

Incorporating Case Conceptualization Drawing in Counselor Group Supervision: A Grounded Theory Study

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While the counseling community embraces the use of creative approaches in counseling and supervision, few researchers have attempted to empirically describe the process of including an art-based technique into counselor group supervision. A grounded theory design guided the exploration of including a case conceptualization drawing technique into six counselor supervision groups. Six doctoral-level supervisors, who were trained in an art-based technique, introduced the method to their group supervisees who were completing a practicum or internship. Data collection methods included individual and focus-group interviews, observations of visual case presentations, document reviews of visual case drawings, and journal-prompted inquiries. Results indicated that supervisor training in an art-based technique is a condition for yielding positive outcomes for counselor trainee development, client treatment, and the supervision group process.

KEYWORDS *grounded theory, art-based techniques, group supervision, creative supervision, case conceptualization, visual case process, creativity in counseling*

Creative approaches to supervision are an engaging way to promote supervisee development of counselor knowledge, awareness, and skills. Gladding (1998) noted that in counseling, client creativity culminates into

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a product that can facilitate insight and promote change. After reviewing current art-based supervisory techniques, Deaver and Shiflett (2011) concluded that including creative approaches into supervision “offers similar valuable benefits for supervisees: improving case conceptualization skills, developing self-awareness, facilitating awareness of transference and countertransference, exploring the supervisory relationship, reducing stress, and improving well-being” (p. 272). Additionally, including art making in supervision has been found to enhance the group process, while making it more enjoyable and promoting meaningful discussion (Bowman, 2003; Wilkins, 1995). However, although numerous benefits have been described, the practice of integrating such techniques into supervision has not been adequately researched. In particular, due to the frequent use of group supervision in professional training, understanding the process of successfully integrating art-based supervisory techniques into this format is especially important to consider (Prieto, 1996; Riva & Cornish, 1995).

Researchers who have investigated arts-based supervision techniques in clinical counselor group supervision have produced limited information about the supervisee’s perceptions of engaging in an art-based technique, have provided no information about the supervisor’s perception of facilitating newly acquired techniques, and have revealed little about the effects of art-based techniques on the group process. The growing interest in incorporating art-based techniques into clinical counselor supervision and the lack of empirical attention to this phenomenon necessitated a rigorous, exploratory inquiry into the process of including art-based approaches in clinical group supervision.

The purposes of this study were to (a) systematically address perceptions of both supervisor and supervisee regarding the process of including art-based techniques in supervision, (b) explore and describe the factors and processes associated with including an art-based technique in group supervision, and (c) develop a theoretical model that explains the process of successfully including a novel art-based technique in group supervision. For the purposes of this study, one art-based technique, a case conceptualization drawing, was selected.

VISUAL CASE PROCESSING AND CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION

The *visual case-processing method*, developed by Ishiyama (1988) and based on the metaphoric drawing technique of Amundson (1988), asks supervisees to (a) reflect on a clinical case and respond with words to a series of sentence stems, (b) generate imagery and metaphors, (c) draw the case, and (d) present the case in group supervision. Ishiyama conducted a study that included 19 of his undergraduate counseling supervisees’ responses to this method. Participants rated 15 areas of effectiveness using a 9-point

rating scale. Students using the visual method indicated that the metaphorical drawing activity encouraged deeper client understanding, promoted the client–counselor relationship and counseling goals, and ultimately enhanced case conceptualization and case presentation skills. He stated that his students found case drawings “more effective in conceptualizing and presenting cases, and personally more satisfying than the non-visual method” (Ishiyama, 1988, p. 158). This visual case drawing technique was the art-based approach selected because it (a) purports to facilitate case conceptualization, a primary activity of group supervision; and (b) outlines a step-by-step approach that gradually encourages supervisees to move from concrete, verbal thinking to metaphorical, visual thinking.

METHOD

A social constructivist research paradigm guided this study’s methodological grounded theory qualitative research design. Social constructivism values individual voices and interactional experiences of participants in understanding how knowledge is constructed (Hays & Singh, 2012). In developing theory that attempted to explain how group supervisors and supervisees experience the inclusion of an art-based technique in group supervision, the ideas of both supervisors and supervisees about how they engaged in the supervision process were crucial. The supervision process, when including art making, is especially complex. A qualitative design, rooted in social constructivism, provided the optimal framework for connecting with and understanding participants’ views when engaging in the multiple interacting factors of art making, supervision, and group process. Qualitative methodology “can provide a rich source of information about the subjective experiences of supervisors and supervisees” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004, p. 294). Beyond information-rich descriptions of the subject experiences, grounded theory researchers attempt to move toward developing a theory that might explain a process or provide structure for further research, and that is useful when there is little information available regarding a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Such is the case with developing a strategy to answer the following research question: What theory explains the process of including a novel art-based technique in group supervision?

