

Systemic Processes in Triadic Supervision

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During a four-year research project that grew out of their teaching and supervision, three counselor educators used a constructivist grounded theory approach to address a gap in the literature on triadic supervision. The authors collaborated with 2 research assistants and 28 research participants to examine triadic supervision through analysis of individual and focus group interviews, observation of videotapes of triadic supervision, and ongoing discussions. Analysis and interpretive theorizing resulted in the identification of the following basic processes present in triadic supervision: systemic engagement, synergy, recursiveness, presence of the supervisor, and community. Description of each process, considerations about use of triadic supervision, and implications for teaching and practice are discussed.

KEYWORDS *counselor education, supervision, triadic supervision*

INTRODUCTION

Supervision is a critical part of counselor training. It is required both as part of the educational process and as central to post-degree internship in pursuit of licensure. Clinical, as opposed to administrative, supervision involves mentoring of the junior professional by a seasoned, more mature professional as the junior person integrates formal theories into practice, hones skills, refines ethical decision making, and solidifies professional identity while providing services to clients (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Bradley & Ladany, 2001; Holloway, 1995; Todd & Storm, 2003). The importance of supervision as part of both the educational and post-degree requirements leading to licensure is elucidated when one considers supervision requirements as laid out by credentialing bodies and state counseling

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licensing boards (Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2000). Professionals utilize knowledge that is considered unique and specialized, which makes it difficult for the average person to understand the implications of putting that knowledge into practice (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004); thus, supervision by experienced practitioners and educators assumes a particularly important role in training and is required in virtually all mental health disciplines. Supervision also serves as a primary part of gatekeeping into the professions.

In recent years, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2001, 2009) has allowed triadic supervision, here defined as two supervisees meeting together with one supervisor, to be used as the equivalent to individual supervision. Similarly, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), while not using the term triadic supervision, considers up to two supervisees meeting with one supervisor to count as individual supervision. Most research noting supervision standards prior to 2001 does not address the use of triadic supervision as a method of individual supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Prieto, 1996), and there remains a dearth of literature addressing effectiveness, comparability, or processes in triadic supervision as opposed to individual supervision. The purpose of this study was to address the lack of literature or research specifically dealing with this supervision modality and to understand the processes which occur in triadic supervision. To accomplish this goal, we analyzed individual and focus group interviews, observed videotapes of triadic supervision, and conducted ongoing discussions with doctoral internship students who provided supervision to master's-level practicum students.

CURRENT LITERATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Very little research has been done on triadic supervision; however, Sturdivant (2005) provides a thorough literature review including the scant information concerning triadic supervision as well as broader considerations about supervision. Recent research about triadic supervision is included both as an update to that review and to provide context for the current study.

Nguyen (2003) considered efficacy of individual and triadic supervision in a study which involved 47 master's-level counseling students receiving supervision. This study examined two specific formats, split focus and single focus, for provision of triadic supervision, and compared them to each other and to individual supervision. Split focus was defined as 30 minutes of an hour-long supervision session being allocated to each supervisee. Single focus was defined as alternating weeks of supervision devoted to one supervisee with the other supervisee present. Both were found to be as effective as individual supervision, with single focus and split focus having somewhat better results on some measures. Bakes

(2005) also studied individual and triadic supervision, and examined supervisory working alliance as measured by the Supervisor Working Alliance Inventory for each modality. Seventy-six supervisees receiving individual or triadic supervision and 47 supervisors providing individual or triadic supervision participated. A number of differences between individual and triadic supervision were identified. Of particular interest for the current study is the finding of differences in the perception of working alliance by supervisors and supervisees based on the modality of supervision, with triadic supervision receiving the higher rating. This finding appears to be in conflict with findings of earlier studies. The author suggests that differences found between individual and triadic supervision may mean that CACREP standards concerning triadic supervision should be revised, particularly in terms of time requirements, and called for research concerning theory development for triadic supervision.

In an earlier study dealing with working alliance, Newgent, Davis, and Farley (2004) noted that triadic and individual supervision were preferred to group supervision. This study, which included 15 doctoral students enrolled in a supervision course and providing supervision, indicated that supervisors viewed individual and triadic supervision as having similar effects on working alliance, supervisor leadership style, relationship dynamics, and satisfaction. Results suggested that the structure of triadic supervision includes considering how much each supervisee is involved and if each supervisee acts as a co-supervisor. In their study, the structure of the triadic supervision experience was predetermined by the researchers, and thus did not examine what occurs when triadic supervision is left to the supervisor and supervisees.

