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ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS IN SUPERVISION:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Connie Elizabeth Couch

College of Education and Behavior Sciences
Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
Counselor Education

December, 2022

This Dissertation by: Connie Elizabeth Couch

Entitled: *Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision: A Collective Case Study*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education

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ABSTRACT

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Animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) have been discussed in recent conceptual literature as having potential for positive implications when applied in supervision (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). However, there was limited empirical foundation or guidance for the integration of two distinct specializations (AAIs and supervision). The purpose of this qualitative collective case study (Stake, 2006) was to explore and understand the experiences of supervisors who have been implementing AAIs within the context of supervision. Specifically, this study addressed the following overarching research question and two sub-questions were addressed:

- Q1 Why are supervisors integrating AAIs into supervision?
 - Q1a What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAIs into supervision?
 - Q1b How are supervisors integrating AAIs into clinical supervision?

Three doctoral-level counseling professionals with extensive training and experience in AAIs participated, representing three cases of animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). Participants had been practicing AAI-S between 7 and 10 years. Two cases existed within university-based, graduate-level AAI training programs and one case existed in the context of a private-practice. Five sources of data were collected for each participant (demographic questionnaire, professional documents [e.g., informed consent, supervisory disclosure statement], multiple interviews per participant [average of six hours per participant], which included a

virtual tour of the AAI-S environment and introductions to animal partners). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis within and across cases (Braun & Clarke, 2009, 2021). Cross-case analysis suggested themes related to need for supportive context for implementation of AAI-S, professionals' personal experiences associated with AAIs, common guiding frameworks for understanding the process of AAI-S, welfare and competency concerns, and the compelling rationale for AAI-S. The final report presented the findings as a holistic account of AAI-S. Based on the findings of this study, implications recommendations for counselor educators, supervisors, and professionals were provided as well as directions for future research.

Keywords: counselor education, animal-assisted interventions, supervision, collective case study, multiple case study

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was a hot, clear, Colorado summer day, the kind where the sun is relentless, and you bake if not in the protective shade of a tree or building shadow. A few horses were already in the arena nibbling grass and swatting flies with their tails. There was a sweet aroma of straw and hay in the air.

The three of us entered the arena with folding chairs and arranged ourselves in a semi-circle centered in the arena. My chair, as observer, was a little farther away from the supervisor and supervisee. With notebook in hand, I was ready to observe a supervision session in which the supervisor was incorporating animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) into their supervision. My observation of this session served as a source of qualitative data for my research internship study. I was excited to see the dance of reflection, guidance, challenge, and understanding of the clinical supervision process begin. This was unlike any supervision session I had ever witnessed and, in my core, I knew it was going to reveal a novel depth untouchable by traditional verbal-only “sit and discuss” methods of supervision.

As the supervisee and supervisor set off on the typical routine of staffing cases, the three horses seemed to ignore our presence in the arena. “Olena,” an adult brown and white mare, now fully engaged in her hay, was about 15 feet away. The other two —“Chip,” an adult grey miniature mare, and “Snickers,” an adult brown mare—were far to the side of the arena also enjoying their grassy meal. Olena recently joined the ranch within the previous three weeks or so but the other two had been longtime residents. As the supervisee continued to share, she brought

up a perplexing case. She had been seeing a child client with a traumatic history, including attachment disruption, for about a month. Recently, the child had begun eloping from their sessions. The supervisee reflected on the child's behavior and was stumped. Why was this child running from her? When the supervisee felt she had done everything she knew to do to create safety and connection for the child, why would this client avoid her and distance themselves from opportunities to process and heal?

As the supervisee continued considering what could be going on with her client, the supervisor stopped her and directed her attention to the horses. The supervisee and I had been unaware but the supervisor had been silently observing our equine neighbors and noticed the horses were displaying strange behavior the whole time. The strangeness, the supervisor pointed out, was in their apparent ignoring of us humans in their space. The astute supervisor, as if sensing an opportunity to lead the supervisee to a new insight, pointed out that typically horses wander over to check out human interlopers but, in this instance, they had not. The supervisee and supervisor explored possible reasons for this. Ultimately, the supervisor asked us to experiment by moving closer to Olena, who was peacefully grazing. We moved our chairs closer by about five feet. No sooner had our chairs touched down in the dirt than Olena lifted her head and looked at us as if startled. She began aggressively hoofing the dirt, shook her head and tail, switching it back and forth vigorously, and her skin twitched all over. Next, she swiftly trotted toward the other two horses. At first, we thought her moving toward the others was to seek comfort from her herd. To our surprise, she reached her long neck out and nipped Chip on the rump! Chip jumped and whinnied in protest, then she and Snickers huffed and stomped away together. Olena stood proud over her newly claimed hay trough.

As our shock wore off, we looked at each other puzzled, trying to wrap our minds around Olena's aggressive behavior. The supervisor asked the supervisee to reflect on what she saw and what she believed happened. The supervisee puzzled over this but stated that clearly Olena was upset by something, which seemed to have transpired simultaneously with our move closer to her in the arena. She and the supervisor further processed the events in the arena and after considering the relational context of the horses, they found their hypothesis.

They postulated that Olena, in her relative newness, might have felt threatened by our encroaching on her space in this still new-to-her territory. Then there was an equine behavior layer of their analysis. Horses are herd and prey animals, meaning they seek safety in numbers. But there is a hierarchical structure to every herd. The supervisor offered that since Olena was still "new" to this "herd" (and the herd was still new to her), the horses' behavior was a reflection on the hierarchy and equine equilibrium was still being established (re-established for Chip and Snickers with the entry of Olena). This microcosm of a relational system displayed in real-time, in real-life, a parallel to the counselor-client dynamics between the supervisee and her client. After more contemplation, the supervisee noticed that the horse dynamics even felt similar what had been playing out between her and the eloping child client. The supervisee and supervisor went on processing the parallel between the humans and the horses and the supervisee and her client. The supervisor highlighted the possible internal and relational experience of the child as parallel to Olena and the threat we imposed in the arena, setting off a cascade of power-plays among the horses.

The supervisee identified that her attempts to "get closer" to her client might have been understood (or neurocepted) by the traumatized child's mind and autonomic nervous system as possible threats, sending her client into an activated polyvagal state (Porges, 2004) in which the

child was literally “in flight” from the threat of the supervisee’s care and connection. This “ah-ha” moment and further development of her conceptualization of the client led the supervisee to re-think a few things. One was she had not been working very long with the client and although she as the clinician sensed relational safety for herself with this client, perhaps the child did not. To maintain safety, the child resorted to running from her as Olena did from us in the arena. With this new insight, the supervisee was able to re-frame her construction of her role, approach, and notice that she needed to attune more to the child’s needs for trust and safety versus her own clinical agenda.

In the supervision session described above, the supervisor used her animal-assisted therapy insights and training to purposefully direct AAIs that facilitated insight, reflection, and growth through the emotionally safe, challenging experiences of AAIs. These animal-assisted supervisory interventions offered the supervisee a potent, palatable opportunity to learn and re-orient herself. The above story exemplified the potential for AAIs in supervision and served to illustrate the rationale for exploring these phenomena further. I hope the narrative oriented you to the essence of the possible “what,” “why,” and “how” of animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). With this in mind, the stage was set for the content of this chapter, literature review, and the methodology that follow. My hope is this narrative introduction allows the content to be more alive and meaningful as you read through.

In this chapter, I introduce the background and context relevant to the potential benefits of AAI-S. Following the background and context, I outline the problem, the gap in the literature, and the rationale for further investigation. Next, I hone the scope of this research by explaining the purpose for this specific study and the research questions that guided it. Lastly, I provide an overview of the design, methodology, methods, analysis, and findings.