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative methodology, the investigator is the instrument of inquiry, data collection, and data analysis (Patton, 2002). Ultimately, the quality of the method is dependent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity, as defined by Patton (2002), is the

quality “of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective . . . which involve self-questioning and self-understanding” (p. 64). Part of my (C. S.) reflexive practice was to explicate my assumptions and biases.

Researcher Biases and Assumptions

My primary assumption that guided this research is that counseling supervisors are interested in incorporating art-based techniques into their group supervision and that counseling practicum and internship students are interested in advancing their own professional development by engaging in art-based techniques. As an art therapist and counselor supervisor, I am convinced of the many benefits of incorporating art making into counseling and supervision. Art making is not only motivating, but it can offer deeper insights into a person’s thoughts and behavior and can foster greater self-awareness than traditional verbal approaches. I believe that counseling supervisors who (a) are provided specific training in a technique, (b) can understand and then explain the rationale for incorporating the technique, and (c) are provided with ethical guidelines for handling the artwork will then enhance the supervisory process in a way that is motivating, promotes group cohesiveness, and facilitates deeper insights about clinical work and greater self-awareness. However, I also think that both supervisors and supervisees may experience some apprehensions about explaining and implementing art directives as well as creating and sharing artwork in the group context. Because I have these preconceived ideas of what I might find, I practiced reflexivity by using a visual journal, explicating my assumptions and biases, and asking research team members to also record their assumptions.

Participants and Setting

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), sampling in the tradition of grounded theory is aimed at theory construction rather than population representation. Unlike other qualitative approaches to sampling, grounded theory requires theoretical sampling procedures. Creswell (2007) described theoretical sampling as “a process of sampling individuals that can contribute to building the opening and axial coding of the theory” (p. 128). Homogeneous samples of individuals, those supervisors and supervisees who agreed to include the visual case drawing during their naturally occurring group supervision, were chosen to participate. Theoretical sampling in naturally occurring situations affords the flexibility to collect data from the most fruitful sources without contriving an artificial experience.

To begin theoretical sampling, the researcher must start with the general target population (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Because my professional

and personal impetus for embarking on this research study was born from my own academic experience, then logically, I selected participants who were current master's-level counseling practicum and internship students and doctoral-level group supervisors at a Mid-Atlantic university. Based on the analysis from data generated, participant data were collected and analyzed until the point of saturation or when no new data emerge, when categories have been developed, variation has been noted, and relationships between concepts have been established (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Although saturation determines the completion of the research, Creswell (1998) wrote that between 20 and 30 participants are sufficient.

Participants included six counseling supervision groups: 6 doctoral-level supervisors and 33 master's-level supervisees who were completing a semester-long practicum or internship at a Mid-Atlantic university. Supervisors attended a 60-min workshop designed to instruct them in how to implement the visual case-processing method, according to Ishiyama's (1988) procedures, in their group supervision. Supervisors were provided research-based support for the technique, examples of the process, a rationale for enhancing case conceptualization, and art materials. Art materials included a spiral-bound journal, oil pastels, markers, and crayons for themselves and all participating supervisees. Supervisors, during their group supervision, instructed supervisees in the visual case-processing method. Supervisees who agreed to participate in this research were asked to complete one visual case drawing and writing protocol, and to present their case during group supervision. Participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were informed that they would incur no penalties or receive any benefits affecting evaluations associated with their supervision or academic experience.

Data Collection

Guidelines for grounded theory research indicate that data collection should include procedures that reveal rich descriptions of "participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" (Charmaz, 2009, p.14). In qualitative research, the researcher also collects data in multiple stages, develops codes and categories, and describes categorical relationships through constant comparison of data and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this study, multiple data collection procedures were implemented throughout the 15-week supervised semester. Data collection sources and types included (a) 6 individual interviews with doctoral-level group supervisors, (b) 6 focus-group interviews with master's-level trainees, (c) 31 visual media and documents resulting from the visual case-processing method, (d) 12 observations of the visual case-processing method presented during group supervision, (e) 5 supervisor journal entries, and (f) 9 supervisee journal entries. Multiple data sources and types were used to increase trustworthiness, as no single data

source can fully capture the complexities of the process under investigation (Patton, 2002).