Sturdivant (2005) examined counselor supervision professionals' perceptions of triadic supervision. Participants interviewed were eight supervisors, including three faculty members and five doctoral students, all in CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Results of this study included identification of several themes, including vicarious learning, feedback/multiple perspectives, vulnerability-support-intimacy, and time saving. Other findings indicated that triadic supervision is seen as beneficial to supervisees and supervisors, a finding Sturdivant contended alone to be sufficient rationale for continued research concerning triadic supervision. He further noted that supervisors need to practice within the bounds of their training. With little research or theory development concerning triadic supervision, it is difficult to contend that supervisors receive adequate training in this modality of supervision. Another study (Hein & Lawson, 2008) also examined perceptions of supervisors who provide triadic supervision. Six doctoral students who were providing supervision were included in this qualitative study. Results yielded two primary categories of responses, including ways in which triadic supervision increases or decreases demands on the supervisor. These authors note that skills required in triadic

supervision are not required in individual supervision and suggest they may not be taught in supervisory training.

Recently, Stinchfield, Hill, and Kleist (2007) outlined an adaptation of the reflecting team model for triadic supervision, which grew out of literature concerning reflective processes in family therapy. Their article reported initial findings arising from a qualitative inquiry about process and experience with the reflective model of triadic supervision and called for research to determine the efficacy and utility of this approach. In addition, these authors indicated the need for ongoing conversation regarding triadic supervision. Providing a different perspective, Gillam and Baltimore (2006), in a podcast, compared triadic supervision with group supervision and described the dynamics of these two modes of supervision as similar. Lawson, Hein, and Getz (2009) proffered a format for triadic supervision that centers around practices to enhance administrative, clinical, and relationship aspects of triadic supervision.

While each of these studies provides valuable information regarding triadic supervision, only Stinchfield and colleagues (2007) examined the processes occurring in triadic supervision, and their work is based on a particular theoretical construct. Several of the studies validate the need for better understanding of triadic supervision and for theory development. Adequacy of training of supervisors, the ability to ethically work within the bounds of training, and findings of studies just cited call for an examination of the processes that occur in triadic supervision.

RESEARCHERS' PERSPECTIVES

We initially became interested in triadic supervision as we discussed our own supervision of doctoral and master's students and the differences in process and actions we experience when providing individual and triadic supervision. We agree with Boyer's (1990) position that research can grow out of teaching as surely as teaching grows out of research and its application. In this case, the supervisory component of our teaching led to observations and questions about what is known and not known about triadic supervision. In addition, two of us have extensive academic and clinical backgrounds in marriage and family therapy and systems theory, and were approved supervisors in AAMFT prior to the advent of supervision coursework in counselor education programs. Thus, the ways in which we explained to ourselves what we do in triadic supervision was not adequately addressed in either individual or group supervision models, which further increased our curiosity.

The problem identified was that no clear understanding or description of what occurs in triadic supervision existed, even though triadic supervision, whether by terminology or by practice, is accepted as meeting the

requirement for individual supervision by some accrediting bodies and within some professions. While it is sometimes accepted as meeting individual supervision requirements, triadic supervision is also sometimes viewed as a form of group supervision. The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of what occurs in triadic supervision. The overarching research question was, "What happens in triadic supervision?" The first year of the study was an investigation of the experiences of doctoral student supervisors and master's practicum student supervisees who participated in triadic supervision (Oliver, Nelson, & Ybanez, 2008). The results of the first year of the study subsequently led to an investigation of the processes of triadic supervision. This article explicates those processes.

METHOD

Our desire to understand triadic supervision led to the decision to use qualitative methodology, which focuses on the meaning of human experience and encourages reflective thinking (Patton, 2002). Our research was intimately involved with our academic responsibilities as instructors and supervisors. Basic procedures involved observing videotapes of triadic supervision and interviewing doctoral-level supervisors in training and master's-level supervisees. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was selected as a guide to conduct the study. A constructivist grounded theory is described as not emerging from data but constructed from data by past and present connections with individuals, worldviews, and research orientations. Like Charmaz, we approached our work focused on seeking understanding rather than explanation and viewing theoretical understanding as interpretive.

