An Investigation of Process Variables in Feminist Group Clinical Supervision

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Abstract
Using a qualitative research design, this study investigated how three supervision groups, each led by a counseling supervisor with a feminist theoretical orientation, understood process variables of feminist group supervision. Participants each completed one semi-structured individual interview and engaged in one of three respective focus groups to talk about their experiences in group supervision. Data from these interviews were analyzed using constructivist grounded theory; standards of trustworthiness were accounted for using multiple tools. A supervision model emerged from the data, representing various clusters of process variables that affected how the participants understood the process and outcome of their supervision experiences. Implications of the model on theory, research, practice, and advocacy are discussed.

Keywords
group supervision, feminist supervision, clinical supervision, psychology training

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There exists a critical need within counseling psychology to understand and promote supervision using a competency-based, multicultural framework (Falender, Ellis, & Burns, XXXX). Group supervision, defined as supervision in which one supervisor provides supervision with more than one trainee (Riva & Cornish, 2008), is the second most used supervision modality behind individual supervision (Enyedy, Arcinue, & Puri, 2003) and has been praised for its various strengths (Marcus & King, 2003). Riva and Cornish (1995) found that the most frequent number of supervisees in group supervision is three or four. From a competency-based framework, group supervision has several unique strengths, including helping trainees engage in cohesive feedback, providing altruistic feedback to other trainees as a way of sharpening one’s own skills, exposing trainees to a large number of client cases, and providing vicarious learning. These strengths are also similar to factors that make group counseling effective (Riva & Cornish, 1995). Furthermore, group supervision can be economical, allowing multiple trainees to receive supervision simultaneously (Enyedy et al., 2003).

Due to the critical, noted strengths of group supervision as a training modality, psychology training programs have noted the importance of group supervision in helping trainees to learn from the counseling experiences of other trainees as well as from their supervisors. Falender et al. (2004) demonstrated how supervision is not only a learning experience for trainees but also a mechanism to ensure adequate training and professional development of the trainee. Falender and colleagues articulated a series of competencies surrounding ethical and culturally competent supervision practice. The authors found that a core element of competent supervision practice was that the “awareness and knowledge of the social context seems pivotal and is another area needing extensive attention” (p. 782). In addition, applicants to clinical training programs have found learning structures using supervision to be beneficial (McIlvried, Wall, Kohout, Keys, & Goreczny, 2010). Empirical research investigating phenomena related to group supervision notes that supervisees are interdependent in their development as professionals, similar to clients in a group counseling setting (Hayes, Blackman, & Brennan, 2001).

Research on group supervision within counseling psychology is of great importance, in part due to the high percentage of graduate-level counseling psychology students who participate in supervision. Specifically, the need to understand if group supervision is preparing counseling psychology trainees to engage in competent practice is an area in need of further research. Fouad et al. (2009) articulated a need for psychology training programs to demonstrate “what they will train people to do and then reflect how they have achieved their goals” (p. S4). Therefore, the need to understand how group supervision is meeting competency benchmarks like the ones articulated by Fouad et al.
is a phenomenon in critical need of investigation. In addressing this gap in the psychological literature, scholars (e.g., Bernard & Goodyear, 2004) have called for the expansion of theoretical models of supervision to help clinicians train the next generation of professionals.

In response to this articulated need, empirical research on the process of conducting counseling supervision using a group format continues to be a growing yet still nascent part of the counseling psychology literature. Bang and Park (2009) have also noted the importance of such an increase in theoretical support for supervision across a wide variety of modalities. Kaduvettoor et al. (2009) conducted an empirical study in which they note that investigations of group supervision have examined phenomena that provided helpful and hindering experiences. The authors found that multicultural learning and peer vicarious learning were helpful, whereas misapplications of multicultural theory were unhelpful and produced higher rates of group conflict. Furthermore, Enyedy et al. (2003) conducted a cluster analysis of supervisees’ experiences in group supervision and found that an open supervisor and honest feedback from one another helped them to grow in their clinical skills. Riva and Cornish (2008) found that a supervisor’s inability to create a harmonious group process and relationship between trainees leads to an unsafe learning environment in which trainees do not learn. Research in social services outside of the field of counseling psychology have produced similar results. Bogo, Globerman, and Sussman (2004) interviewed social work students and found that the students’ supervision groups were seen as positive when the group leader was supportive and also available; however, the authors noted that a leadership style was needed that facilitated trust and safety within the group and also addressed the process of the group itself. Riva and Cornish (2008) illustrated that supervisors and supervisees often have a different perspective on the frequency of the amount of discussion about group process in group supervision; scholars (e.g., Ögren & Sundin, 2006) have found that supervisors believe that they focus on the group process more than do supervisees. These writings exemplify how group counseling theories and processes are integrated into group supervision and continue to be a construct in need of investigation.