Measures to Ensure Participant Confidentiality and Safety

To ensure confidentiality, participant information was deidentified. Data obtained from audio recordings, transcribed interviews, artwork, documents collected, and journal entries were assigned a participant code and pseudonym. Once video and audio recordings were transcribed, the recordings were destroyed. All data, including consent forms, transcripts, memos, and other data, were securely stored.

DATA ANALYSIS

The 13-member research team analyzed the data collected according to grounded theory procedures. Research team members worked in dyads to analyze individual and focus-group interview transcriptions. During initial open coding, dyads developed factors, subfactors, and definitions and provided supporting data from each interview. Additionally, each research team member created memos for the interviews. During axial coding, factors were examined across participants. Codebooks for individual and focus-group interview data were created and distributed to research team members for feedback.

Research team members analyzed the visual case drawings and writing documents that were completed by supervisees. Working in dyads, each pair coded documents for relevant factors associated with the process of including the technique in group supervision and provided supporting information for each group. Axial coding procedures led to a composite codebook for the visual case drawing and written documents. Data were compiled and distributed to research team members for feedback.

The lead researcher analyzed and compiled factors and supporting information from written responses to an e-mail journal prompt completed by supervisors and supervisees. Supervisors were asked to respond to the following: Describe what factors are necessary for the successful and effective use of an art-based technique in counselor group supervision. Supervisees were asked to respond to the following: Describe your impressions of including the visual case process drawing in your group supervision as both a presenter and as an observer of others sharing their cases. Factors were extrapolated and a consensus was reached with a research team member. Field notes from nine observations of visual case presentations were recorded. Anecdotal data from field observations served to support or dispute other data sources and types.

VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

Qualitative research has been described as research that is substantive, sensitive, novel, logical, and creative, that blends description with conceptualizations, and that is grounded in data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Methods for enhancing credibility in this study included constant comparison analysis, developing concepts, theoretical sampling, triangulating data sources and analysts, saturation, and theory building (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Methods for promoting transferability, dependability, and conformability included developing rich descriptions of participants, context, and the data collection process, consensus coding and integration procedures, memoing throughout research to document coding and analysis processes, searching for negative case examples, member checking (i.e., asking clarifying interview questions and offering transcript review), maintaining records for establishing an audit trail, and employing audit reviewers. Two auditors were selected to review this inquiry based on their professional identity as counselors and qualitative researchers who have participated in group supervision and understand the vulnerabilities of being a novice counselor in training. Additionally, researcher assumptions and biases were explicated throughout the research process. The lead researcher monitored assumptions through the reflexive practice of visual journaling throughout the inquiry.

RESULTS

The following factors were extrapolated and compiled from the multiple data sources and types.

Factor 1: Preferences for Training in the Art-Based Technique

Group supervisors indicated specific conditions for feeling prepared for including art techniques in supervision. Best practices for learning a new art-based supervision technique included face-to-face instruction using models and examples. Adele, a practicum group supervisor, stated that she “felt prepared just after meeting with you (researcher). I did go back and look through the article just in case they (supervisees) did have specific questions.” Additionally, she felt prepared by being informed by an “article [and] examples.” When Karen, an internship group supervisor, was asked if she would introduce an art-based technique in group supervision without training, she stated, “No. I wouldn’t have because I don’t have enough confidence in myself to do it. You training me the way you did and giving me examples allowed me to have the confidence to then pass it on to them (supervisees).”

Factor 2: Recommended Qualities of the Art-Based Technique

Certain qualities of the art-based technique were noted to be important in facilitating successful inclusion. The technique must be perceived as beneficial to the supervisee and the process and as worth the time and effort, and it must cause no harm. Additionally, the supervisor must deem the technique as interesting, motivating, and as having the potential to be positively received by the supervisee. Supervisors noted that art-based techniques that have structure and have research-based evidence of efficacy are important for successful inclusion. Georgia, a practicum group supervisor wrote a comment on this:

This technique added a whole new dimension to processing case conceptualizations. The most obvious, of course, is that the group members and I did not have to rely solely on a verbal explanation to attempt to understand and offer feedback to the presenter about the client. We had a diagram, a picture, or a symbolic representation to look at and make connections from. For those of us that are visual learners, this is WONDERFUL! It seemed to keep the client present with us the entire time, and it was easy to imagine moving parts of the picture/diagram around or imagine directions where they could go. It just made this part of the supervision session so much more interesting and much more interactive.