Background and Context

Humans have lived with, worked with, and relied on animals since the beginning of time (Fine, 2019b). What has evolved into a mutually beneficial dynamic relationship between humans and the animals over the course of thousands of years is referred to as the human animal bond (American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA, n.d.; Fine, 2019b). In modern day society, humans are not so reliant on animals for survival; yet, animals have become deeply involved in our lives. Animals are in our homes and in our communities. Many people consider the family pet(s) part of their family (Animal Legal Defense Fund, n.d.). A financial reflection of the place pets hold in our lives is the pet product industry in the United States, which recently set a new benchmark with its highest value ever, exceeding \$123.6 billion in 2021 (American Pet Products Association [APPA], 2022). For frame of reference, this is up from approximately \$67 billion in 2017 (APPA, 2017). It is undeniable that animals have a deeply important place in our lives. Recently, there has been a surge in scholarship on the biological and physiological mechanisms at play in maintaining the bond humans have with animals. This bond is generally explained through theories of social support, attachment, and biophilia (theoretical explanation of human tendency to interact with nature; Fine & Mackintosh, 2016). This human-animal bond is the source of some explanation of how AAIs work and might provide therapeutic benefit.

Human-animal interactions (HAIs) describe the multiple types of purposeful and beneficial interactions between humans and animals (Fine, 2019b). Fine (2019b) explained that interest in human animal interactions evolved over the last half century and shaped emerging fields related to wildlife conservation, veterinary medicine, and particularly the field of AAIs. Much of the evolution that led to the development in AAIs was because of primarily medical and mental health benefits that have been chronicled in the last 50 years through anecdotal reports

and research (Chandler, 2017). Many mental health practitioners have appreciated the beneficial therapeutic transfer that aids in building rapport with clients and propels the therapeutic process. The notion that this bond might contribute to mutual benefit on behalf of the human and animal partnership is one that was widely held. Yet, more awareness and collaboration among scholars has elucidated that the mutual benefit might best be gained when certain welfare and handling conditions are met (Chandler, 2017; One Welfare, n.d.). Though there has been a surge in interest in AAIs over the last half-century, there remains inconsistent standards of practice and limited formal frameworks for developing competency (Fine et al., 2019). There are developments in the area of structured pathways toward competent practice to address the implicit welfare, safety, and competence concerns for the rapidly growing field of AAIs (AAII, 2021a). Dual competency in both areas, AAI and supervision, is of particular concern when considering combining one specialization with another specialized practice. This is analogous to animal-assisted play therapy, in which the professional has had high degree of training and practice, and developed knowledge, skillset, and competency in both play therapy and AAIs (VanFleet et al., 2015).

Mental health professionals who integrated AAIs into their existing clinical frameworks incorporated specific techniques that are purposeful, goal-directed, and designed to evoke therapeutic change (Bruneau & Johnson, 2016; Chandler et al., 2010). Interventions could range from indirect such as telling stories about the therapy animal, reading a book about animals, or even using metaphor related to animals with clients. Other techniques involved direct involvement of qualified therapy animals such as leading a horse through obstacles or teaching basic obedience commands to a dog for developing a client's assertiveness and communication skills. O'Callaghan (2008) conducted a study of how AAIs were being integrated in mental

health settings. Responses regarding the intention behind the AAIIs included enhancing client social skills and self-confidence, modeling specific behaviors, enhancing trust and therapeutic rapport, and facilitating feelings of safety in the therapeutic setting. Chandler (2017, 2018) built upon O’Callaghan’s work by developing the human animal relational theory (HART) to guide professionals’ intentionality and practice of AAIIs in the therapeutic context. Otting and Chandler (2021) elaborated, providing empirical credibility to HART through a grounded theory by which “consistency between HART and counselor-client participants’ experiences of AAT” was established (p. 1).

Given the increasing popularity of AAIIs across disciplines and settings and the therapeutic benefits many mental health professionals attribute to those interventions, it was not surprising that AAIIs found their way into the realm of clinical supervision. The supervisory relationship parallels the therapeutic relationship in many ways (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Milne, 2006). Many techniques and interventions that originated in the therapeutic context have been transferred into the supervisory context (Milne, 2006). This is a logical transfer as many supervisees experienced what would be considered a clinical issue if the setting was therapeutic as opposed to supervisory. For example, many novice counselors/supervisees experience anxiety, especially as they move from the classroom to applied practice in practica and internships (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Supervisees often experience anxiety, difficulty navigating professional boundaries, and low confidence in their ability to carry out counseling skills they are learning. At times, the emotional or developmental issues facing supervisees could impede their professional development and, at worst, create ethical dilemmas.

As the signature pedagogy of the mental health professions, supervision serves to instruct, train, and support professional development of supervisees in areas such as case

conceptualization and clinical techniques. Supervision also served an important gatekeeping function designed to protect the community. The supervisory relationship and working alliance (Bordin, 1983) hold the space for all the goals and tasks of supervision. Bernard and Goodyear (2018) referred to the supervisory relationship as the “pillar that supports everything else about supervision” (p. 86). Given the importance of the supervisory relationship and the potentials for supervisees to experience resistance, shame, anxiety, and transference, it is understandable that supervisors need interventions and techniques that could assist in addressing those such supervisee experiences.

The supposition some authors have made, suggesting inclusion of AAI-S, was there exists the potential for enhancing the supervisory relationships, fostering supervisee development of insight and self-reflection, and potential capacity to ameliorate emotional impediments to a supervisee’s progress, is compelling. Several authors outlined and discussed the potential benefits of AAI-S (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). For example, Stewart et al. (2015) articulated how they conceived the impact of AAIs in the therapeutic context translating to the supervision context and provided case examples. In the examples they provided, supervisees experienced shifts in insight and professional growth through interacting with the primary author’s qualified therapy dog. Meola et al. (2020) found that an hour-long equine assisted learning intervention resulted in some decreased anxiety and increased perceived counseling self-efficacy among counseling practicum students. Overall, these authors suggested that the very mechanisms of AAIs that enhanced therapy and counseling processes could also be transferred to the supervisory relationship (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015).

Although these publications highlighted growing interest in AAI-S and provided a robust rationale for implementing AAI-S, very limited research has been published on this topic. The majority of work on this topic was conceptual and practice-based, discussing applications of AAI-S in the context of supervision practice (Jackson, 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015).. The presence of conceptual work in the literature suggested this intervention has been underway for some time.

Without further empirical work to support the use of AAI-S as a pedagogical and supervisory intervention, this practice, brimming with educative potential, leaves supervisors without an evidence base to inform implementation. Further research has been called for and is needed to understand this construct and begin laying groundwork for this intervention in supervision (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Extant work established in the field of AAI-S supported the potential of AAI-S as productive and beneficial in certain contexts (Chandler, 2017; Fine, 2019b; Pet Partners, 2022a). A few notable areas where AAI-S might influence are improving constructive social behaviors, reducing behavioral problems, enhancing self-esteem, facilitating client motivation to participate in therapy, promoting a calming effect which increases client sense of safety, and, in many cases, contribute to improved health and psychosocial outcomes (e.g., healing from medical procedures, reduction in isolation, decreased depression and anxiety; Chandler, 2017; Fine, 2019b; Pet Partners, 2022a). In a meta-analysis by Nimer and Lundahl (2007), animal-assisted therapy (AAT) showed promise as an additive to established interventions and a call for future research targeted at examining how AAT could be optimally beneficial.

The parallels between therapeutic and supervisory engagement suggested there is value in the transfer of certain therapeutic interventions to address issues in supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Milne, 2006). As Stewart et al. (2015) and others (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017) proposed, one such class of interventions are AAIs.