Various empirical investigations of group supervision have also helped to identify process variables and to discuss how group supervision creates relevant professional development for psychology trainees. Enyedy et al. (2003) interviewed students in counseling and counseling psychology graduate programs and identified five clusters of issues that hindered group supervision: problems between supervision group members, problems with the group supervisor, supervisee anxiety and other perceived negative effects, logistical
complaints (such as time, selection of cases, etc.), and poor group management (Enyedy et al., 2003). In addition, Linton and Hedstrom (2006) interviewed eight graduate students attaining a master’s degree in counseling and found several process variables that are important and occur in group supervision; group conflict, group cohesion, and feedback from both the supervisor and fellow trainees were all important process variables in group supervision. These studies concentrated on phenomena that hindered the group supervision process; however, an exploration of the group supervision process that identifies strengths of the process is still needed.

In addition, supervisors’ theoretical orientations have been suggested to affect supervision process and outcome (Falender & Shafranske, 2004). Scholars have argued that theoretical orientation may affect the supervisor–trainee relationship; furthermore, theoretical orientation has been shown to influence valued supervision skills (Putney, Worthington, & McCullough, 1992). Fouad et al. (2009) stated that those supervisors who are competently practicing supervision should be able to articulate a philosophy or model of supervision and reflect how this model applies to practice (e.g., legally, ethically, developmentally) with trainees; yet, there is little research that articulates empirical support for models of supervision using a theoretical orientation (Ladany & Inman, 2008).

Scholars have documented how supervisors’ feminist theoretical orientation intersects with their professional identity as a supervisor in counseling psychology. Feminist approaches to therapy have included a core set of values for clinical practice, including a commitment to an egalitarian relationship with clients, the personal being political, and an attention to the psychology of women and of gender that had been noticeably absent from existing approaches prior to their inception (Worell & Remer, 2003). There has been great change within the identity of feminist theoretical approaches to therapy over the past 10 years to include transgender-inclusive, anti-racist, feminist paradigms that include a commitment to social justice and activism (Singh & Burns, 2011). Szymanski (2005) found that adherence to feminist theories predicted feminist supervision practices, such as collaborative relationships, power analysis, diversity, and social context. How these feminist, theoretical variables affect group supervision process and outcome is a phenomenon still in need of research. Specifically, an investigation of the extent to which feminist theories and tenets affect the supervision process is needed to explore how professionals can integrate their theoretical orientation with their supervision practices.

In answer to the above calls for research on a deeper understanding of both positive and negative facets of the relationship between a feminist theoretical orientation and the process and outcome of group supervision in counseling psychology, this study aimed to preliminarily investigate these variables.
study answered the research question, “What are process variables that affect feminist group supervision?” This research study explores group processes within intact, complete supervision groups from the perspective of trainees in the same supervision group who all had the same respective group supervisor who has a feminist theoretical orientation.

**Method**

The researchers used a grounded theory inquiry to identify how participants described the phenomenon of their group supervision process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is an inductive approach that allows researchers to become heavily immersed in the data with the intention of building theory (rather than verifying existing theory) related to the un-researched phenomena in question (Fassinger, 2005). Although there are theoretical models and arguments for feminist therapy, little linkage exists between such theory to the practice of supervision in counseling psychology. This prolonged engagement with the data allowed for an ongoing process of data analysis in which researchers identified a grounded theory of participants’ experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, Morrow (2005) described the phenomenon of “trustworthiness” as standards of credibility for qualitative research that emerge from qualitative research itself and are not based on quantitative methods. The mechanisms of trustworthiness include articulating the influence of the researcher and the world and context of the participant as part of the research process (Morrow 2005). The researchers met various standards of trustworthiness in various aspects of the study’s methods as articulated below.