Factor 3: Desirable Supervisor Characteristics

Certain characteristics of a group supervisor who incorporates art-based techniques into group supervision were described as advantageous. These qualities include specific training in art making, positive perceptions of their own creativity, prior successful experience of including art making in supervision, comfort and confidence with incorporating art making in supervision, openness to new experiences, the ability to motivate supervisees, and the ability to remain nonjudgmental regarding artistic skill.

Anne stated, "I had some concerns initially because I'm not very artistic . . . I've not used those kinds of creative techniques in my own work." She indicated that it would be more desirable for a supervisor to be "familiar with the method or more creative and artistic than myself." Anne's doubts about her own creativity affected her feelings about introducing the art-based technique, and she stated, "I always worry about asking supervisees to do things that I don't already know how to do."

Georgia possessed the desirable characteristics she identified for supervisors who include art in supervision. These desirable attributes included confidence, comfort, and previous success with art making. Georgia stated, "I think that for me being comfortable and . . . making art myself and seeing it done successfully before . . . is a big plus . . . to feel confident in doing it

myself before I ask somebody else to do it. It seems to be a part of me. I do have the expressive arts certification background and that's part of it."

Factor 4: Teaching the Technique

Specific pedagogical practices for teaching and promoting the art-based process to supervisees were elicited from the data. Supervisors recognized the need to acknowledge and tend to supervisee anxiety regarding creating and displaying artwork. During the interview, supervisors suggested the following strategies to alleviate anxiety: (a) review the art technique protocol, (b) provide literature resources that support efficacy, (c) provide examples of the technique, (d) model the technique, (e) provide opportunities for practicing the technique, and (f) be willing to adapt the technique to student needs.

Michael, an internship supervisor, described how he taught the art-based technique. "I modeled it [and] sent them the articles and we talked about what it is, what it isn't, the process, and how this incorporates into what they are already doing." Sally stated, "I've sent them all the documents . . . and had them read the article that we went over . . . in group in the beginning. We've gone over the actual sheet that had the questions. We've talked about what metaphors are. We came up with some of them."

To successfully include an art-based method in group supervision, group supervisors stated that they must first consider the appropriateness of the technique for their supervision group. Supervisors noted that supervisees need to be prepared to use art-based techniques. Methods for preparation included establishing "ground rules" when introducing the art-based process, providing clear directions, and offering supervisees an opportunity to "explore the materials." Further, supervisors recommended that those who want to include an art-based technique in group supervision embrace constructivist principles of flexibility, negotiation, supportive stance, and understanding of the characteristics of the supervisee learner. One internship supervisor wrote, "training or knowledge of the visual case process or any art-based technique is definitely necessary prior to application in group supervision. Explaining the process using the examples given, especially the line drawing, [gives] the message that this can be done without trained artistic ability."

Supervisees described their perceptions of how a supervisor should prepare a group for art making in supervision. These suggestions paralleled group supervisors' ideas about how they would like to be taught supervisory techniques. Supervisees want a supervisor who will model the technique, provide research support for using the technique as well as the rationale for implementing the technique, provide examples of various skills of the created art product, include a practice session before trying out the process, emphasize the art process over the created product, and provide

clear directions for completing the technique. One supervisee thought “it was a good that she (supervisor) gave us . . . the article . . . the research behind it.” Supervisees noted that successful integration of art into supervision required a supervisor who could competently facilitate interaction among group members. Another supervisee stated:

I think she did a good job of letting us know that we weren't going to be judged on our artistic ability because as much as I love art and using stuff like that in sessions, I'm not artistic. Like, I'm not good at drawing. It's just not my strong suit. But, I felt really comfortable, surprisingly, doing this. I always have this fear like they're going to judge my drawing kind of thing. But I felt really, really comfortable in this group because it was so not focused on that . . . It's not really focused on what I drew, it was more about what I was saying about my client.

Additionally, the supervisee noted that it was helpful when the supervisor “had already incorporated some art into the group, [used] role play, and showed examples.”