O'Callaghan and Chandler (2011) described established techniques and intentions of AAT practitioners' function to address issues such as anxiety, rapport building, and promoting management of stress with therapy clients. Many novice counselors (e.g., counselors-in-training, early integrative developmental model [IDM; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011] level supervisees) experience similar issues as those addressed through integration by AAT as an adjunct to the therapeutic milieu. Given the success found in application of AAT strategies for clients and the parallel experiences of counselors, there is a compelling rationale for the application of AAIs in supervision.

Animal-assisted interventions have potential to effect change in the supervision process and enhance the supervisory relationship; this transfer of therapeutic intervention to supervision intervention has been advocated in recent literature (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). Although there is a compelling rationale for the inclusion of AAIs as an adjunctive element to supervision as it is the therapeutic milieu, very little empirical evidence exists (Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020). Because this gap exists in research, there is little to substantiate the potentials of AAIs in supervision. Further, unique welfare and liability issues within the scope of AAIs indicate a need for appropriate training and ethical, competent provision of AAIs in any context (Chandler, 2017; Fine, 2019b; Stewart et al., 2013, 2016).

In addition to the needs for research as related to provision of AAIs, there are specific considerations for supervisors supporting the necessity of research in this area. The *Standards for Counseling Supervisors* (Dye & Borders, 1990), *The Best Practices in Clinical Supervision* (ACES, 2011), and the 2014 *Code of Ethics* of the ACA all called for counseling supervisors to adhere to standards of practice that promote successful supervision and attend to the welfare of clients. Such practices and standards require supervisors to engage in facilitating a strong supervisory relationship, oft including managing problem behaviors of supervisees.

Supervisees range in needs dependent on a multitude of considerations, such as development and personal factors, and often experience anxiety and stress, especially early in their development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). If AAIs are adept at addressing such features in mental health clientele in certain situations, it is reasonable to extend that AAIs might also be suitable for application in supervision where many of the relational (therapeutic relationship, supervisory relationship) dynamics exist (Friedlander & Shaffer, 2014; Stewart et al., 2015). From this stance, it was clear there are multiple needs for formal investigation of AAIs in supervision. Research is essential to inform the field and present considerations to supervisors who might wish to integrate this intervention in their supervision practices. In particular is research exploring the experiences and process of integrating AAIs into clinical supervision.

Purpose and Rationale

Further research exploring the experiences and process of supervisors who are integrating AAIs into supervision would be beneficial to the supervisory and AAI communities. Qualitative inquiry is useful in exploring such phenomena, especially those that are new or poorly understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam, 1998). Specifically, exploring the experiences of

supervisors who are already implementing this type of intervention in clinical supervision would provide insights that might inform other supervisors who wish to integrate this intervention in their supervision practices. Questions of “how” and “why” supervisors might integrate AAIs into their supervision existed at the forefront of this particular inquiry. Case study research, specifically multiple case study design, was optimally situated for this type of research (Stake, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the experiences of supervisors who have been implementing AAIs within the context of supervision. Further, as relatively little research base on integrating AAI-S exists, this study explored supervisors’ perspectives of the processes at work in AAI-S.

The expected outcome of investigating this phenomenon (AAI-S) was multidimensional. First, investigating supervisors’ experiences with AAI-S might reveal how such interventions could enhance supervision and inform practice. Second, understanding the experiences of supervisors who are integrating AAI-S might help researchers better understand this phenomenon. Third, this research could aid supervisors in reflecting on their own supervisory practices and promote thoughtful consideration of integrating AAI-S. Lastly, research in the field of AAIs would contribute to further professionalization of these practices by strengthening the research base and raising awareness in the general mental health and human services communities of the necessity of specialized training, understanding of animal welfare, and components of ethical and competent practice (Stewart, 2014; Stewart et al., 2016).

Research Questions

The phenomena of animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) being integrated into supervision had little documentation in the literature and remains ill-defined. For the purposes of this study, I

constructed a working definition of AAI-S for this study: AAI-S is generally described as clinical supervision in which AAI is integrated into the supervision process. This definition places the emphasis on the “intervention,” leaving the interventions in supervision to encompass learning (AAE), therapeutic interventions transferable to supervision (AAT), and other animal assisted activities (AAAs). As an interdisciplinary term, AAI is supervision (in reference to clinical supervision of mental health fields). Therefore, not including a specific occupation such as counseling or psychotherapy, to specifically delineate the occupational location of the supervision leaves the term open to clear use across disciplines. This term specifically refers to supervision incorporating AAI regardless of the supervisee’s professional orientation, occupational identity, or personal practice of AAT.

Although there is a scarcity of extant research and documentation, AAI-S has been identified as an adjunct to traditional clinical supervision with compelling possible implications for counselor development and processing-oriented supervision (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). Therefore, it was important to design an inquiry that would elucidate the experiences and processes of clinical supervisors who were already integrating AAI in their supervision practices to create a base from which future research might grow. Since qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding the experiences of those who live the experiences, a qualitative approach was well suited to this type of investigation. Thus, I designed a qualitative inquiry that would guide meaning-making for the purpose of explaining this phenomenon.

A guiding principle of the study was there existed instances and experiences of supervisors integrating AAI into their supervision but little was known about how and why they chose to do so. Given the rise of interest in AAI mental health contexts (Schlau, 2017) and the

inherent risks and welfare considerations related to AAI-S (Chandler, 2017; Fine & Griffin, 2022), it was necessary to understand the experiences of supervisors who had included AAI-S into their clinical supervision practices and how they had done so. Procedures that supervisors used to implement AAI-S were also an important facet because they aided the delineation of this phenomena. According to Stake (2006), an overarching, binding concept is the common thread that holds together a collective case study. He referred to this concept as a *quintain*. The binding concept acts as the goal toward which the researcher is working to understand through investigation of selected cases that represent the concept in action. For this study, the overarching, binding concept served as the primary research question: T two secondary research questions guided the approach, design, methods, and analysis of this study.

Q1 Why are supervisors integrating AAI-S into supervision?

Q1a What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAI-S into supervision?

Q1b How are supervisors integrating AAI-S into clinical supervision?

Description of the Study

Understanding the potential benefit and ethical application of supervision that includes AAI-S is an important agenda. As Meola (2017), Stewart et al. (2015), Owenby (2017) have discussed, AAI-S might provide unique methods aiding counselors in training (CITs) self-reflection, understanding of themselves and work with clients, and enhancing the supervisory relationship. Since the overarching phenomenon of AAI-S lacks thorough definition in the scholarly literature, a qualitative research approach was appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The goal and intended outcome of this study was to distill and understand the experiences of supervisors regarding AAI-S and the processes by which they implement and believe AAI-S is

a useful adjunctive element to clinical supervision. This study used multiple case study design to arrive at a rich understanding of the *how* and *why* of AAI-S (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 2006).

Criteria based, purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were clinical supervisors and had experience integrating AAIs in their clinical supervision. Three supervisors participated in this study. Several types of data were collected, resulting in prolonged engagement and triangulated data sources. Interviews, think-aloud reflections, virtual tours, animal introductions, and documents were gathered from each participant. Data were analyzed within cases and then across cases, consistent with standard multiple case study design (Stake, 2006). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022) provided additional organization and structure to the analysis at both the within case and across case levels of analysis.