**Research Team**

The research team was comprised of counseling psychology doctoral student, two counseling psychology master’s students, and one faculty in a counseling psychology program. The primary author identified as a White, male, queer-identified counseling supervisor with a feminist theoretical orientation. The second author identified as a White, lesbian, female doctoral student who identified as a feminist. The third author identified as a White, heterosexual, male master’s student who had exposure to feminist theory but did not identify as a feminist. Likewise, the fourth author, a White, heterosexual male who was acquiring post-master’s education to receive his licensure as a professional counselor, had engaged with feminist theory but did not identify as a feminist therapist. The second, third, and fourth authors were all undecided in
their theoretical orientations as trainees but had all had exposure to various theoretical frameworks of psychotherapy. All researchers had experience or were gaining research experience as trainees in qualitative research design and were active professionals or trainees in supervision theory and practice. It is important to note that the first, second, and third authors were involved in the research design and data collection for this study, and the first and fourth authors were involved with data analysis. This change in members of the research team involved was due to graduation and evolving commitments of members of the research team throughout the process of the study.

Creswell (2008) noted that grounded theory should guide researchers to identify their assumptions about the topic of inquiry and to integrate their biases as part of the data collection and analysis. The researchers also recognized that their reflexivity was necessary to adequately learn about the construct under investigation so that they could be in alignment with standards of trustworthiness. Prior to the beginning of data analysis, the research team met to identify researcher assumptions. These biases included the assumption that a counselor’s feminist theoretical orientation has a significant effect on the process of group supervision. The four researchers also held the assumption that participants would identify societal barriers (e.g., heterosexism, sexism) as part of their relationships with each other, with the supervisor, and with the supervision process. These biases were documented and discussed in relation to each stage of the research process. One research team member had conducted group supervision for counseling psychology trainees prior to the study, and all members of the research team had been trainees in a group supervision format. All members of the research team believed that their experiences led to biases surrounding group supervision being an effective mode of supervision and that group supervision could yield positive outcomes if facilitated competently. The researchers had conversations about their ideas and relationships with feminism as a socio-political movement and biases about feminist therapy as a psychological practice ranging from messages received about feminism (e.g., “feminism is anti-male”) to environmental messages internalized from society (e.g., “feminism is primarily concerned with the experiences of White women”). These biases were recorded and memos were written and used as a source of data.

**Participants**

As other studies investigating group supervision have often not used intact supervision groups (Riva & Cornish, 2008), this study centralized its mission to use a methodology not widely described in the counseling psychology
literature. Specifically, the authors used groups that were intact in order to more richly describe intersections between group process and supervision as outlined by qualitative research. The first author recruited participants by sending out e-mail announcements using snowball sampling (Lavallee, 2007), a technique in which electronic and social networking sites are identified, recruitment materials are uploaded, and prospective participants forward such information to other communities either in person or virtually. In this study, the first author sent an e-mail announcement to four different professional electronic mailing list/s (e.g., Division 17 LISTSERV, the AAMFT) and articulated that the researchers were looking for intact supervision groups in a variety of different settings in which the supervisor had a feminist theoretical orientation and in which all members of the group were willing to participate in the research process. Prospective supervisors and trainees responded to this e-mail, and the first author sent them a comprehensive explanation of the study and spoke with potential supervisors and trainees to answer any available questions. The research team then conducted individual interviews with each participant of a respective supervision group using secure phone lines. Purposeful sampling was used to establish criteria for participation in the study (Patton, 2002) for a rich experience of the phenomenon. These criteria included identifying as (a) being a part of a supervision group in which the supervisor had a feminist theoretical orientation, (b) being either practicing therapists or trainees in counseling and/or marriage and family therapy, and (c) being older than 18 years of age. Out of six possible groups that were identified, three groups were used as they were the only three that met the full criteria as articulated above.

Nineteen participants from three supervision groups (three supervisors and 16 trainees) participated in this study. One group was at a community mental health center on the west coast that served lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender clients exclusively (one supervisor, 4 trainees). One group was at a community mental health center in the Midwest that provided counseling services for a range of mental health issues (one supervisor, 6 trainees). One group was at a community mental health center in a large city on the east coast that provided counseling services for clients who had survived sexual assault (one supervisor, 6 trainees).

Trainees. The age range of trainees was 23 to 58 years ($M = 27.3$), with 3 trainee participants identifying as male and 13 identifying as female. The racial and/or ethnic identity of trainees included three African American, nine White, one Chicana/Latina, and three people of mixed ethnicity (Chicana/Latina and White; and African American and White). Three trainees identified as bisexual females, two identified as gay males, 1 as a heterosexual male,
and 10 as heterosexual females. Twelve of the trainee participants identified as master’s students in professional counseling, three of the participants identified as master’s students in marriage and family therapy, and one participant as having a master’s degree in marriage and family therapy and accruing post-degree hours for professional licensure. Two trainees identified as being in their 1st year of a 2-year master’s degree, 12 trainees identified as being in their 2nd year of a 2-year master’s degree (three of these students were also in a doctoral program in counseling psychology), one identified as being in the 3rd year of a doctoral counseling psychology program, and one identified as having a master’s degree and accruing post-master’s hours for professional licensure. Five trainee participants identified as having a feminist theoretical orientation, three identified as having a cognitive-behavioral orientation, one identified as having a relational-gestalt theoretical orientation, three identified as eclectic, one as integrative, and three as unsure about their theoretical orientation. All trainees picked an alias for the data collection and analysis process.