Doctoral-level student supervisors and master's-level supervisees in triadic supervision were invited to participate. A total of 28 research participants, including 10 supervisors and 18 supervisees, volunteered to be interviewed individually and/or contributed videotapes of triadic supervision. Other than ethnicity and gender, no demographics were collected about participants who were interviewed. Since two of the researchers regularly taught master's practicum, we did not want to be able to identify any student from their interviews and demographics. Our own experience in teaching and supervising four doctoral cohorts over the three and a half years of the project formed the foundation for the research project. Finally, two doctoral research assistants who completed a doctoral-level qualitative research class conducted the individual interviews and gave input to the data base about their own observations and perceptions. The constructivist grounded theory approach of Charmaz (2006) was congruent with our view of participants and students as co-learners and the value we placed on their contributions to the research.

Year One

Understanding the lived experience of supervisors and supervisees in triadic supervision was the main objective for this initial phase of the research. A semi-structured format was selected for the Caucasian female research assistant who had been trained in qualitative research methodology to interview the 5 supervisors (3 Hispanic and 2 Caucasian females) and 15 supervisees who volunteered to participate. Interviews were guided by the following conversational topics: experiences with triadic supervision, strengths and drawbacks of triadic supervision, organization of time to meet needs of supervisees, interaction among the supervisor and two supervisees, and perceived differences among individual, triadic, and group supervision. The research assistant taped and transcribed all interviews. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) constant comparative method was used as a guide to read, analyze, and compare the data as we openly coded units of meaning in a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts before reaching consensus on axial categories and preliminary themes.

Participants were also invited to contribute videotapes of triadic supervision to form a second source of research data. All participants in each video had to sign a release for the videotape to be accepted. A total of 12 videotapes, with 3 different supervisors and 8 supervisees, were made available, and we watched the tapes, took independent notes, comparatively analyzed the tapes, and collaboratively reached consensus on what we had observed.

A third source of data was obtained by the second author from a focus group interview conducted with a supervision group of nine doctoral internship students (one African male, one Caucasian male, four Hispanic females, and three Caucasian females), all of whom were providing or had provided supervision. The semi-structured format using the same conversational topics was used once again to guide the group discussion with a concluding discussion focused on an examination of the preliminary themes gained from the individual interviews.

After the data from the video observations and the individual and focus group interviews were compiled, compared, and analyzed, we refined our initial interpretations and presented the results for reflection and discussion to the doctoral internship class for further discussion, reflection, and member checking. Researcher notes formed the documentation for both group interviews. Findings revealed a number of practices and themes. Some of those are similar to those important to individual and group supervision, such as flexibility of agenda and approach by the supervisor. Other findings appeared to be unique to triadic supervision processes, including time use and supervisor encouragement of systemic processes (Oliver et al., 2008).

Year Two

Year two efforts concentrated on theory refinement through continued discussion, readings, and study of triadic supervision during weekly master's- and doctoral-level practicum and internship classes, and triadic supervision. Bi-monthly meetings of the researchers were devoted to organizing and synthesizing the results. We presented and discussed our interpretations at both a state and a national professional conference. Late in year two of the study, the first two authors held a focus group interview with a doctoral internship group consisting of one Caucasian male, five Caucasian females, and five Hispanic females, all of whom had not been previously interviewed. All were providing or had provided individual and/or triadic supervision, and some had also received triadic supervision. Both preliminary themes from year one and refined thematic categories from year two were presented for discussion. In addition, students were invited to share their own experiences with triadic supervision and offer additional insights which were incorporated into the data base.

This was a year of discussion, analysis, and reflection. We reached consensus to conduct theoretical sampling through further interviews with doctoral student supervisors and additional videotapes of triadic supervision during the next academic year. Theoretical sampling allowed us to refine and further develop categories as well as examine the relationships among them. These reflections led to an additional query. We planned to ask supervisors to describe how triadic supervision proceeds from the beginning to the end of a session in the next phase of the project.