The findings of this study included detailed descriptions and a conceptual framework of AAI-S aimed at informing future practice among supervisors, counselor educators, and other mental health clinicians. This conceptual framework organized participant experiences, processes, and how and why they implemented AAI-S.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are either accepted industry terminologies (e.g., animal-assisted interventions [AAIs]) or my own explanation of a construct (e.g., supervisee) added here for clarification. For example, a gold-standard in the field of AAIs, Animal Assisted Interventions International (AII, 2021a) is an international organization offering “community, continuing education, standards of practice, competencies and accreditation for AAI practitioners and animal trainers” (para. 1). The AII’s terms consolidate and are inclusive of other entities’ terminologies that have been leading industry standard terms such as Pet Partners and the International Association of Human Animal Interactions Organizations (IAHAIO, 2018). For the purposes of this study, I aligned most terminologies having to do with practice and preparation

for provision of AAIIs with AAI standards and Glossary of Terms (AAII, 2021b). Of note, AAI terminology referred to the practice of AAIIs with canines only. In contrast, I developed a working definition of animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). My definition includes the rationale for my wording choices specific to the purposes of this study. Additionally, definitions of terminology having to do with major roles and concepts are provided for clarity at the outset of this study, such as “supervision” and “supervisor.”

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA):

Animal-assisted activities incorporate specially selected and trained animals into impromptu or planned activities and interactions that might be offered by volunteer, paraprofessional, or professional human-animal teams. Animal-assisted activities might be unstructured or goal oriented in areas such as motivational, recreational, social and general well-being. Animal-assisted activities teams have participated in a minimum of introductory preparation and training for the populations they visit and the dog they are handling. With additional preparation and training, AAA teams can work directly with a licensed, degreed, or equivalent healthcare, human service, or educational professional in animal assisted education (AAE), animal assisted therapy (AAT) and animal assisted special program. Animal-assisted activities promote mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. Animal-assisted intervention might directly or indirectly involve the animal. (AAII, 2021b)

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE):

AAE incorporates specially selected and trained animals into goal directed, educationally relevant teaching plans that are designed to promote development of general or special education skills in areas such as cognition, social functioning, personal growth,

responsible pet carers, etc. AAE is developed, directed and/or delivered by a person who is licensed, degreed, or equivalent education professional specialized expertise in teaching/education. The process is evaluated and documented. AAE providers who handle their own dogs have additional intermediate to advanced training in dog advocacy, handling, communication, behavior, husbandry, health, welfare and well-being in both living and working situations. Alternatively, teaching/education providers may choose to work in conjunction with an AAA team, a professional dog handler or an AASP who have additional training for the scope of AAE. AAE may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAE promotes mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. AAEs may directly or indirectly involve the animal. (AAII, 2021b)

Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI):

AAI is an interdisciplinary term that describes unstructured or goal-oriented activities that intentionally incorporate animals into human services, healthcare, education, and similar fields. AAIs may be individual or group in nature and are appropriate for a variety of ages and abilities. AAI is an umbrella term that encompasses the AAII membership fields including Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA), Animal Assisted Education (AAE), Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), Animal Assisted Special Programs (AASP) and Animal Assisted Placement Programs (AAPP). AASP and AAPP represent member categories that reflect the wide-ranging nature of AAI, and that AAI service providers who do not fit into AAA, AAE or AAT have indicated the need for. AAIs promote wellbeing and benefits for humans and provide a positive experience for the animals

without force, coercion or exploitation. AAIs may directly or indirectly involve the animal. (AAII, 2021b)

Animal Assisted Intervention Animal Handler: A person who has been trained to handle animals for the specific area and level of AAI in which they provide services (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP or AAPP). An AAI animal handler has knowledge in animal behavior, communication, animal training skills and animal welfare (AAII, 2021b).

Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision (AAI-S): Clinical supervision in which AAIs are integrated into the supervision process. This definition places the emphasis on the intervention, leaving the interventions in supervision to open encompass learning (AAE), therapeutic interventions transferable to supervision (AAT), and other AAAs. Animal assisted intervention is an interdisciplinary term, as is “supervision” (in reference to clinical supervision of mental health fields). Therefore, not including a specific occupation such as “counseling” or “psychotherapy” to specifically delineate the occupational location of the supervision leaves the term open to clear use across disciplines. This term specifically refers to supervision incorporating AAIs regardless of the supervisee’s professional orientation, occupational identity, or personal practice of AAT.

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT):

AAT incorporates specially selected and trained animals into goal directed therapeutic/intervention plans that are designed to promote improvement in physical, cognitive, psychosocial, behavioral, and/or emotional functioning. AAT is developed, directed and/or delivered by a professional who is educated, licensed, degreed, or equivalent in healthcare/human service and has specialized expertise within the scope of

practice of his/her profession; the process is evaluated and documented. AAT providers have additional intermediate to advanced continuing education for AAT theory and practice. AAT providers who handle their own animals have additional intermediate to advanced training in dog advocacy, handling, communication, behavior, husbandry, health, welfare and well-being in both living and working situations. Alternatively, healthcare and human service providers may choose to work in conjunction with an AAA team, a professional dog handler or an AASP who have additional training for the scope of AAT. AAT may be provided in a variety of settings, with a variety of ages, may be individual or group in nature. AAT promotes mutual wellbeing and benefits for the humans and animals involved. AAT may directly or indirectly involve the animal. (AAII, 2021b). A wide variety of disciplines might incorporate AAT.

Counselor-in-Training (CIT): This term refers to students in a graduate training program for professional counseling, specifically in practicum or internship.

Entry Level Competencies: “The entry level encompasses awareness and initial implementation of skills, knowledge and attitudes reflected in the standards and competencies for those new to AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP and AAPP member categories” (AAII, 2021b).

Expert Level Competencies:

This category would include those who teach or instruct coursework, who complete research, publish papers, research, etc. in their membership category or categories.

Members at the expert level have demonstrated mastery skills in one or more areas of AAI membership (AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, AAPP), within their skill set and scope in the areas of theory, practice, research and constructive evaluation of people, animals, or

programs within their membership field. Expert level members are eligible to become assessors for AAI accreditation. (AAI, 2021b)

Intermediate Animal-Assisted Interventions Competencies:

Knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of dog-handler teams providing animal-assisted interventions including handlers who work under the direction of professional providers of AAE/AAT (paraprofessional and professional). The intermediate level reflects those who have mastered the entry level skills reflected within the standards and several competencies but are still in the phase of being trained, mentored, and/or supervised for AAA, AAE, AAT, AASP, and/or AAPP. They are still learning the theoretical foundations of the standards and competencies, and are learning to apply them to practice in their member category (or categories) and discipline. Those with a position of intern, assistant, and apprentices and similar best fit this category. (AAI, 2021b)

Supervisee: A supervisee is a member of a mental health profession receiving supervision.

Likely this person is a more junior member of the profession in which they are receiving supervision and might be involved in supervision to meet educational (practicum, internship) or credentialing/licensure requirements.

Supervision: Supervision in the context of this paper stood for clinical supervision. “Clinical supervision is the signature pedagogy of the mental health professions” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018, p. 2).