Supervisors. In addition to 16 trainee participants, three supervisors who participated in this study also engaged in individual interviews and were part of the group interview process. Like the trainees, they all picked aliases to use for the data collection and analysis processes. Gianna identified as a 38-year-old, European American, bisexual female supervisor, who had been a licensed counseling psychologist for six years and had been conducting group supervision for two years. Alison was a 34-year-old, European American, lesbian-identified supervisor who had her master’s degree in marriage and family therapy. She had been licensed for 12 years and supervising for eight years. Lia was a 48-year-old, African American, heterosexual supervisor. She was licensed as a counseling psychologist for 11 years and had been supervising using a group modality for seven years. The range of time since being initially licensed was 4 to 13 years (M = 9). All three supervisors identified as having a feminist theoretical orientation.

Instruments

Two instruments were used for this study: a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked six questions about demographic data. This questionnaire included questions about age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, year in program or number of years providing supervision, theoretical orientation, and education status. The first, second, and third authors interviewed respective participants using a semi-structured format to explore participants’ experiences of the phenomenon.
under investigation (Creswell, 2008). The authors used an interview protocol (see the appendix) with participants that included interview probes about the participants’ experiences in supervision, questions specific to their supervision process, how they felt prepared to undergo counseling work as a result of their supervision, and their professional development. Each participant decided on an alias at the beginning of the interview; this alias was used throughout the entire study. Interviews were 45 to 120 minutes in length and were transcribed throughout the data collection process (the assignment of an alias and transcription of an interview occurred as soon as it was completed) verbatim by the first, second, and third authors. This immediate process was done to maintain the anonymity of the participants and to capture the opportunity to gather data from participants who have been known to be difficult to access (Fassinger, 2005).

In accordance with the standard of trustworthiness of adequate amounts of evidence (Morrow, 2005), all 16 participants also participated in one of three group interviews as well after all individual interviews had been completed. These respective group interviews included each intact supervision group with the supervisor in the group. In line with feminist process (Worell & Remer, 2003) and in order to address power differentials that would impact trainee openness, the supervisors and trainees all agreed to a respectful discussion about the process of supervision and that the information shared would not be used in any evaluative capacity. In these group interviews, each participant was given their transcript from the individual interview to review, edit, and comment on the transcript (also called a “participant check”). The individual interview reviews helped the research team to clarify concepts in the transcribed interviews that were unclear and also gave opportunities for the participants and the researchers to co-construct meaning together by asking one another questions and validating one another’s experiences.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This study employed a qualitative, ideographic design, using a constructivist, grounded theory framework (Charmaz, 2000) for data analysis. The data from both the individual and group interviews were first coded using an open coding method, in which the first, second, and third authors examined respective selected paragraphs of data and created categories based on frequency of words, phrases, or ideas (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This method was supplemented with a line-by-line coding method, in which the research team coded passages from each interview line by line.
to also create codes and categories. The researcher constructed categories from the data (e.g., “culture,” “outcome,” “power”) and subcategories (e.g., “learning about self and attitudes,” “learning about content of LGB sexual orientations”) and ideas about the data (e.g., the researcher wrote a memo that stated, “How might this student’s thoughts about her own self-efficacy as a therapist be related to the overall process of supervision?”). This method allowed the participants’ language to guide the development of categories and subcategories in which data were grouped into recognizable patterns. Members of the research team audited each others open-coded data by taking portions of already newly coded data, coding the data without seeing the original coding, and comparing the newly coded data to the original. Discrepancies between the authors’ coding and the auditor’s coding were solved by discussion until consensus was reached. Triangulating the analysis helped to reject individual researcher bias by “[remaining] attune[d] to our subjects’ views of their realities” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515).