Supervisees also noted the importance for supervisors to differentiate between art as a tool or technique for supervision and art as therapy. Supervisees acknowledged their desire for supervisors to demonstrate flexibility with the technique, particularly with selection of art materials and processes. One supervisee stated that it was important to “allow the expression to transcend traditional materials.” Several group members included collage and computer-generated imagery into the “drawing” protocol.

Factor 5: Desirable Supervisee Characteristics

The analysis revealed that certain characteristics of supervisees are more conducive to including an art technique. Primarily, supervisees should be open to exploring the counseling relationship through the creative process.

One supervisor wrote:

Supervisees must be open and willing to participate in the process, explore their role in the counseling process, want to enhance their professional development, have a safe and supportive environment, be open to receive and give feedback, and open to the creative exploration process.

Georgia wrote:

Supervisees should have at least a curious interest in using artwork for their case conceptualizations; not having that, an open mind and willingness to listen, take in, and consider the information presented at the orientation would be a bottom-line necessity.

Factor 6: Response to the Art-Based Technique

There were mixed reactions from supervisees about the visual case-processing method. Supervisees identified several concerns and challenges created by integrating the art-based technique into group supervision. These included anxiety, fear, uncertainty of whether they could convey intended meaning through metaphor and drawing, judgment from peers, and a concern that their artwork would be “interpreted.” Supervisees noted that using an art-based technique requires “sensitivity.” One supervisee noted:

My only concern when I was doing my visual case conceptualization was my drawing abilities. I am not very artistic and it scared me at first to have to draw out my case, but surprisingly, my group was very supportive. I wasn't sure if I would be able to use print-outs to visually illustrate my client. I think in the instructions it should define what mediums are allowed to be used for case conceptualizations and which are not. I was also concerned with coming up with metaphors. As mentioned before, I'm not a very creative person so I was worried about coming up with a metaphor that would really illustrate my client's case, but once I did think of one it was great!

Another supervisee described the art-based technique as reducing defensiveness during group supervision feedback:

Sometimes I feel really defensive of my sessions and people, the rest of the group, seeing a five-minute snippet of my session with the client and then making judgments . . . But, I didn't feel that way when I presented my art. So, I felt more open to their (referring to group members) feedback.

Other supervisees noted a lack of interest and found the process of developing metaphors and creating the drawing too “time consuming.” Also, some supervisees noted that the metaphor and drawing examples provided during instruction of the process were “intimidating.”

Adele wrote:

Although all of my group members participated in the art-based technique, a few of them originally complained about ‘adding another assignment.’ Once they completed the technique and saw the benefit of actually incorporating the drawing into the case conceptualization, they seemed to have a different take on the technique. Additionally, one group member did not want to draw her picture using the art supplies and instead created her drawing on the computer. I did not put any restraints on the students.

Supervisors stated that supervisee resistance grew from the supervisee's perceptions about "not being a good artist," "judgment" from their peers, requirement of "more work," and using unfamiliar materials. Supervisors noted their resistance to including the art-based technique was founded in their unfamiliarity with the process.

Participants noted particular interventions that were useful in reducing supervisee reluctance and fear. These included emphasizing the creative process over the completed product, clarifying the technique directive, adapting the process according to individual needs, and monitoring and facilitating group response to the visual case presentation. Anticipating this possible fear, one supervisor stated:

I'm not sure how vulnerable the students will be. I only think it's really going to work if they'll take a little bit of a risk with the whole thing when a student presents a case I mean I think that I'll definitely have to be aware that the drawing activity can be a window to the more vulnerable areas of people they don't even realize are there. I think I'll have to monitor how closely we truly get into scrutinizing that drawing and I do want to maintain some level of safety and I think that artwork has a way of going deeper than you anticipate.

Despite these worries, the majority of supervisees found the process of including the art-based method to be "excellent," "interesting," and "informative."

Factor 7: Recognizing Characteristics of the Supervision Group Context

The logistics of the supervision group may affect the successfulness of integrating an art-based technique into supervision. Mitigating group factors included the number of group members, whether supervisees were at a practicum or internship level, and specialty tracking (e.g., community, mental health, school). Larger supervision groups, including one group of 10, demonstrated difficulty with time management for sharing the visual case.

Participants believed that groups that have an established sense of cohesiveness would increase the successfulness of including an art-based technique. Karen felt her supervisees would be receptive because "they're [a] good, close knit group." Sally stated that the group factors that would promote the process included that her group was already "cohesive" because of its size, the group had been together in supervision before, and the group had already taken some risks.