Supervision is an interdisciplinary intervention provided by a more senior member of a profession to a more junior colleague or colleagues who typically (but not always) are members of that same profession. This relationship a.) is evaluative and hierarchical, b.) extends overtime, c.) has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the

professional functioning of a more junior person(s); monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the client that she, he, or they see; and serving as a gatekeeper for the particular profession that the supervisee seeks to enter. (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018, p. 9)

Therapy Animal (Qualified Therapy Animal):

Therapy animals...are evaluated on their ability to safely interact with a wide range of populations, and their handlers are trained in best practices to ensure effective interactions that support animal welfare. Therapy animal handlers may volunteer their time to visit with their animals in the community, or they may be practitioners who utilize the power of the human-animal bond in professional settings. (Pet Partners, 2022a)

Summary

This chapter introduced the topic under investigation: animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). A description of the problem, purpose, and rationale for the current study was provided as well as a brief description of the background and context to situate the reader. Although theoretical claims proposing AAI-S might enhance supervision were found in recent literature, minimal research base existed to support this position. The current study explored the experiences and processes of supervisors who had been integrating AAIs in supervision using a collective case study design. In Chapter II, more in-depth background and context for the literature areas foundational to the framework for this study are provided. The topics covered include relevant development and history of supervision and creativity in supervision, relevant development and history of AAIs, and an outline of the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter III provides a description of the qualitative research approach, multiple case study methodology, researcher stance, participant criteria, sampling procedures, data collection

methods, and analysis methods. Chapter IV reveals the findings of this collective case study, case by case, Within case analysis, findings are presented followed by cross case analysis. Themes presented are discussed in more detail in relation to implications and future directions in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Horse is not here
to reward your ego
to compete with you
to punish you
to control you

The Horse responds to
who you are
how you feel
what you think
what you do

The Horse is here
to enable you to learn
how to be a better You
- and that is a blessing.

—Verikios

In Chapter I, I provided the context for the current study, problem, rationale, purpose of the study, and research questions guiding the study design and structure. Here, I provide a deeper context for the study by reviewing the literature relevant to the study.

There were two primary areas to explore. First, the framing for the human-animal bond (HAB) and the topography of the literature space related to animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) is provided. I focus on the potential mechanisms of action of AAIs that support the rationale for inclusion in the context of clinical supervision. Next, I provide an overview of supervision literature relevant to the purpose of the study. I focus on the spaces in supervision wherein AAIs have potential for most impact. Lastly, I return to the discussion of animal-assisted interventions

in supervision (AAI-S) by bringing together the literature threads that demonstrate and support the rationale for AAI-S and substantiate the need for further investigation.

From Human-Animal Bond to Animal Assisted Interventions

Understanding the nature of the application of AAIs in supervision calls for an orienting tour of the complex landscape of the bond that is the foundation for human-animal interactions. Human-animal interactions (HAIs) are the source of the benefits AAIs are designed to purposefully employ for human wellbeing. Beginning with an orientation to the world of human-animal bond (HAB), I describe the hierarchy and framework established in the field of HAIs, which leads to the framework of specialized, goal-oriented AAIs.

Human-Animal Bond (HAB)

The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological, and physical interactions of people, animals, and the environment. (AVMA, n.d.)

This succinct definition of HAB describes the reciprocal relationship found between humans and animals that has existed in societies for millennia. Humans have lived with, hunted, and relied on the work of many species of animals (Walsh, 2009) to meet an array of human needs. Animals have needed humans as well. Domestication, socialization, and integration into human social fabric developed through an interactive dance between a human and animal coevolution driven by mutual needs for survival (Serpell, 2019; Walsh, 2009). Animals have been included as essential partners in human life beyond survival, going on to involve promotion of health and healing. Spiritual and cultural traditions honor animals and their relationships with humans as symbols of the interconnectedness of life and linkage to the spiritual realms (Serpell, 2019).

This human animal connection is found reflected in many sources of ancient art. Perhaps most well-known are the caves of Lascaux, France that are home to paleolithic paintings and sculptures (ca. 15,000 B.C.). Such cave art revealed an era of bounding human intellectual and social development, providing modern humankind with an early example of human innovation in symbolic representation, abstraction, “unequivocal evidence of the human capacity to interpret and give meaning to our surroundings” (Tedesco, 2000, para. 2). Thus, the archeological record has recognized the meaningfulness of animals to their human neighbors from the marks and scratches etched out in dark caverns meant for ceremony and habitation. American mythologist Joseph Campbell (1984) identified animals as having a universal paw at the table so as to say, given their roles as companions and spiritual guides in both ancient and modern cultural practices around the world.

The relationship between humans and animals has evolved from agrarian co-habitation/co-working to integration in the day-to-day lives of humans as companions and has far-reaching wellness implications for humans and their animal companions (Thayer & Stevens, 2019). The foundation of HAB provides context for the *how* and *why* human and animal interactions and interventions might function for human benefit. Nested within HAB, HAIs are the purposeful and novel ways animals have been integrated into modern society such as companion animals (pets), goal-directed interventions including animals for human wellness benefits (AAIs), and as highly trained and conditioned service providers performing assistance to humans with disabilities and medical problems (service animals; Thayer & Stevens, 2019). Animal-assisted interventions fall within the scope of HAI and include AAAs, AATs, and AAE.

Human-Animal Interaction (HAI)

Extending from the context of the HAB, the HAI has been identified as a worthy phenomenon for investigation as a social determinant of health (Mueller et al., 2018). The

AVMA (n.d.) defined these interactions as “encompass(ing) any situation where there is interchange between human(s) and animal(s) at an individual or cultural level. These interactions are diverse, idiosyncratic, and may be fleeting or profound” (para. 1). Thayer and Stevens (2019) explained that HAIs are a fundamental part of human life that consists of the mutual and dynamic interface between human and non-human animals. When discussing HAIs, it is important to distinguish between the three classifications: affiliative relationships (companion animals, pets), AAIs, and service animal interactions (Thayer & Stevens, 2019). The classification is based on the goals, amount of structure, and required training involved (Thayer & Stevens, 2019). While the majority of HAIs include working with dogs, these interactions might involve many other species in varied settings. For example, some mental-health interventions incorporate horses into treatment plan interventions and others might involve smaller animals, such as birds and fish, when serving physically fragile elderly patients (Beetz et al., 2012). The focus of this study involved AAIs; thus, affiliative relationship and service animal dynamics and research are not addressed further.

Before going further, issues with terminology are relevant to orienting to the framework of HAIs. For example, equine-specific nomenclature and interventions are determined by respective credentialing/training organizations. The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (n.d.) instructed on a model for equine-assisted psychotherapy. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (n.d.) referred to their interventions as equine-assisted services and specifically a training model called equine facilitated psychotherapy. Although there are differences in the equine methods (ground-work with a horse versus therapeutic riding), both offer training and credentialing to qualified professionals. Pet Partners (2016) also registered equines for therapy teams to carry out AAIs. The challenges

presented in varied and unclear terminology have troubled the professionalization and clarity of services for years (Parish-Plass, 2014). This lack of clarity has led to terms used in literature and professional services such as pet therapy, canine-assisted therapy, and more.

Additionally, what *kind* of therapy might this indicate (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, mental health therapy)? Such confusion has led some authors in the professional counseling field to differentiate by adding the word counseling: animal assisted therapy in counseling (Chandler, 2017; Stewart et al., 2013). The IAHAIO (2018) developed a taskforce to address terminology clarification and outline ethical guidelines for the welfare of animals involved in AAIs; their whitepaper called for clarifying and calling for use of their accepted terminology:

The Task Force encourages IAHAIO members to have these definitions and guidelines adopted and implemented in theory, research and practice as they stand in their own programs and those of others working within the geographic range of the member's organization. The Task Force also recommends IAHAIO members to promote these definitions and guidelines in their respective countries. (p. 4)

For simplicity's sake and to remain consistent with the guidance of IAHAIO (2018), I included any terminology specific to a species, occupational setting, or professional identity into the framework of AAIs, which is an accepted industry standard for terminology. For example, equine assisted learning (a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International term) was included in animal assisted education and equine facilitated psychotherapy. Further, as the specific species and type of intervention were not the focus of this study, I defined the phenomenon of supervision interventions including animals as AAI-S.

Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI)

Next, the HAB hierarchy honed into the specific design and application of interventions involving qualified humans and qualified animals to achieve wellness goals of humans: AAIs.

