recognizing the

different parts of herself helped her relate to others, have empathy towards others, and be open to feedback. She concentrated on being transparent by looking at and understanding her own issues; this translated into being helpful to others and being open to feedback. Key to Maude's development of counselor awareness was a concentration on personal transparency.

> I think it's made me better. I think, I think it's helped me realize all those different parts of me and all those different parts of my client . . . it makes it, I guess, easier to relate almost, because I can see that. I think it helps to build empathy. Because I have all this stuff going on surrounding my personal issues too . . . And it's also made me more open to feedback.

Having their peers actually see them doing this when processing on the large skills mats created an environment where they felt at ease to do the same. For example Carmen wrote "processing my thoughts and feelings with the group has helped me to set boundaries." Eleanor discussed the sense of freedom related to being able to share her feelings, "I felt a lot more free to discuss my feelings and concerns. Today really put me at ease because the group members and supervisor were really accepting of my feelings." Having a group supervision environment that was conducive to safe sharing while giving and receiving feedback in a structured way generated this notion of transparency

Integral to this sense of transparency is the idea that as the participants processed their experience or gave feedback to another participant's experience, the group was able to discern what was true and accurate. Some participants discussed how dealing with their thinking allowed them to recognize when their thoughts were irrational. For example, Ashley stated, "Even when I went up there processing my problems on it, listening to other people process their problems was really insightful because it got me thinking about things I wouldn't have thought otherwise. Like

kind of like are irrational thoughts sometimes." Maude talked about how the wheel helped her identify if she was misrepresenting what she was trying to communicate. She stated:

> If I were just having a conversation with somebody and somebody told me, "you don't have any emotions about that," it's like . . . yes I do, I know that I said something about that. But, I might just be misrepresenting that in my mind as far as how the conversation went . . . But when you are on the wheel it's kind of inevitable, you have to do it. So you kind of don't have that escape route of dodging feedback from people.

Eleanor wrote about being able to share all her feelings in front of her peers. She stated, "It made me realize that although as counselors we really try to keep our emotions in check in front of clients, we can still express our feelings an emotions in front of colleagues."

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes an overview of the findings of this study and describes how the findings relate to existing literature. Limitations to this study, implications for counselor education and supervision, and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Overview of Findings

In this study I explored the lived experiences of CITs who participated in group supervision that implemented the Awareness Wheel (Miller & Miller, 2011). I was interested in understanding the perceived effect of the Wheel as the CITs mode of communication in the context of group supervision. Six CITs participated in group supervision over an eight-week period. Weekly participant journals, individual interviews, and one focus group were used to collect data. Five distinct themes emerged: (1) counselor awareness, (2) confidence, (3) consistent process, (4) learning, and (5) togetherness.

Counselor awareness encompassed a variety of topics including building empathy, being able to understand the role of the counselor and the role of the client, identifying countertransference, taking into account the perspective of others, and recognizing counselor issues. All facets related to counselor awareness seemed to influence one another. For example, the awareness that accompanied the ability to identify client and counselor issues seemed to help the CITs better understand their roles as counselors and recognize that both the client and the counselor could be understood from the perspective of "that wheel." This led to understanding countertransference and the importance of working through issues since both client and counselor were a part of awareness.

CITs described the benefits of separating their thoughts from their emotions which is one facet of skill development facilitated by counselor awareness. Unraveling these two entities

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helped the CITs clarify their own experience as well as that of the client. Additionally, some of the CITs recognized they had assumed some of their client's thoughts and emotions, and as the development of counselor awareness increased, they were able to discern their experience from their client's.

Many of the CITs described different and new skills such as tracking conversations, attending to others' experiences, and noting gaps in information. The data indicated the newfound skills were acquired due to an increase in counselor awareness. Many of the CITs talked about these skills as being significantly helpful to their professional development and an important companion to the basic counseling skills learned in their skills course. Others described these skills as more beneficial than the basic counseling skills because CITs learned how to use the basic counseling skills with intention. For the participants, there was a shift from doing a technique in session to knowing why to use that technique in session.