Year Three

The objective of year three was to invite doctoral student supervisors to confirm themes through theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) and to answer more specific inquiries about how triadic supervision proceeds in session. A doctoral research assistant (male Caucasian) trained in qualitative research interviewed nine supervisors (one Caucasian male, five Hispanic females, and three Caucasian females) using the original conversational topics with one new query: Describe a triadic supervision session. What happens first? What next? How do things proceed from one thing to another? Using open and axial coding of the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), researchers reanalyzed transcripts from the first set of individual interviews and proceeded to analyze the second round of interviews for the first time. We sought additional participants to provide videotapes of triadic supervision. Four additional videotapes of triadic supervision provided by different doctoral-level supervisors and master's-level supervisees were

obtained and similarly studied by the three researchers. No new properties were identified. Data appeared to be saturated.

Year Four

Researchers met weekly to conceptualize overarching theoretical processes derived from data analysis, researcher notes, and memos related to identified themes and categories. Discussions persisted until consensus was reached and a theoretical basis was formed that included all meanings discovered during the research. Member checking of final results was completed with a doctoral internship class of 11 females (6 Hispanic and 5 Caucasian), most of whom had previously contributed to the study through individual or focus group interviews and who were in their last semester of supervising master's-level practicum students. In addition, the researchers contacted and requested the two research assistants who had conducted the individual interviews during year one and three to read and react to the researchers' theoretical interpretation of the data. Finally, three supervisors who participated in the first year of interviews and videotaping volunteered to read, react to, and offer suggestions regarding the results. These individuals are all graduates with whom we had ongoing contact. All are female and Caucasian. One went directly from the master's program into a doctoral program, and two had a number of years of experience in school or community mental health settings prior to their doctoral studies. Although no new interpretations or themes were identified, this phase resulted in additional comments, understandings, and observations about the theoretical interpretations. Basic theoretical meanings were consistent over the course of the study, but were modified, refined, and enhanced as a result of ongoing researcher collaboration. In addition to member checking, trustworthiness was achieved through prolonged engagement and through multiple sources of data and triangulation of data (Patton, 2002).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a final part of the research, we engaged in interpretive theorizing in order to conceptualize meanings and processes in triadic supervision. We propose that there are several overlapping and overarching systemic processes reflected in triadic supervision. These include systemic engagement, synergy, recursiveness, presence of the supervisor, and community.

Systemic Engagement

The first of these processes is the principle of systemic engagement—that is, the arrangement of supervisor working with two supervisees provides

connection and relatedness such that the arrangement itself forms a unity or whole. Ways of achieving this engagement may vary among supervisors or according to the supervisees involved in the supervision in that it may be as subtle as how the supervisor uses eye contact to invite both people into connection or as overt as asking for engagement. When supervisors engage in this way, they find ways to do what bell hooks (1994) talks about when she discusses redirecting attention from her voice to one another's voices. However, the most salient examples of systemic engagement occur when involvement among the supervisor and supervisees is such that flow of information, spontaneous discussion, role-play, teaching moments, consultation, and personal reflection on the part of supervisor and supervisees seem to arise naturally out of the interaction among the three.

As one supervisor put it, "That struck a chord with me. We were completely interactive. We still have that relationship to this day." Another, who described the triadic supervisory role as facilitative, said,

I'm very collegial... I ask them "What did you like? What did you not like?"... It just comes out once they start talking about (a difficult client), and usually the other one will be like, "Well, why?" And they're funny because they, they start, they practice right there... it's not planned... it just happens.

After thinking about what happens in individual and triadic supervision, yet another indicated, "It isn't really like that... starting with one... and then you talk to the other... What happens is they end up giving each other feedback, and I try to facilitate." Systemic engagement as a way of understanding what happens in triadic supervision is different from, though not necessarily contrary to, the work of Nguyen (2003) and Newgent and colleagues (2004), since both of those studies specified the structure of supervision. In this study, triadic supervision structure was not pre-determined. Thus, the possibility of systemic engagement was not determined by structural factors of supervision nor limited to particular structures within supervision.