Animal-assisted interventions are goal-oriented and structured interventions that intentionally incorporate animals in health, education, and human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness. In all these interventions, the animal may be part of a volunteer therapy animal team working under the direction of a professional or an animal that belongs to the professional. (Pet Partners, 2022a, para. 1)

Animal-assisted intervention is an umbrella term (see Figure 2) for three specific types of interventions: AAAs, AATs, and AAEs. Each of these branches is discussed in more depth later.

Qualified Human-Animal Teams

To promote the professionalization of AAIs and protect both human and animal welfare, only qualified, trained professionals (therapy team handlers, teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists) should provide any type of AAIs. Here, I provide a synopsis of the criteria and requirements for ethical provision of AAIs. I focus on the parameters of registering as a therapy team with only one organization (Pet Partners [PP], 2016) to provide an example of the high standards and rigorous training involved in becoming a registered therapy team for provision of AAIs. Pet Partners is a training and credentialing body for registered therapy teams. A therapy team includes a qualified human and qualified animal and provides AAIs. Pet Partners currently registers nine species of animals as members of therapy teams: dogs, cats, equines, rabbits, guinea pigs, llamas and alpacas, birds, miniature pigs, and rats. Pet Partners' website describes their work and role succinctly:

Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted therapy, activities, and education. With more than

10,000 registered teams making more than 3 million visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation's most diverse and respected nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit in a wide variety of settings and in various communities across the country and beyond with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students, veterans with PTSD, people who have experienced crisis events, and those approaching end of life.

(para. 1)

Both animal and human members of a registered team must meet specific criteria. For example, a prospective therapy animal must have no history of aggression/injury to others, have basic mastery of obedience skills (walking on a loose leash, respond reliably to commands such as "sit", "down", etc.), welcome interactions with strangers (not just tolerate), among other criteria. Prospective therapy animals need to be "just right"—able to maneuver among people and possible other animals without becoming overly stressed and reactive. The prospective handler should, among other things, understand their animal partner's individual signals of stress (e.g., concern, overstimulated, tired) and be able to redirect their animal without use of physical force, vocal volume, or coercion using food/toys.

Clearly, there is much more to the provision of AAIs than simply having a pet accompanying their human at work. Schlau's (2017) aptly titled professional counseling article, "Bring Your Dog to Work Day: What Animal Assisted Therapy Is Not," highlighted the problematic nature, risk, and liability of or bringing a pet to the workplace and, further, the unethical, unqualified provision of animal-assisted therapy. She described that well-intentioned, loving pet owners desire accompaniment by their pets at work and might be drawn to integrate their pets into therapeutic activities with clients. However, doing so concerned several ethical

and legal issues that could endanger clients, the animal, and even professional credentials (Schlau, 2017).

Partnering with Animals as Co-Therapists

Foremost in this discussion is consent; consent should always be addressed with a group, setting, individual receiving AAIs prior to inclusion of an animal in an AAI whether the handler is qualified to do so or not. This should appear in the informed consent and/or professional disclosures involved in one's professional practice. Consent of the animal should also be considered as a component of animal welfare. This means the human has a responsibility to attend to the animal's needs and signals (signs of biological needs like hunger, thirst, and stress level). Forcing an animal to perform in an AAI by disregarding their needs is cruel and could result in unintended harm to others or the animal.

Underscoring the shift in thinking about consent and partnership with a qualified therapy animal, some practitioners referred to their therapy animals as their "pet practitioner" (Chandler, 2017) or "co-therapist" (Levinson, 1962). Boris Levinson (1962), considered by some as a grandfather of AAT, famously wrote about the accidental inclusion of his dog, Jingles, in a child therapy session and subsequently published his experiences in an article titled "*The Dog as a Co-Therapist.*" The paradigm shift representing framing a therapy animal as a pet practitioner or co-therapist truly spoke to the recognition of agency and individual needs and desires animals have. Further, using such terminology promotes awareness of this shift in view of the animal as an autonomous partner rather than an object of capitalist relationship to be used for human gain. A colleague of mine shared of a local (to her) therapist who involved equines in his psychotherapeutic interventions. Each day, he went to the paddock and told the horses the client's scheduled for the day and asked the horses for volunteers. Horses wishing to be involved

that day (volunteer) stepped forward, indicating their readiness and interest in engaging in therapy services that day (L. Schaewe, April 13, 2021, personal communication). Although anecdotal, this story embodied respect and appreciation for the animal's consent to be involved in an intervention role.

Other human factors plague unethical and unqualified involvement of animals in interventions. Clients, students, and patients might have aversions (fears, phobias) or allergies to animals and to assume inclusion of an animal in the therapy process could cause harm to that person. Animal assisted intervention providers should carefully screen clients to avoid harm (Chandler, 2017). For example, individuals with history of animal abuse would be a poor match for AAT. Similarly, animals involved in a classroom setting with children who have severe emotional and behavioral issues might warrant additional safety guards to protect the animal and children. Above all, the professional providing the AAI is the animal's advocate and the ability to read and communicate with the animals to prevent harm is essential (Chandler, 2017).

Animal assisted interventions have been widely accepted as a potentially beneficial additive to conventional therapies, activities, and educational practices that aim to improve the health and well-being of humans (Beetz, 2017; Chandler, 2017; Fine, 2019a). The potential for benefits of AAI cuts across therapeutic, educational, and healthcare domains and has garnered interest of researchers seeking to define mechanisms of action responsible for the effects of AAI and to determine the extent of impact to clients, students, and patients (Beetz, 2017; Wells, 2019). Potential mechanisms of action for HAI and AAI are discussed later.

Animal Assisted Activities (AAA)

The primary distinction among AAAs, AAT, and AAE is AAAs are informal. Although they are informal, this does not mean they are any less goal-directed or intentionally planned

interactions with humans in varied settings for motivational, educational, and recreational purposes. A central feature of AAAs is the focus on enhance(ing) quality of life (Pet Partners, 2022a). Human-animal teams providing AAAs might work directly with professionals in health care, education, and/or other human service settings to support client, student, or patient goals. For example, AAAs might be provided in hospitals to boost morale of patients or encourage movement in recovery, in nursing homes to greet and mingle with residents, at universities (and other locations known as high stress inducing, like airports) to provide stress reduction, on hospice units providing connection and companionship, or motivating at-risk youth. Animal assisted activities also include animal-assisted crisis response and animal-assisted workplace well-being. Animal-assisted crisis response

provides comfort to those who have been affected by natural, human-caused, or technological disasters. Animal-assisted crisis response is effective because the safety, familiarity, novelty, and interest in the animal have been found to be impactful when building rapport with a person affected by crisis. (Pet Partners, 2022a)

Animal-assisted workplace well-being involves a therapy team visit to a workplace in which the activities

boost employee morale and satisfaction and increase productivity. Numerous studies have shown that when people take just a few moments to pet an animal, their stress is reduced. Research also shows that animals in the workplace often lead to more productive coworker interaction, increased trust levels between colleagues, and more effective collaboration. (Pet Partners, 2022a)

Animal assisted activities do not require the same intensity of structured and goal-oriented programming; therefore, they might tend to be more spontaneous and offer a range of

interactions. Several explanations are offered on the function of an animal playing a motivational or social role in interactions with humans. The benefits of AAAs are largely believed to be grounded in motivational, stress reducing, and social lubrication processes that promote human wellness (Beetz, 2017; Wells, 2019).

Animal-Assisted Education (AAE)

Animal-assisted education (AAE; sometimes referred to as animal-assisted pedagogy; IAHAIO, 2018) is also a goal-oriented intervention but it is more structured than AAAs. Another distinctive feature is AAE is directed by education professionals (e.g., general education, special education teacher). The primary rationale of an AAE provision is to facilitate progress toward academic goals, develop prosocial skills, and, at times, promote improved cognitive functioning. Student progress toward academic and social goals must be measured and documented (IAHAIO, 2018; Pet Partners, 2022a).