Palpable throughout the data was the notion of confidence. An increase in confidence was noted by all participants and across data sources. All the participants admitted they were better, more confident counselors at some point during the study. Counselor awareness, increased skillset, giving and receiving feedback, and group participation all contributed to CIT confidence. This theme was noteworthy since every participant mentioned it and tied it to different aspects of the entire experience.

Virtually all participants noted that the consistent process of group supervision helped them. The use of the Awareness Wheel and the structure inherent in group supervision was part of the overall essence of the consistent process noted by participants. For CITs, having a consistent process, both for conducting group and for discussing cases or issues, was viewed as helpful and as contributing to their growth. It provided a sense of knowing what they could

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expect and what was expected from them as they gave and received feedback. Participants saw the consistent process as providing clarity about what they were doing in group supervision and in terms of understanding and being understood.

The Awareness Wheel was a major organizing factor for participants. They talked about the different zones of the wheel in a manner that indicated this wheel was now essential to structuring their thought process not only in group supervision, but in their daily lives as well. Additionally, CITs were intentional in being aware of each zone related to the Wheel. They shared their experiences of watching peers work out issues on the large skills mats and discussed their own internal processes of filling in the zones of the wheel simultaneously. They discussed being cognizant of those zones when working with clients, when giving feedback, and in instances in their personal lives. Finally, participants stated the Wheel was beneficial in helping them make sense of difficult situations while communicating those experiences effectively.

Each participant noted the clarity brought about by a consistent process. Participants were clearer about what they were doing, and about understanding and being understood. The clarity also brought about a sense of direction when addressing issues and when working with clients in session. Attending to sensory data, thoughts, feelings, wants, intentions, and actions resulted in an overall sense of clarity as students were struggling with difficult cases.

Another significant theme that emerged across the data sources was learning. Learning encompassed giving and receiving of feedback, having the opportunity to visually observe their peers work through their issues on the large skills mats, and the repetitive nature of the group process. Learning, for the CITs, focused on watching, listening, seeing, and participating in the group supervision process. Participants also noted that having to physically move through their own issues on the large skills mats, coupled with paying attention to their peers as they did the

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same, solidified a format for giving and receiving feedback. Furthermore, the fact that participation was unavoidable and immediate made the entire group supervision session an inevitable learning experience. Finally, because the process transpired weekly, participants indicated they were able to quickly grasp the Awareness Wheel.

A final component related to learning was the participation and knowledge of the supervisor. Had they not trusted their supervisor, the participants stated they would have had a difficult time accepting the process as valid. Key to this was the supervisor's willingness to participate in the process with the CITs. When I gave feedback, I used the Wheel to provide that feedback. I gently coached the students on the large skills mats, which in turn helped them feel safe enough to get in the center of the Wheel and work through their issue. They also mentioned that my coaching them and pointing out areas they missed helped them learn the process because they knew I was there to support them. My 'backing them up' allowed them to focus on the issue and work through it rather than worry about using the large skills mats perfectly. This was helpful in reducing anxiety and stress while presenting issues on the large skills mats.

CITs described an essence of togetherness that gradually developed throughout the eight week study. Having support from peers by building relationships seemed to assist in counselor development. This coming together penetrated many aspects of the process. Giving and receiving feedback among group members enhanced a sense of camaraderie. The participants stated the format of the Awareness Wheel facilitated togetherness because they were able to provide feedback in a non-critical manner. The opportunity for each CIT to be transparent with others allowed relationships to develop since honesty was essential and expected. Finally, participants commented that their concerns regarding their abilities and struggles as emerging counselors were normalized as they listened to peers sharing similar fears. Again, togetherness was the

result of peers identifying with each other. As they became vulnerable and transparent with each other, these two potentially anxiety-producing phenomena were neutralized in the safety of group supervision while using the Awareness Wheel.