For the supervisor, in some respects, the interaction resembles having a couple in the room: "It's almost like having a husband and wife... and having to deal with the relationship between the two of them.... You're aware of tension or issues between them." From our observations and the comments from supervisors and supervisees, we thus theorized that one part of the supervision process is in providing the container or crucible for the relationship between the supervisees. Supervisees learn that listening respectfully and thoughtfully is as important as speaking, which is something they are simultaneously learning to do in their counseling sessions. In addition, supervisors deal with their own relationship with each supervisee. Dealing with ruptures in any of the relationships is part of what must occur, with the primary responsibility for being attentive to and working sensitively

to repair such ruptures being the supervisor's. Another facet of triadic supervision that is similar to working with couples is that the supervisor has the opportunity to observe dynamics of supervisees that may not be seen if working with one supervisee alone. This became clear as supervisors were attentive to how and when supervisees interacted with each other as well as with the supervisor, how and when disruptions occurred (or did not) within the relationships, and how repairs were managed. Supervisors also reported that triadic supervision allows a different perspective about "what an individual supervisee might not understand because of (heightened awareness of) different developmental levels" of supervisees.

Synergy

Triadic supervision is also synergistic. For the purposes of this study, synergy refers to the process whereby the impact of three individuals coming together for supervision is greater than the impact of each individual working alone and perhaps greater than the impact of any two individuals working together. Synergy in triadic supervision can be seen, in part, through the systemic engagement just outlined. It cannot be completely captured by that, however, and may rather be a by-product of systemic engagement. When working well, triadic supervision produces ideas and learning that appear to be fuller than what would occur on the part of any individual member of the triad. This occurs in individual supervision, as well; however, when triadic supervision functions ideally, supervisors and supervisees alike describe it as "rich, very rich" because of the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences that seem to feed one another and grow into yet other perspectives. As one supervisor described it, "In triadic supervision, $1 + 1 + 1 = 5$." Another supervisor offered,

I really enjoy it. I think I prefer that (triadic) over all others, because I feel like individual . . . I think that just one person wouldn't really be able to help . . . maybe they could sometimes, but not in all aspects, so I think it would be nice to have a different opinion of what's going on.

Another supervisor stated,

. . . it was very different (from individual) . . . what I really liked about triadic supervision . . . was that they were able to give advice to each other or help the other person out if they . . . if supervisee one had a question in this area, and supervisee two knew a little bit about that area, then they would talk to supervisee one . . . so I thought that was very beneficial for not only myself, but for them as well . . . they really did give each other really good information.

Another supervisor said, concisely, "I'm learning from them just as . . . we're learning from each other." This conclusion is consistent with Sturdivant's

(2005) findings about the importance of feedback and multiple perspectives. Supervisees are active participants in rather than passive consumers of supervision, which once again agrees with what hooks (1994) describes in her work about teaching.

Recursiveness

A third principle of triadic supervision is that it is, in some sense, recursive. Observations of triadic supervision, comments from participants, and our own experiences as supervisors and researchers led us to conclude that interaction among supervisor and supervisees impacts each of the people in the room, which then impacts the next interaction, which then impacts each of the people in the room and so on. This impact also occurs directionally—that is, what occurs in supervision impacts supervisee/counselor work with clients, and clients impact the supervisee/counselor, which then impacts triadic supervision. In addition, triadic supervision, in the process of being studied, impacts the researchers, all of whom also provide individual and triadic supervision. The researchers, after analyzing their findings, impact supervisors when the researchers present information to focus groups in which supervisors who are participants in the research and others who are not comment on those findings. Awareness and knowledge gained by supervisors in the focus group process then flow back to supervisees and ultimately back to clients, and so on. This recursive process of folding back over on itself occurs in multiple directions and multiple times. The idea of a recursive perspective in terms of understanding supervisee growth was addressed by Rigazio-DiGilio (1997) in her discussion of integrative supervision. The principle described here recognizes that the recursive process impacts not only supervisees, but clients, supervisors, and trainers of supervisors as well. As described by focus group members, triadic supervision provides “the best of both worlds” (referencing individual and group supervision) and is the “catalyst for fire in the discussion in group supervision . . . and in focus group discussion” about triadic supervision. In addition, focus group members who both counsel and supervise reported that triadic supervision “affects how I think about what I do” in both counseling and supervision.