Examples of AAE are typically found in learning settings such as local libraries and schools. Many general education elementary classrooms have classroom animals (guinea pigs, rabbits) or might incorporate other animals in programs for special education purposes (Brelsford et al., 2017). Beetz et al. (2012) reported that classrooms that simply housed an animal could lead to improved (general) concentration, motivation, and relaxation in students. The most common involvement of animals in education is through reading programs and are also the most empirically supported (Brelsford et al., 2017).

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

Pet Partners (2022b) offered a succinct description of AAT:

[AAT] is a goal-oriented, planned, structured, and documented therapeutic intervention directed by health and human service providers as part of their profession. A wide variety

of disciplines may incorporate AAT. Possible practitioners could include physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, certified therapeutic recreation specialists, nurses, social workers, speech therapists, or mental health professionals. (n.p.)

Animal-assisted therapy maintains a focus on achieving specific goals related to enhancing cognitive, emotional, physical, or social functions (Thayer & Stevens, 2019). As previously stated, terminology and confusion exist when there is no differentiation in an occupation providing the AAT. Medical or physical health interventions could include facilitating movement and recovery activities in people who have spinal cord injuries (Beetz et al., 2012). Animal-assisted therapies have been specifically designed to evoke language or social development for children with autism (Chandler, 2017).

Of particular interest to the subject matter central to this study were the applications of AAT in mental health settings. Stewart et al. (2015) and others (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Owenby, 2017) suggested transferability of AAT interventions to the realm of supervision. A wealth of literature substantiated AAT as an agent of change in mental health wellbeing. For example, interacting with animals promoted activation in attachment and oxytocin systems (Beetz, 2017; Chandler, 2017; Wells, 2019). Evidence showed that interaction with animals had a calming effect due to activating the parasympathetic nervous system, regulating a human's flight/fight/freeze response (Carter & Porges, 2016). A primary benefit of AAT interventions, though, might be in their ability to act as a catalyst for forming trust and a sense of safety when entering the therapy process (Chandler, 2017).

Animal-Assisted Techniques and Intentions

O'Callaghan's (2008) exploratory survey research of 31 mental health professionals who incorporated AAT into their therapeutic process revealed 18 specific techniques and 10

intentions for the practice of AAT in counseling professions. She found the 18 animal-assisted therapy techniques (e.g., counselor reflects/comments on client's relationship with therapy animal; counselor encourages client to play with therapy animal during session; counselor encourages client to perform commands with therapy animal; counselor comments or reflects on spontaneous client–animal interactions; counselor shares animal stories/metaphors; counselor has therapy animal present without any directive interventions; counselor creates specific/structured activities with therapy animal; counselor allows therapy animal to engage with client in spontaneous moments that facilitate therapeutic discussion; pp. 92-93) and 10 animal-assisted therapy intentions (building rapport in the therapeutic relationship; facilitating insight; enhancing client's social skills; enhancing client's relationship skills; enhancing client's self-confidence; modeling specific behaviors; encouraging sharing of feelings; enhancing trust within the therapeutic environment; facilitating feelings of being safe in the therapeutic environment; pp. 94-95) were integrated into the mental health treatment milieu in various ways to address numerous intentions, often many at a time. O'Callaghan's initial work and subsequent publication with Chandler (O'Callaghan & Chandler, 2011) provided valuable information about how and why interventions were employed in psychotherapeutic settings. An important outcome of this research was the confirmation of what has been shown in AAI literature and in anecdotal reports by professionals: "a prominent AAT intention is to enhance therapeutic rapport through the client–therapy animal relationship" (Chandler et al., 2010, p. 100). The implication this dynamic, intention, and outcome has for supervision experiences was AAIs might feasibly promote important qualities in the supervisory relationship.

It was clear to see why there was such a draw and rise in popularity of AAT and why the field of AAIs has quickly become more accepted as complementary wellness interventions to

existing therapies for humans (Fine et al., 2019). With the increasing draw to AAT and promotion of benefits in the public, more professionals are seeking ways to “join the herd” (Stewart et al., 2016). In 2016, the ACA adopted professional competencies for animal-assisted therapy in counseling (Stewart et al., 2016). These competencies provided much needed guidance on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of competent animal-assisted therapy practitioners. The ACA promotion of competency with AATs was a major step in the direction of continued safe and ethical practice and recognition of AAT as a specialization within the larger mental health field. Continued efforts toward the professionalization of AAT and recognition as a specialization in the field of professional counseling would hopefully improve ethical practices and the quality of services moving forward.

The compelling nature of AAIs that draws people, professionally and personally, toward AAIs also begs the questions “how” and “why”? What are the mechanisms of action in AAIs? Why do people feel better when they are interacting with animals? Next, I highlight the commonly accepted underpinning mechanisms in human-animal interactions/AAIs. I am describing the next section as potential explanations for the function of the human-animal bond and interventions due to the issue of terminology confusion rife in the field; thus, there has been sometimes little distinction between the two or they are referred to interchangeably.

Potential Explanations for the Human-Animal Bond and Interventions

Considerable effort has been made toward identifying and defining the mechanisms of action responsible for the benefits experienced in human-animal connections and illuminating how animals might promote human health (Fine, 2019b). Beetz (2017) encouraged researchers to keep searching for explanatory evidence and stated it was important to understand the how and

why of AAIs because “these processes can also indicate the conditions that need to be met in order to gain the desired effects of AAI” (p. 139).

In her 2019 review, Wells described the current landscape of posited explanations for the effect and benefits of the human animal connection. She reported there was ongoing debate regarding the complex relationship between humans and animals and the effect of animals on human health. Together, Beetz (2017) and Wells (2019) outlined current dominant concepts including biophilia, anthropomorphism, social lubrication, companionship and caregiving, motivation, physical fitness, human experiential (versus verbal) symbolic system, distraction, and more contemporary biological explanations of stress reduction, attachment, and activation of the oxytocin system.

Biophilia

Perhaps the most recognized attempt to explain the human-animal phenomenon came from “biophilia.” In *Biophilia* (Wilson, 1984), a conceptual framework was introduced offering an explanation for the apparent human biological draw toward animals. Wilson called it the biophilia hypothesis. He presented a convergence of sociological, anthropological, and scientific rationales that culminated with his thesis: the propensity of humans to be attracted to nature, animals, and find a peacefulness in and calm in nature had, at least in part, a genetic basis. Wilson (1984) suggested human survival depended on human relationships with animals for food, work, and signals of potential danger; this was an evolutionary, genetically encoded aspect of humanity (Beetz, 2017; Mormann et al., 2011). Wells (2019) warned that the biophilia hypothesis alone should be considered with caution. She echoed Joye (2011) in calling out the biophilia concept as an expansive construct with too little evidence to be considered a conclusive theory for AAI research.

Anthropomorphization

Anthropomorphization is a human cognitive tendency to assign human feelings, mental states, and intentionality to non-human entities (flora, fauna, and nature alike, e.g., seeing empathy and understanding in the sweet eyes of a golden retriever). Beetz (2017) noted this tendency is usually undesirable, resulting in humans dressing their animal companions in cute outfits and assuming they enjoy the same activities as humans (e.g., going shopping, etc.). Unfortunately, this tendency could be harmful to animals by blinding humans to animals' warning signals of stress, thus creating a welfare issue for the animals (Fine et al., 2019). However, Beetz acknowledged that by the same token, it could have a positive effect as it promotes empathy for humans to understand animal needs and behaviors, which is good for the animal. This ability to empathize with animals might contribute to why humans respond so positively to AAI.