<div align="center">**Relationship to Existing Literature**</div>

Counselor Awareness

Counselor awareness contained statements about countertransference, counselor issues, perspective, empathy, and awareness of the client. The subtheme, counselor awareness facilitating skill development, contained statements about separating thoughts and feelings, tracking, attending, filling in the gaps, and working through difficult issues.

As the CITS developed awareness, they were better able to participate in their own process of reflection and encourage that in their peers. Peabody and Gelso (1982) stated, "Empathic counselors, as part and parcel of their empathic ability, are more receptive to their own internal processes" (p.241). There was a cyclical aspect of this for the CITs. As they developed counselor awareness, they began to build a better understanding of empathy and apply it. This led them to being more receptive to exploring their experience, in turn contributing to their counselor awareness. They also were more receptive to critical feedback and felt safe being wrong because it was necessary for growth.

In a study exploring benefits and limitations of supervision, Brooks, Patterson, and McKiernan (2012) found clinical supervision the best modality for CIT skill development, building confidence, and growing as professionals. In another study, Akos and Scarborough (2004) reviewed Internship course syllabi and noted the emphasis on skill development, which included techniques, awareness, and case conceptualization during this portion of training for CITs. Participants described improved or acquired skills were enhanced by counselor awareness.

Some noted that the skills were more useful than basic counseling skills because they provided them with the ability to have a conversation with the client while also engaging them therapeutically. De Stefano et al. (2007) pointed to this task for CITs stating, "This may be due in part to the fact that trainees need to perform higher-level conceptual tasks while engaging with the client through basic interpersonal communication" (p. 42). Participants recognized this and noted their new skillset, which focused on intentionality, helped them implement basic counseling skills.

Two skills discussed at length were the ability to differentiate thoughts from feelings and the ability to separate self from client. The participants noted how this separation helped them pay closer attention to their own reactions as well as the client's. This new skill and increase in awareness was discussed by Hayes, Riker, and Ingram (1997) in a study about countertransference. They asserted, "The ability to differentiate self from client is critical to the process of entering into the client's world while simultaneously monitoring one's own internal reactions" (p.151). Separating thoughts and feelings, as well as self from client made it possible for CITs to monitor themselves while also being a part of the client's world. This skill is key to managing countertransference.

Learning

CITs discussed the benefits of the experiential nature of the supervision process in two ways: vicarious learning and kinesthetic learning. Several CITs discussed how the Awareness Wheel and large skill mats helped facilitate learning because of the physicality of the process. The kinesthetic element of learning identified by participants is a unique finding in this study and adds to the literature about how learning can take place in group supervision. Participants also discussed the importance of observing their peers work on issues and give and receive feedback

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in supervision. This finding supports previous research about vicarious learning and observation.

For example, Kellum's (2009) study using reflective teams in group supervision indicated vicarious learning was an important component to the experience. In a study exploring students' perceptions of individual, triadic, and group supervision, Borders et al. (2012) found that students perceived vicarious learning as a unique benefit to group supervision when comparing it to individual and triadic supervision. In a conceptual article on group supervision, Westwood (1989) addressed the benefits of experiential and vicarious learning stating, "Groups provide an ideal opportunity for modeling or imitation learning to occur among peers" (p. 349).

Participants in the current study noted the role of the supervisor in their learning, and attributed gains in part to the supervisor's willingness to be transparent and model and use the same process supervisees used to present cases and give feedback. This finding supports those of Ögren and Sundin (2009) in a recent study on group supervision. Ögren and Sundin (2009) noted that "Supervisors who emphasized that the supervisees were competent, and at the same time were willing to share their own experiences with the group contributed positively to the supervisees' development" (Ögren & Sundin, 2009, p. 134). Westwood (1989) discussed the role of the supervisor in the learning process and indicated, "With several present in a session, trainees can observe, then adapt their own approaches to what the supervisor is doing" (p. 349). In a qualitative study exploring therapist-counselor development Skovholt & Ronnestad (1992) found novice clinicians rely heavily on the external expertise of supervisors and experienced therapists for guidance pointing to the integral role supervisors maintain. The best role the supervisor can take, given the research, is to model what is expected of the students so as to promote an environment of vicarious and experiential learning while also being transparent and sharing their own experience so as to connect with the supervisees.