Presence of the Supervisor

The presence of the supervisor is another contributor to the process of triadic supervision. This is not surprising, in that such presence is also important in individual and group supervision as well as in counseling. One supervisor expressed how important it is

...to be fully present...it makes me make sure that I'm fully present when I'm supervising...showing respect, being genuine...really to be

able to, even though you haven't been in their situation, to try to have that empathic response, and try to really understand...especially in triadic supervision, because it makes you very aware of, you know, that there are three people in the room instead of two.

The work of Rogers (1995), Friedman (1985), and many others who have emphasized the importance of the therapeutic relationship, as well as research emphasizing the importance of relationship in supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Borders & Brown, 2005; Campbell, 2000; Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003; Holloway, 1995; Muse-Burke, Ladany, & Deck, 2001), was confirmed yet again in this study. The supervisor's ability to demonstrate genuineness and congruence as well as to model a non-anxious presence in the supervisory process enables the creation of an ambiance that encourages supervisee reflection on one's own and the co-supervisee's work; fosters sharing of information, concerns, values, experiences, and the like; builds self-efficacy; and encourages risk taking to develop skills or to practice openly within the supervision sessions.

While supervisory style may be more or less open to the supervisees' agendas (as opposed to the supervisor's), more or less directive or structured, or more focused on a particular role of the supervisor, the ability to be fully present to the process is crucial to triadic supervision and may be more difficult in this setting, particularly for novice supervisors, than in individual supervision. A telling comment made by one supervisor, while talking about triadic supervision where one supervisee was initially very difficult, was,

I thought, "okay, this is where I have to really learn about relationships" . . . I was sitting there thinking, "how am I going to develop this relationship . . . what am I going to do?" . . . and this other poor brand new person over here was all nervous and scared . . . I thought, "what a combination."

Community

Finally, community appears to be a hallmark of triadic supervision. The word *community* is used in a variety of disciplines and has many connotations (Chinn, 2008). For this reason, naming this principle was difficult and was ultimately a product of discourse with focus groups. Initially, *collaboration* was considered; however, community provides a truer sense of what is intended, as it implies deeper relationship and involvement. Indeed, as one supervisor suggested, "the sense of community arises from collaboration" and "collaboration is needed to bring community." For the purposes of this analysis, community has defined itself through the words of study participants.

In his work about teaching, Palmer (2007) contends that "learning . . . demands community—a dialogical exchange in which our ignorance can be

aired, our ideas tested, our biases challenged, and our knowledge expanded, an exchange in which we are not simply left alone to think our own thoughts” (p. 79). Similarly, supervisors and supervisees in this study indicated that triadic supervision seems to allow supervisees to “have the freedom to make mistakes,” to “not be perfect,” to “not know” and “self-disclose,” and thus “give the others the freedom to do the same.” This freedom may first be modeled by the supervisor, but may also be brought to the interaction by a supervisee. In triadic supervision, community can be seen as part of synergy and as part of systemic engagement, yet is not precisely either one.

Community is fostered by the supervisor, particularly in early stages of supervision, through the posing of questions designed to solicit input from both supervisees about whatever material or case is being presented. However, this often moves to a process where the speaking, listening, and responding begin to occur naturally among the three or may be actively pursued by supervisees, rather than originating with the supervisor. How the supervisor encourages and honors community will differ from supervisor to supervisor and perhaps from session to session within the same triad. For instance, a supervisor may ask throughout or at the end of a case presentation, “What are you thinking about this?” or “Do you have ideas about this?” or “What is your reaction to this?” The supervisor may use a process similar to the reflecting team described by Stinchfield and colleagues (2007) for triadic supervision. Alternatively, the supervisor may ask the presenting supervisee to reflect with the listening supervisee about what has been presented, with the supervisor remaining silent, only joining the conversation as the reflection winds down. Whatever the approach, we saw that the result is that both supervisees and the supervisor join forces in providing ideas, suggestions, comments, concerns, solutions, or more questions about what is presented in supervision. In this way, community overlaps with synergy.

Another important feature of community is shared responsibility. Some supervisors and supervisees initially described this as accountability; however, as focus groups continued, the sense of this element became more clearly that all members share responsibility for the tasks of supervision, even to the point of supervisees making sure their co-supervisees attend and are prepared for supervision. One supervisor who also participated in triadic supervision as a supervisee explained it precisely, stating:

When you are in supervision together you develop a sense of responsibility for each other. You also hold each other accountable for what you say and then subsequently for what you do. The supervisor can be fooled, but your fellow classmates know whether or not you are living up to your responsibilities.