The first author and the fourth author then engaged in axial coding. They took categories and their subcategories from the open coding process and made connections among them by applying the categories and subcategories to the original transcripts to confirm that the relationships initially made between categories and subcategories did exist. Furthermore, they used the axial coding process to see how related categories interacted with each other. For example, the researchers identified whether categories and subcategories were a causal condition that influenced the phenomenon of student learning, a contextual condition that was a characteristic of the participants’ specific time and place during investigation, or a strategic action that depicted how participants handled the phenomenon as they encountered it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, the researchers used the axial coding to see how related categories interacted with each other (how one category identified as a “causal condition” could be directly linked to a “contextual condition” based on participants’ experiences).

The first author then used selective coding to refine categories that needed further specification or development. Selective coding, often called focused coding, helped the first author to sort large amounts of data by selecting a core category, systematically relating it to other categories, and using the data to validate these relationships (Charmaz, 2000; Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These selective codes helped the first author to “check on the fit between the existing theoretical framework and the empirical reality it explains” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 516). The first author used the software NVivo 2 to conduct the open coding and the selective coding
processes to help him identify categories and help him check the fit between the categories that he created with the existing data. Finally, he constructed an analytic framework in the form of a visual model that helped him to make systematic meaning of the associations between themes. As a way of triangulating the data analysis process (in accordance with standards of trustworthiness; Morrow, 2005), summaries of the data analysis and the analytic model were sent back to all 16 trainee participants to solicit feedback. Nine of the participants returned the model with feedback and comments. Subsequently, the revised model (see Figure 1) emerged from the data analysis process and from corresponding participant feedback.

Findings

The data indicated an interaction of (a) three clusters of variables that described influences on trainees’ and supervisors’ experiences in supervision (supervision-focused variables, feminist theoretical variables, and group process variables), (b) the influence of feminist theoretical orientation on supervision process and outcomes, and (c) the effect of culture, equality, and environmental factors on the supervision process. Furthermore, a model that fully captured the richness of the phenomenon under investigation needed to recognize the extent to which these clusters of variables interacted with each other. These respective clusters and their associations with one another resulted in a supervision model described below; this description will address the model in depth by addressing each cluster and corresponding intersections between clusters individually. Within each cluster, the model also identifies subclusters, or subcategories that emerged through the coding process that help to categorize specific variables. Participants chosen aliases are used to protect anonymity. As data from both individual and group interviews were transcribed and coded as part of the process, data from both sets of interviews are also excerpted below.

Analytic Model of Process Variables Involved With Feminist Group Supervision

This model indicated the presence of three distinct sets of variables: (a) the influence of supervisor variables, (b) the influence of group process variables, and (c) the influence of feminist theoretical variables on the supervision process. The data exemplified three distinct clusters that helped to describe the complex nature of feminist group supervision for this specific group of participants.
Figure 1. An analytic model of process variables in feminist group supervision
Cluster 1: Supervisor variables. Both supervisors and trainees noted the importance of supervision variables that affected feminist group supervision. The analysis process helped the authors to further understand this cluster of variables in terms of two distinct subclusters: (a) Supervisor Use of Self in the Supervisory Relationship and (b) Supervisor Action/Intervention. These two subclusters were distinguished by the supervisor’s use of self-disclosure about her history and/or experience in supervision without the intention of promoting supervision/trainee process versus the use of an intervention specifically aimed at facilitating or developing the supervision/trainee process. Sheena, a 24-year-old trainee, noted that she recognized how her supervisor self-disclosed about her own fears (subcluster 1) and uncertainties during the counseling process, as well as processing with trainees how to present feedback and in what ways she would formally and informally evaluate trainees in the group: “[My supervisor] knows what she’s doing without being all hierarchical. . . . She’s good at disclosing some of her own experiences as a trainee so that we know that it’s OK to not know what we’re doing all the time. . . . I have never felt unsafe about being evaluated.”

Cluster 2: Group process variables. The process variables in this second cluster (see Figure 1) involved the participants’ experiences of how they felt that their experience in and as a part of a group affected their experiences in feminist group supervision. As with Cluster 1, the analysis process helped the authors to further describe this cluster of variables in terms of two distinct subclusters: (a) Variables That Affected Group Supervision Process and (b) Variables That Affected Group Supervision Structure. For the first sub-cluster, some participants recognized how traditional group process variables (e.g., supporting other members altruistically; processing group dynamics during supervision; conceptualizing process in supervision as a microcosm to the outside world; Brabender, 2002; Yalom, 2005) affected their experiences of supervision. David, a 34-year-old African American male trainee, was able to recognize how his awareness of group variables impacted this subcluster: “I feel like I learn just as much from other people’s cases as I do from my own. . . . Last week, I felt like [another trainee] was struggling. . . . I said, ‘You should try this resource.’ I felt like, ‘I actually gave a suggestion that I could use myself with my own clients and I helped her out.’”