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Togetherness

The research indicated a group of peers with whom beginning counselors can interact with is beneficial. In a conceptual article promoting an eclectic model of supervision, Yogev (1982) noted, "Group meetings are helpful . . . because students can recognize the universality of their feelings and discover that fellow students have similar concerns" (p. 238). In a study examining CIT experiences of impasse in counseling and utilizing group supervision to address this impasse, results indicated that when CITs felt incompetent, their peers helped them work through that and normalize it for them (De Stefano et al., 2007). Finally, research has shown a distinct benefit of group supervision is the normalizing process that occurs amongst CITs (Borders et al., 2012).

De Stefano et al. (2007) highlighted fears often experienced by beginning counselors, and stated "Beginners feel particularly uncertain about their counseling performance, and anxiety is often an impediment to effective practice" (p. 42). Ray and Altekruse (2000) addressed the benefits of group interactions, and stated, "through group interactions, counseling students can have a stronger sense of self by testing reality and letting go of negative perceptions and intellectual isolation" (p.20). The theme of togetherness in the current study, including the sense of safety that accompanied it, is consistent with previous literature. An element of togetherness that was noted by participants was that it fostered honesty and openness. This finding is consistent with those of Borzumato-Gainey (2004). Borzumto-Gainey found that when group members have fears about relationship loss regarding another group member, possible damage to a relationship, or harming another due to the nature of their feedback, feedback was hindered. The results of this and previous research indicate that positive relationships within the group should be promoted so that more honest and open feedback can occur.

Consistent Process

Research on perceived effects of different models of supervision is lacking (Newgent, Davis, & Farley, 2004). However, providing a structure in group supervision has been shown to aid students in their clinical work. For example, Starling and Baker (2000) researched the lived experience of practicum students in structured peer group supervision. The participants noted several benefits of the experience which included a decrease in confusion and anxiety, clearer goals, an increase in confidence and peer feedback (Starling & Baker, 2000). Participants of the current study noted similar benefits resulting from both the structure of the group supervision as a whole and the structure inherent in the Awareness Wheel and having a structure to the group supervision process as a whole. Although there is some research on models and interventions used in group supervision, what is lacking in the literature is research examining the effects of implementing a model or structure consistently over time in group supervision.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of CITs in group supervision utilizing the Awareness Wheel. Overarching themes that emerged from the data were counselor awareness, learning, togetherness, confidence and a consistent process. The current research confirms that awareness is key to counselor development. For counselor educators, it would be beneficial for those working directly with CITs to encourage an environment of self-reflection in order to promote skill development and honest discussion of counselor issues. It may be helpful to utilize a structured process to assist CITs in developing self-reflection skills. In addition, training and identifying thoughts versus feelings and separating self from the client would likely be helpful. All the participants struggled with separating thoughts and feelings, hinting at the lack of training in this area in their academic preparation for their clinical fieldwork. Many of the

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CITs were adept at basic counseling skills, but struggled with implementing them until they developed counselor awareness.

Counselor awareness also facilitated management of countertransference. CITs knew about this counseling issue, but did not fully understand what it entailed and its ramifications when left unmanaged. Counselor educators and supervisors should take time to discuss this concept with CITs and address how the management of countertransference can determine whether it is helpful or harmful in the counseling process. Educating CITs about this prior to entering the clinical portion of their counselor education program would be prudent.

Another consideration for counselor educators and supervisors is creation of a supervisory climate that is conducive to experiential and kinesthetic learning and also promotes transparency. The CITs enjoyed watching their peers and their supervisor walk through the same process of the Awareness Wheel on the large skills mats because not only did it facilitate learning, it provided everyone with an opportunity to see people make mistakes and receive correction in a safe way. Additionally, when the supervisor and the supervisees were engaging in the same format and following the same rules, the CITs felt secure in sharing their fears and concerns. In essence, they felt it was safe to be vulnerable in front of their peers.