Supervisees noted that for successful integration of an art-based method into group supervision, individual supervisees should be "open-minded" and "flexible" with their self and others.

Factor 8: Acknowledging Outcomes of Including the Art-Based Technique in Group Supervision

The outcomes of incorporating the visual case-processing method included perceived benefits for the counselor trainee, the group process, and the client's treatment. For the counselor trainee, supervisors and supervisees noted benefits in cognitive complexity and metaphorical thinking, as well as advantages for a visual thinking learning style, self-care, insight, and reflexive practice. For the group process, acknowledged outcomes included increased motivation, empathic understanding, quality feedback, group cohesiveness, and clarity of case presentation. Some of the acknowledged outcomes that benefited the clients' treatment included counselor trainees responding to client metaphors, cultivating deeper empathic understanding, and developing a holistic conceptualization. Participants acknowledged that these benefits have the potential to accelerate treatment.

Karen wrote:

I felt like the art-based technique allowed the supervision group to explore the therapeutic relationship in [a] deeper level. The process allowed us to discuss counter-transference, counselor blocks to emotions, counselor perceptions of their roles, and relationship between counselor and clients.

After observing a visual case presentation, Karen noted several positive outcomes, including benefits both for the group process and for the counselor trainee. The quality of the processing and feedback after the case was notably "richer." She noted that rather than "analyzing the client" and "giving advice," group members began to consider and respond to the importance of the therapeutic relationship. For the supervisor, facilitating her supervisees' understanding of their actions when working with a client is an important goal of supervision.

One benefit is that it puts the counselor in there. So they see themselves in the art. Two, it allows you to perceive a different aspect from someone just talking about a case. The art can show you things that a person is subconsciously thinking about. So things the person may not verbalize. You see things from different perspectives . . . it promotes more conversation, more feedback and more processing.

For the supervision group, supervisees noted that the process fostered greater "cohesiveness," "feedback," and "empathy" for peers.

Supervisees noted a plethora of benefits and outcomes of using the art-based method for their clients, the group process, and themselves. Supervisees noted that the process of developing metaphors for their own

visual case conceptualization method prompted them to listen and respond to their clients' metaphors. One supervisee noted:

It really tuned me in to when I'm with a client, the metaphors they are already using and, to really repeat their metaphor or . . . use it with them and I always saw a real connection made . . . like they really felt understood and they could take it a step deeper.

Supervisees noted that the visual case-processing method offered "better conceptualization" and therefore accelerated treatment. A supervisee stated:

It just made you examine your relationship more with the client beyond just, this is where they come from, this is what they're like, this is their issues, and this is how I'm going to treat them. We had to talk more about your relationship with the client. I thought it really helped with analyzing transference. Cause you can't really tell it during case conceptualization but with a visual case conceptualization and then the questions that are being asked while we're getting feedback from it. There's a lot of transference that you're not seeing.

Also, some supervisees began to use art materials with their clients. One supervisee noted that she had not previously considered using art materials with her child client. She noted, "And that was a really good, I think, entry-way or gateway for me to use art with my clients because I wouldn't really know what to say or wouldn't want them to think I was trying to interpret them."

For themselves, supervisees noted that using the art-based method created a "perceptual shift," "improved their case conceptualization skills," provided a more "holistic" approach to understanding clients, developed cognitive complexity, tended to their own "learning style," taught them the possibility of using art as "tool for counseling," gained a better understanding of their role in the "therapeutic relationship," began to hear "client's metaphors," and became more "reflective" practitioners. Several supervisees noted that they began to use the provided art materials for "self-care" as a way to reduce their own "stress" and "anxiety." When comparing the art-based technique of case conceptualization to traditional verbal/written conceptualization, supervisees found the creative method "more enjoyable" and found that it tended to a "visual learning style," created "more responsive" group members, provided "more information," and produced a tool for continual "reflection" on a case.

Group supervisees indicated that they enjoyed engaging in the process and found it to be interesting. Supervisees noted improvement in their client conceptualization skills. One supervisee stated, "the visual case processing was beneficial for me to see myself and the client in a clearer picture."