Data also depicted how this cluster of group process variables contained process variables that were more closely linked with the structure of supervision. Participants often noted how a supervision session’s flexible agenda, vicarious learning, evaluative processes, and beginning check-in processes (in which supervisors triaged their respective trainees’ clients to come up
with an agenda for supervision) were helpful. Participants differed in how this structure-focused subcluster was depicted but often found that they experienced a continuity and vicarious learning regardless of the respective supervision group’s structure. Lia noted, “Our [group’s] structure is pretty . . . well, fluid, I guess. . . . There are days where we really give certain students the time they need to get feedback about a particular client. . . . Other days, our group can be really process-oriented.” Participants who had been a part of other supervision groups specifically noted how the process was often inductive, allowing the trainees to lead the process of the session instead of having a deductive, supervisor-led process (a hallmark of feminist therapy; Worell & Remer, 2003).

**Cluster 3: Feminist, theoretical variables.** In this third cluster, variables depicted from the data (see Figure 1) involved participants’ recognition of how relational attributes, sociocultural process, and issues of power and equality affected the supervision session. Like the previous two clusters, the analysis process helped the authors to describe this cluster of variables in terms of two distinct subclusters: (a) **Cultural, Equality, and Women-Centered Variables,** and (b) **Ethical, Relationship-Centered Variables.** All 16 participants and all three supervisors noted one or more experiences or feelings surrounding supervision that were a part of each subcluster. Gianna noted that she felt as though her supervision experiences were seen as feminist given the attention that her group paid to issues of diversity and social justice: “Coming from a graduate program in which [sociocultural] topics were not always talked about so explicitly . . . the supervision group that I now run is safe for me to talk about how my culture is experienced in supervision and in the therapy I do with clients.” Nena, a 26-year-old, European American, heterosexual trainee, found that power was a large part of how these various factors influenced her experience of supervision from a feminist theoretical orientation:

I love how [my supervisor] always checks in with us. She’ll say things like, “Is this my agenda, or are people OK if we move to this topic?” She’s constantly addressing the power she has as an evaluator and a leader. I’ve not seen the feminist ideal modeled like that. . . . I use it in my work with clients without thinking about it as a result of being in supervision with her.

In addition to variables that exemplified issues of culture and power, participants also named variables that centered around their relationships and that valued feminist tenets of self-care, nurturance, and emotional connection.
in relationships. Sarah, a 24-year-old, Chicana, lesbian trainee, noted, “Our relationship in supervision is so key. We take care of each other. For instance...we each take turns bringing food each week because our supervision is during [a traditional meal time]. We share our culture through food; we energize each other through food.” Alison, a supervisor, also noted relational aspects of her feminist supervision group:

The trainees that work with me know my emphasis on openness and emotional expression. If one of us has completed a celebratory milestone in or outside of supervision—doing well with a client or getting through a difficult time personally—we will be happy and celebrate that in our space together.

**Intersections and relationships between process variable clusters.** The data also highlighted a strong association between these three clusters of variables. Specifically, data illustrated how Clusters 1 and 2 were applied through a “lens” constructed from variables from Cluster 3 to create supervision outcomes. Reena, a participant, artificled how supervision and group process variables merged and were connected using a feminist theoretical lens constructed of both relational and power/cultural variables:

Even [our supervisor] will disclose information about herself and continually ask us, “How are you all feeling about our relationship and what’s going on here?” Further, our group is good at working, you know? We learn a lot from each other and help each other out a lot. It’s the group, it’s our supervisor, it’s our diversity.

**Supervision outcomes.** In addition to process variables, the data also described a number of outcome-focused variables. The authors determined that outcome variables of feminist group supervision were important to understand the multi-faceted structure of the phenomenon. In line with the competency benchmarks outlined by Fouad et al. (2009), the supervisor participants noted ways in which they were able to assess trainee competence in various domains such as client conceptualization. They also noted that such assessment was done in both individual and group formats. Specifically, Alison noted the importance of “finding out whether [the trainees I was supervising] actually knew how to understand client’s symptoms and could plan interventions based on their understanding of these symptoms. I often am assessing through verbal process and trainees’ helping with others’ cases about these skill levels.” Data exemplified that supervision outcomes for
trainees often presented as increases in self-efficacy, noting their own increased self-awareness of issues of sociocultural diversity in counseling, increased skills in both individual and group counseling sessions, and a growing sense of professional development. Data from Sarah exemplified such outcomes: “As a White female in a relationship with clients who are of many different racial backgrounds, I need to talk about those things . . . and, as a result, I just feel . . . like I know what I’m doing.”