One way to create an environment conducive to experiential learning and transparency would be providing a structure for giving and receiving feedback during supervision. The Awareness Wheel proved to be an effective format in achieving this because it provided a structure that the participants could use. The zones of the wheel also aided in skill development and awareness, making the intervention effective and versatile. Additionally, the Wheel helped students give and receive constructive feedback. Having a format that everyone was required to use buffered feedback that might have otherwise been difficult to hear.

Limitations of Study

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. The first limitation relates to the sample of participants in the study. Participants came from only one CACREP-accredited counseling program, limiting the range of CIT experiences that could be explored. Another limitation related to sample included the relationship three of the participants had with the primary researcher. Three of the participants had been under the direct supervision of the primary researcher the year prior to the study. Those participants had already developed a trusting relationship with me that could have made it easier to engage in the group supervision experience and may have influenced their descriptions of their experiences.

Another potential limitation to the group is the relationship between and among group members. All six participants worked together at the CTC. Additionally, three of the group members were friends and the other three group members were also friends. It is possible these friendships helped facilitate feelings of togetherness. Interactions outside the group amongst the members could not be accounted for and cannot be ignored as potentially important given the close relationships among members. The extent to which these friendships and relationships contribute to the findings is difficult to know.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is recommended to expand and clarify the findings of this study. Given the importance of counselor awareness noted by participants, additional research utilizing the Awareness Wheel in supervision is warranted. The Awareness Wheel has been used in many different modalities; however, its use in the counseling profession, specifically as it relates to counselor training and supervision of CITs, is limited. In addition, other methods of group supervision that aim to enhance counselor awareness should be studied.

The underlying theme of transparency is difficult to qualify. The results of the current study indicated that it was partly related to the format used by all participants and the supervisor, partly related to the level of transparency each participant was willing to experience, and partly related to the level of emotional accountability each member began to assume. The question remains as to what exactly makes up this phenomenon. Research concerning transparency and its impact on the development of CITs would be beneficial and would fill a gap in the current literature. The role of transparency in group supervision, and its impact on the willingness to be open and honest, should also be studied.

More research that seeks to understand what facilitates CIT level of confidence would be useful. Understanding factors that promote feelings of confidence in CITs, especially those who are just beginning to work with clients, could help minimize anxiety and fear about clinical work. Participants in the current study did not mention any aspects of the experience that were unhelpful. I believe it is important to understand what works, and what does not work, in order to improve something. Further studies using the Awareness Wheel and other specific models or structures might be structured to identify least helpful or unhelpful aspects of the process.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the experiences of CITs in group supervision utilizing the Awareness Wheel. I was interested in how CITs described those experiences and their perceptions of the impact of these methods. Specifically, I was interested in CITs' experience of group supervision when utilizing a model of communication which focuses on sensory data, thoughts, emotions, intentions, and actions. Findings in this study include themes consistent with existing literature as well as themes that have yet to be addressed in the literature.

The findings are consistent with current literature regarding supervision being the most appropriate modality for counselor development, counselor awareness and its impact on managed countertransference and development of empathy, the experience of group supervision specifically as it relates to a sense of group togetherness, and vicarious learning as a benefit of group supervision. The findings also pointed to new directions for research, which include the use of the Awareness Wheel in supervision modalities, the Awareness Wheel, and its perceived effects on communication of CITs, kinesthetic learning in group supervision, and exploration of transparency in supervision.