Shared responsibility certainly may be a part of systemic processes; however, it is in the understanding and implementing of a sense of community that shared responsibility comes to fruition.

CONSIDERATIONS

Based on observations of triadic supervision, interview data, and our own experiences with triadic supervision, we believe there are some situations where triadic supervision is either not the best choice or should not be offered. Primary among those occurs when a supervisee has personal issues of such a nature that he or she cannot function well in a triadic system as described or those issues interfere with the benefit and learning experience of any potential co-supervisee. Such a supervisee may require consistent one-to-one supervision for a period of time before being able to benefit from and not disrupt triadic supervision. However, it can be argued that supervisees who cannot participate effectively in triadic supervision may have difficulties which should properly be addressed in their own personal counseling. As a corollary to this, novice supervisors, particularly those with limited clinical experience, may not have well-established skill sets and the experience to effectively manage difficult triads in such a way that systemic engagement, community, and the like are achieved.

In addition, we observed that at times, even in triadic supervision with skilled and experienced supervisors, individuals need one-to-one time with the supervisor. This can occur for a variety of reasons. For example, a supervisee may have personal concerns impacting counseling work that he or she does not want to share with the co-supervisee. A supervisee may wish to discuss particular cases alone because the co-supervisee personally knows a client. Relational disruptions between the supervisor and supervisee may need to be addressed one-to-one. Evaluative functions of supervision are often better addressed individually, particularly in cases where remediation is necessary. It may just be that the supervisee needs additional reassurance, and individual supervision may be perceived as more conducive for this type of support.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND PRACTICE

The processes articulated in this article may have significance as a conceptual framework for educators who teach and supervise supervision, as well as for those who are being trained in supervision. Working with two people in the room can be exponentially more difficult than working with one person in the room, whether the work is counseling or supervision. This complex supervision relationship can be taught in such a way that newly trained supervisors understand the interrelated and systemic nature of the identified processes before actual supervision is started. Our findings along with the findings of others indicate that something different, which may require additional skills, happens in triadic

supervision. For example, assisting supervisors in working effectively with relationship disruptions between supervisees becomes essential when triadic supervision is used. Providing supervisors-in-training with a broad model for understanding processes of triadic supervision, including concepts of systemic engagement, synergy, presence of the supervisor, recursiveness, and community as they apply to triadic supervision, may foster more confidence and competence as they begin work utilizing this modality. Beginning supervisors may experience a similar challenge to that experienced by supervisees: selecting an appropriate theoretical model of supervision that works with not only one supervisee, but also with two. Indeed, facilitating understanding of these processes, regardless of the theoretical model supervisors-in-training use, may allow supervisors-in-training to more firmly ground themselves in a particular supervision model precisely because they have a way to think about processes occurring in triadic supervision.

A broad model for understanding triadic supervision may provide one way to examine various theoretical models of individual supervision as they are applied to triadic supervision settings. Researchers might consider, for example, whether a particular supervision model provides a way for these processes to unfold, and if it does not, whether it could or should be modified to take full advantage of the triadic modality. This research may also have implications for experienced supervisors. As an explication of fundamental processes, it may be useful to supervisors as they evaluate and reflect on their supervision.

CONCLUSIONS

Triadic supervision is a form of supervision that, in addition to being both cost- and time-effective for universities, faculty, supervisors, and supervisees, appears to have much to offer in the development of counseling skills. There remains a need for research concerning theoretical approaches which ensure effective practice in the delivery of triadic supervision. In addition, research concerning the translation of models used in individual supervision to triadic supervision is needed. Resulting information concerning developing theoretical models of triadic supervision would, in turn, inform the teaching and practice of supervision.

We believe the model currently proposed has utility for examining specific theoretical approaches as those approaches are used in triadic supervision. Application of this model may also provide a beginning for new theoretical approaches to triadic supervision. In addition, research examining the validity and the importance of the processes identified in this study from a variety of theoretical perspectives may provide further refining or redefinition of this model.

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