Additionally, the technique affected their ability to present the case to the group. Another supervisee indicated, “The visual case process allowed me to relay more information about the client in ways that help my peers to better understand the relationship between the client and myself.” Including the technique influenced supervisee ability to connect to client metaphors. One supervisee noted, “I found that it offered a way to connect my client’s own metaphors from the session.” Lastly, supervisees noted that the art-based technique developed their own cognitive complexity and metaphorical thinking. One group member noted:

I really enjoyed using the visual case conceptualizations in group supervision this semester. It allowed me to see my clients and others’ clients in a different way than just writing bullet points down on a form. I was able to get a better understanding of my client and her struggles and it provided a more holistic framework for conceptualizing my client’s case. It also seemed to be pretty beneficial in allowing others to see exactly what my client was going through since they were not in session and didn’t know everything that was said. I also think it was a fresh way to spice up group supervision. The traditional case conceptualizations are very useful and clinical, but the visual case conceptualizations were fun and exciting. I think doing the visual case conceptualizations allowed my group members to provide more feedback.

Supervisors attributed the technique to developing supervisee cognitive complexity and noted that supervisees were able to “make connections” and to “think more abstractly and critically.” Supervisors wrote that the technique increased the depth of supervisee conceptualization skills, and they recognized that novices began to “consider the possibilities of a client’s story.” Also, supervisees gained a better understanding of the therapeutic relationship and were able to “actually connect with the client instead of just writing a synopsis and diagnosis of the client.”

The lack of time for addressing counseling topics was a noted cost of incorporating the art-based technique.

DISCUSSION

This grounded theory research was an inquiry into the process of integrating art making into group supervision. [Figure 1](#) presents a conceptual model representing how the factors that emerged during analysis promote the process of integrating a novel art-based technique into counselor group supervision.

The process of including an art-based technique in group supervision begins with the supervisor. For successful integration of the technique, the group supervisor should ideally be creative or artistic and have experience

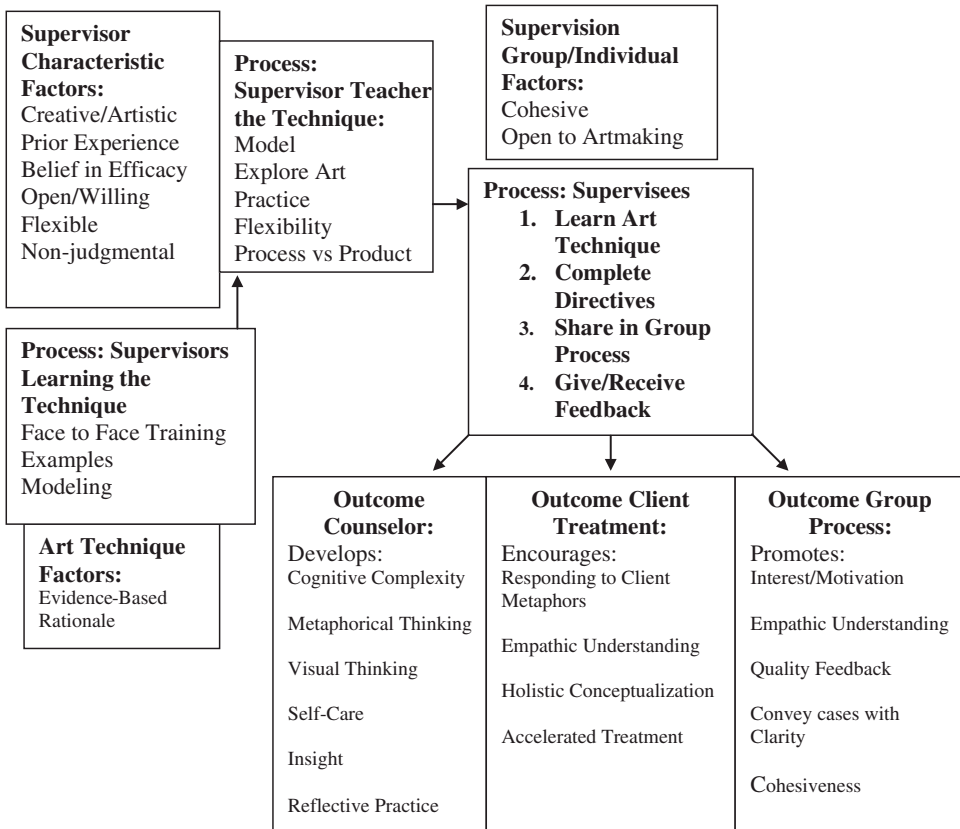


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model: This model displays the factors and processes that promote successful integration of a novel art-based technique into counselor group supervision.

with art making and the technique introduced. The supervisor should believe in the efficacy of the art-based technique and remain open, flexible, and willing to negotiate the criteria of the technique. Additionally, the supervisor should remain nonjudgmental in response to the artwork created.