Supervision is of primary importance throughout the career of the therapist. Group supervision is paramount and is done in all CACREP-accredited university programs. Group supervision is a modality with many benefits, such as learning from others, sharing cases efficiently and with greater effect, practicing of skill development, support and supervision given by demonstrating skill-modeling, and feedback as modeling. Good communication skills enhance supervision and should result in helping the counselor develop professionally. Professional development encompasses self awareness, on-going skill building, development of empathy, and client centeredness as well as dispassionate client interest. Developing these skills within a group magnifies their effect. The Awareness Wheel offers a viable way for supervisees to learn all of these things.

The benefit and impact of group supervision are clear. Continuing research concerning effective and appropriate models for group supervision is needed to enhance the group supervision process and its impact. The Awareness Wheel is a model which facilitates integral aspects of CIT development and continued research on the use of the Wheel in counselor education seems beneficial.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWER/EXTERNAL AUDITOR OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY

I recognize the confidentiality required for protection of human subjects. I will follow all legal and ethical standards in assuring that the confidentiality of participants is maintained.

The participants' identities will not be revealed to anyone other than the Principal Investigator. Pseudonyms will be used to identify each participant's audio recording. All audio recordings and notes will be turned over to the principal investigator and I will not maintain any separate recording or notes. All information will be kept confidential.

Pseudonyms will be used in place of the participants' real names.

.

_____   _____
Interviewer/External Auditor Name   Date

_____   _____
Interviewer/External Auditor Signature   Date

_____   _____
Principal Investigator's Signature   Date

Journal Prompts:

1) My experience of today's group supervision were:

   2) How do I see using this communication template as having an impact on me as a counselor?

2) How do I see using this communication template as having an impact on how I conceptualize client issues?

APPENDIX 3

Semi-structured interview questions:

1) What was your experience of using the Awareness Wheel in group supervision?

2) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel help you communicate with your peers?

3) In what ways if any did hearing feedback, that was provided using the Awareness Wheel, help you to receive it?

4) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel help you conceptualize client cases/issues?

5) In what ways, if any, did using the Awareness Wheel impact you as a counselor?

6) Please describe any ways in which using the Awareness Wheel might have impacted you personally.

APPENDIX 4

ERIN L. SHERMAN, MAcc, CRA, CIP, CPIA
Research
Compliance Officer Division of
Research, Commercialization and
Outreach

6300 OCEAN
DRIVE,
UNIT 5844
CORPUS
CHRISTI,
TEXAS
78412 O
361.825.2497
• F
361.825.2755

Human Subjects Protection Program	Institutional Review

Board

APPROVAL DATE: June 15, 2013

TO: Ms. Fredericka DeLee

CC: Dr. Marvarene Oliver

FROM: Office of Research
                Compliance
                Institutional Review
                Board

SUBJECT: Initial Approval

Protocol Number: 51-13

Title: Group Supervision of Counselors in Training Implementing the
                   Miller Awareness Wheel

Review Category: Expedited

Expiration Date: June 15, 2014

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

Eligible for Expedited Approval (45 CFR 46.110): Identification of the subjects or their responses (or the remaining procedures involving identification of subjects or their responses) will NOT reasonably place them at   risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the their financial standing, employability, insurability,   reputation, or be stigmatizing, unless reasonable and appropriate protections will be implemented so that risks related to invasion of privacy and breach of confidentiality are no greater than minimal.

Criteria for Approval has been met (45 CFR 46.111) - The criteria for approval listed in 45 CFR 46.111 have been met (or if previously met, have not changed).

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and   social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Provisions:

Comments:

This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities:
1. Informed Consent: Information must be presented to enable persons to voluntarily decide whether or not to participate in the research project unless otherwise waived.
2. Amendments: Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment Application to the Research Compliance Office for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
3. Continuing Review: The protocol must be renewed each year in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review Application, along with required documents must be submitted 45 days

before the end of the approval period, to the Research Compliance Office. Failure to do so may result in processing delays and/or non-renewal.
4. Completion Report: Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final   written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the Research Compliance Office.
5. Records Retention: Records must be retained for three years beyond the completion date of the study.
6. Adverse Events: Adverse events must be reported to the Research Compliance Office immediately.