The data also revealed that there were outcomes that were focused on clients’ progress that stemmed from supervision process, highlighting competent supervision process. Trainees and supervisors revealed their ability to see outcomes in clients, including a decrease in client symptoms, greater client insight, and overall increased global functioning while trainees were being supervised from the interviewed supervisor. Lia noted, “I often am able to assess my own competence when I see trainees using conceptualization and intervention skills with each other and also seeing clients utilizing interventions outside of sessions with their trainee therapists.”

Implications

The above model depicts a series of process variables to help counseling psychologists describe feminist group supervision. This study had several limitations that are important to recognize. It is important to note that the supervisors who self-identified as having a feminist theoretical orientation may have had specific theoretical approaches that they integrated into their supervisory practice. As there are multiple themes and variations of feminist therapy (Enns, 2004), future researchers should examine how different tenets of feminist theory could be exemplified in supervisory practice to create multiple different ways of providing feminist group supervision so as not to make inaccurate implications about various supervisors. Although the goal of qualitative research is to build theory (rather than verifying existing theory and generalizing such theory to other individuals), future researchers should note the within-group differences of feminist therapists when designing future studies.

There are several implications of this study for supervision theory, practice, research, training, and advocacy on feminist group supervision. The model above helps to both support and expand current supervision theory. The model supports existing scholarship (e.g., Linton & Hedstrom, 2006; Riva & Cornish, 2008) by acknowledging the importance of group process (e.g., cohesion, altruism) on group supervision. The model expands such theory by illustrating how such group factors
also intersect with supervisory and multicultural variables to associate with positive supervision outcomes for both trainees and the clients of trainees. Furthermore, this study’s exploratory findings provide necessary empirical data for supervisors to begin to expand their understandings of competency-based supervision. Specifically, this study highlights the specific Competency Benchmark: “understanding of other individuals and groups and intersection dimensions of diversity in the context of supervision practice, able to engage in reflection on the role of one’s self on therapy and in supervision” (Fouad et al., 2009, Supervision, D. Essential Component, p. S22, Awareness of factors affecting quality, Essential Component).

In addition to theory, the process variables for feminist group supervision identified by this study will also provide a basis from which counseling psychologists can engage in further research to understand related phenomena. The importance for having empirically supported models of supervision has been widely called for scholars in professional psychology (Falender & Shafranske, 2004). Building on these exploratory findings and validating this model and other models of theoretically derived supervision using empirical methods are important areas of future research. With such empirical understanding comes the need to more comprehensively understand how one’s theoretical orientation affects the delivery of supervision services. Furthermore, although scholars have found variables that are a part of feminist supervision in an individual modality (e.g., Szymanski, 2005), more research is needed to fully understand the extent to which feminist group supervision happens in a variety of different settings and how different process variables intersect and occur in different ways.

This study’s findings helped to document how feminist group supervision happens in three different contexts and therefore has implications for practice. Counseling supervisors can use such a model to begin to understand and formulate their own model of feminist group supervision. Specifically, this model illuminates the significance of supervisors’ use of self and supervisory interventions, which supports current scholarship in which authors (e.g., Bang & Park, 2009) illustrate the need for supervisors to begin to conceptualize and understand their role in their respective supervisory processes. Furthermore, this model helps counseling psychology supervisors to understand the complexity with which their theoretical orientation (feminist or otherwise) affects group and environmental factors surrounding their supervision. Singh and Chun (2010) outlined the importance of supervisors engaging in self-examination to see how their own beliefs and attitudes affected the supervision process. Combined with the
above model, counselors must have a firm sense of their own theoretical orientation and how they believe such an orientation may affect their supervision. Journaling and supervision-of-supervision could be important first steps in such a process.

In addition to implications for theory, research, and practice in counseling psychology, the results of this study have numerous implications for training. The data depict to what extent exploration of one’s experiences in supervision may serve as a catalyst for professional identity exploration and increase in trainee self-efficacy. Such results can consequently have a large implication on the training of counseling psychologists to explore the effect of relational, cultural, and sociocultural variables within their professional roles as supervisees or supervisors-in-training. Specifically, this study has implications for ways in which supervisors can train emerging professionals using certain competency benchmarks related to diversity and cultural competence in supervision practice (e.g., “Basic knowledge of and sensitivity to issues related to individual and cultural differences [i.e., the APA definition] as they apply to the supervision process and relationships”; Fouad et al., 2009, p. S22).