Successful teaching of the technique to supervisees involves modeling the technique, allowing supervisees to explore and practice with the art material, and emphasizing the process of creating rather than the resulting product. In the group context, supervisees learned the technique, completed the directives required by the art-based technique, and shared their completed visual case during the group supervision process. Upon completion, group members exchanged feedback. Supervisees noted that cohesive groups would be more successful at integrating the technique. Individual members who previously felt comfortable with art processes and materials promoted the process of integrating this technique.

Successful inclusion of an art-based technique into group supervision may produce beneficial outcomes for the individual counselor-in-training,

the group process, and client treatment. Counselor supervisees build cognitive complexity, metaphorical and visual thinking, self-care strategies, insight, and reflective practice. The supervision group may benefit from increasing interest and motivation, developing empathic understanding for group members, producing quality feedback, and conveying cases with more clarity. Interestingly, supervisees noted that by participating in the art-based exercise, they experienced a greater sense of cohesiveness. Novice counselors began to listen for client metaphors and felt that this holistic conceptualization method developed their ability to understand their client more empathically, promoted a treatment focus, and thereby accelerated treatment.

Group supervisors who witnessed these outcomes were more likely to believe in the efficacy of art-based techniques for supervision. With the experience of facilitating one art-based technique, group supervisors are better prepared to promote the successful integration of other art-based techniques. Savvy group supervisors recognize that a key factor for successfully integrating any art-based technique is face-to-face instruction that includes examples and models, is evidence-based, and is implemented with a clear rationale.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The limitations of this research included researcher biases, assumptions, and inexperience as well as characteristics associated with the participants sampled. My attempts to minimize the effect of bias and assumptions on research results included explicating my own biases in writing prior to conducting the research, while discussing these with research team members, asking research team members to describe their own biases and assumptions prior to their involvement, and monitoring my reactions throughout the investigation through the reflective practice of visual journaling. Despite safeguards being incorporated, researcher bias and assumptions may have precluded me from recognizing important factors and subprocesses.

Sample characteristics were another potential limitation of the study. Limiting the data collection site to one local university counseling graduate program may reduce the generalizability of results. However, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), sampling in the tradition of grounded theory is aimed at theory construction rather than population representation. Theoretical sampling procedures were followed.

The number of participants may be considered another delimitation. Thirty-nine participants contributed to the data collected. Although saturation determines the completion of the research, Creswell (2007) wrote that between 20 and 30 participants are sufficient. The replication of factors and subprocesses among the six supervision groups studied indicates saturation. However, one supervision group that did not participate in the research may

have contributed additional information that could have changed the resulting theoretical model. Conducting the investigation at another university may have influenced the findings as well.

IMPLICATIONS

Research findings presented have important implications for counselor education and supervision, specifically when creative approaches are being considered as instructional strategies. Counselors, counselor educators, and counselor supervisors are presented with a growing number of opportunities to learn creative techniques to include in their practice. The creation of the Association for Creativity in Counseling, a division of the American Counseling Association, in 2004 evidences this growing interest (Duffey & Kerl-McClain, 2008). However, incorporating art-based techniques comes with the responsibility of receiving training in the use of arts before implementing them in professional practice (Ziff & Beamish, 2004). Professionals who want to routinely include art-based techniques in supervision are ethically bound to pursue ongoing training to practice within their scope of competence (American Counseling Association, 2005).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Results from this study indicate that incorporating the visual case-processing method into group supervision creates important outcomes for supervisees' personal and professional growth, the group process, and client treatment. Quantitative methodologies can investigate whether there are measurable differences in supervisee growth between those who utilize art-based approaches and those who do not. Specifically, the visual case-processing method serves as a case conceptualization and presentation tool. Quality of conceptualization skills between supervisees who use art-based and nonvisual approaches may have important implications for professional practice, supervision, and education.

Although the visual case-processing method was implemented, for reasons explained earlier, other purposeful art experiences relevant to supervisee training should be investigated. Making comparisons between techniques may assist supervisors in finding the most effective pedagogical tools for advancing novice training.

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