Riva and Cornish (1995, 2008) found an increase in coursework related to supervision in their 15-year survey of group supervision practices. The emerging model from this study also shows the importance of teaching supervisors-in-training the importance of how theory and group process intersect within a group supervision framework. Specifically trainees and early career professionals interested in feminist theoretical orientations can use such a model to see how issues of power, culture, context, and social justice—core tenets to feminist psychology (Enns, 2004)—can be operationalized throughout one’s professional identity development.

Finally, the current study has a variety of implications related to the practice of social justice work, a role hallmark to counseling psychology (Speight & Vera, 2008). As feminist therapists are currently being challenged on their involvement with activism outside of the therapy office (Singh & Burnes, 2011), the need for information on how feminist counseling supervisors teach and scaffold trainees in their multiple roles as feminist psychologists is still a phenomenon in need of research. Specifically, the knowledge of how feminist supervisors train future professionals in the practice of social justice advocacy (specifically, working through issues of privilege and oppression inside and outside of the therapy room, the delivery of psychoeducational and outreach programs, etc.; Burnes & Manese, 2008) in their practice is an important phenomenon in need of further investigation.
Appendix

**Individual Interview Protocol**

1. Describe your group supervision setting. What relationship do you have with the other group members *(you can use aliases if you would like when referring to other people)*?
2. How did you know your supervision was effective? How did you know that supervision was working?
3. How are trainees evaluated in the counseling traineeship? Do you feel like your evaluation is fair?
4. Do you feel like everyone in the group gets adequate time to talk about their concerns, cases, and issues? If individuals do not get adequate time, how is that reconciled and/or dealt with?
5. Describe the dynamics of your supervision group. Are there partnerships/alliances between specific members of the group? How do these alliances/subsets influence the group as a whole? What are your thoughts about these influences?
6. Are there trainees who consistently tend to talk a lot during supervision? Are there specific members of the group who are good at receiving feedback? Are there members of the group who find receiving feedback more challenging than others in the group?
7. How has this experience of supervision affected your professional identity? In what specific ways has such an effect occurred?
8. How have you learned about your strengths and growth edges since you’ve been in supervision here?
9. A critical incident is defined as a meaningful emotional or behavioral interpersonal experience that has an effect on a trainee’s effectiveness. Describe a critical incident that has happened to you in supervision? What effect did it have on you?

*(if trainee)* How did you feel your relationship with your supervisor was influenced by this incident?
How did you feel your relationship with the other trainees was influenced by this incident?
*(if supervisor)* How did you feel your relationship with the trainee was influenced by this incident?
How did you feel your relationship with the whole trainee group was influenced by this incident?
Has there been a time when there has been a negative incident in supervision (negative incident is defined as an incident in which your functioning was negatively affected)? What was the incident, and how did you resolve it? How do you feel this incident affected the group as a whole?

10. Describe a time in which you disclosed personal feelings or part of your personal history in your supervision at this site. What type of reaction did this disclosure elicit from other members of your supervision group, including your supervisor (if a trainee)? Did this disclosure affect your relationship with your supervisor and each other?

11. Describe a time in which another member of the group self-disclosed personal feelings or personal history in your supervision here at this site. What type of reaction did this disclosure elicit from you? Did this disclosure affect your relationship with that person? How did that affect the group?

**For trainee only** (supervisee questions have an “EE” following number):

12EE. What is it like being in a group with other trainees who may have more experience than you? Who have less?

13EE. What is your relationship like with your supervisor? If there were any parts that felt collaborative to you, what would they be? If there were any parts that felt hierarchical to you, what would they be?

**For supervisor only** (supervisor questions have an “OR” following number):

12OR. How did parallel process come up at all (for supervisor only)?

13OR. How do you address the needs of different supervisees at different developmental levels in the context of a group? Are there specific dynamics of working with a group (vs. an individual trainee) that make it difficult to address developmental issues?

14OR. How do you incorporate supervisees’ feedback of each other into the overall picture of the supervisee’s development?

15OR. The psychological research talks about the need for a balance in group supervision that contains varying degrees of case conceptualization, didactic training, and interpersonal process. What are
your thoughts on the emphasis of these three constructs? Should one stand out more than another in a feminist model? Why?

OR. Given the question above, when do you choose to use different interventions in supervision (e.g., when do you use different ideologies)?

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