Social Lubrication

The tasks of companion animal ownership might offer insight into the psychological wellbeing experienced by pet owners. Companion animals often require daily walks, grooming, and other activities that in turn are a catalyst for socialization for the owner (Wells, 2004), similar to the idea of behavioral activation in cognitive behavioral therapy (Ruggiero et al., 2018). This then leads to significantly higher instances of social connections, impromptu conversations, and other potential social encounters which can enhance the human's potential social wellbeing. However, this seems to be relegated to strangers' reactions to animals with certain features (like puppies vs. older dogs; Wells, 2004).

Companionship and Caregiving

Another popular explanation offered in the HAB/AAI research community is the role of companionship and caregiving of animals. It is possible the simple provision of companionship given by pets is where the benefits of the human-animal connection are derived. Research describing the effects and experiences of isolated individuals and nursing home residents seemed to support this claim, particularly in relation to the involvement of AAT with elders (Sellers, 2006). Caregiving of animals (e.g., feeding, grooming) might have similar effects as receiving other forms of social support (Julius et al., 2013). Beetz (2017) shared that animals are also typically eager recipients of caregiving, which might also contribute to the companionship dynamic at play in the HAB and AAI.

Motivation

Components of motivation theory offer a compelling theory for functions contributing to AAI. Motivation has been historically accepted as important to learning and social wellness (Beetz, 2017). Some authors articulated a clear preference specifically for intrinsic motivation (as opposed to extrinsic motivating forces), saying it produced better and longer lasting outcomes (Harpine, 2015). Intrinsic motivation is primarily aroused through the experiential system (discussed later), is inherently involved in HAI, and is a product of the multi-sensory experience of HAI and the low involvement in human verbal systems (Beetz, 2017; Wohlfarth et al., 2013). For example, an animal-assisted education program (with dogs) provided support indicating the dogs had a positive impact on the intrinsic motivation of children's reading (Beetz, 2017; Beetz & McCardle, 2017; Beetz et al., 2012). Human-animal interactions might present openings to access and develop intrinsic motivation and related personal successes without fear of extrinsic

consequences by removing evaluation, social consequences, grades, and other forms of external motivators.

Physical Fitness

Physical wellbeing and healthcare outcomes tied to HAI are likely a product of an increase in physical exercise that comes with the territory of pet ownership or involvement with animals in rehabilitation settings (Bauman et al., 2001; Brown & Rhodes, 2006). When compared to non-pet-owners, pet-owners were found to engage in exercise more, although this is typically truer of more active animals like dogs versus lazier ones, like cats (Christian et al., 2013; Pruchno et al., 2018) but a warning in interpreting this might be many dog owners do not actually walk their own dogs. The Human Animal Bond Research Institute (n.d.) produced a great deal of educational initiatives designed to educate the public on the health benefits of simply walking their dogs.

Human Experiential Symbolic System

It is thought the processing and motivation arousal actions related to the human experiential system are what explains the function and benefit of AAIs (Beetz, 2017). Schultheiss (2001) described that in experiential systems, the perception of reality is processed through the human palate of sensory experiences (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, touch, vestibular, proprioception, interoception) and is ingrained in human behavior, subconscious thought, and emotion. Epstein (1994) called this implicit-experiential functioning, according to his cognitive experiential self-theory of personality, and is dependent on “experiences, implicit memories, and phylogenetically old processes, which are closely related to emotions and motives” (Beetz, 2017, p. 142). Whereas the verbal-symbolic system or explicit-cognitive functioning (Epstein, 1994), in which reality is processed and understood as conscious, verbal

communication uses words and symbols to engage “analytic-rational thinking and declarative memory and occurred relatively late in human phylogeny” (Beetz, 2017, p. 142). Most human-to-human communication takes place in the latte, and Beetz (2017) suggested the experiential system activation is how the primarily emotion based, intuitive communication with an animal occurs. Thus, the HAI helps balance these modes of human cognitive processing and the non-verbal/para-verbal communication in HAIs results in stimulation of motivation and improved mood.

Distraction

Beetz (2017) reported that although there was little research to support this, anecdotal sources seemed to support the distraction animals offer from pain and anxiety could contribute to the effect of AATs and might be a component of underlying explanatory mechanisms.

Stress Reduction Through Social Support and Presence of Animals

This concept offers a compelling argument for the positive effects of human-animal interaction. Social support theories provided explanations of stress regulation and often suggested stress reduction could be affected through physical contact and emotional support. Beetz (2017) and Wells (2019) both highlighted literature indicating the promise of animal involvement in reducing negative emotions and stress levels via social support mechanisms. However, Beetz and Wells diverged in where they, respectively, attributed stress reduction origination. Beetz emphasized attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1963; Bowlby, 1969) as a primary component of the net reduction in stress among humans interacting with animals, which is discussed in more depth later. Wells maintained that the primary component of stress reduction as related to HAB/HAI/AAI was associated with the documentation of lowered autonomic nervous system response stresses. Wells gave Shiloh et al. (2003) as an example—they reported

that simply stroking or seeing an animal (usually one that was familiar), repeatedly resulted in at least transient reductions in heart rate. However, Wells acknowledged it was possible the presence of an animal might simply provide a buffer to a stressful condition, similar to Beetz's suggestion of animals' provision of distraction from emotional, psychological, or physical pain. Although García-Gómez et al. (2020) highlighted multiple methodological issues in the overarching body of research on the subject, their review also, at least tentatively, identified that activating the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) could cultivate a state of relaxation for humans involved in equine-assisted interventions, which seemed to support the thesis behind stress-reduction in relation to the HAB/AAIs.

A study by Pendry and Vandagriff (2019) aimed in part at responding to the call for rigorous evidence base and examined human physiological components of stress as related to contact with animal-assisted interventions. In their randomized controlled trial, researchers investigated the extent to which a college-based animal visitation program (which would be considered an AAA) affected college students' self-regulation and coping with academic stress by measuring salivary cortisol levels. Cortisol is a hormone that triggers a cascade of biophysiological reactions during times of stress and is regularly used as a biomarker of stress (Hellhammer et al., 2009). Pendry and Vandagriff noted the salivary cortisol levels reflected activation in the "the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis—one of the body's most sensitive stress-systems," thus offering a reasonable view of the effect of the AAI on human stress (p .2). The results of their investigation demonstrated that the intervention (petting cats and dogs for 10 minutes in the college-based animal visitation program) lowered salivary cortisol levels in the trial group of students as compared to the control group. The authors suggested their findings indicated the interventions could provide an effective means for stress reduction in the

population. They went on to extrapolate that participation in such an activity “may influence individuals’ appraisal of stressors as less threatening and facilitate physiological downregulation, which are important modulators of HPA-axis activity” (Pendry & Vandagriff, 2019, p. 8). The implications, then, might support the stress reduction explanation of the positive effects of AAIs. Further, this concept might strengthen the possibility that AAIs could be useful to the supervision process due to the propensity for anxiety and stress in many supervisees (Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015).

Attachment and Activation of the Oxytocin System

Both the role of attachment and activation of the oxytocin system are major theoretical bases for explaining methods of action in AAIs (Beetz, 2017; Chandler, 2017; Wells, 2019). As stated previously, Beetz (2017) prioritized attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1963; Bowlby, 1969) and suggested it as a “comprehensive basis for the explanation of human-animal relationship and the positive effects of HAI, including the regulation of stress and negative emotions via social support” (p. 144). Various works supported this assertion (Beetz et al., 2011, 2012; Julius et al., 2013) and proposed that most humans are capable of, and frequently do, bond and attach securely to animals regardless of familial/primary caregiver attachment history. Others (McConnell et al., 2011) indicated that companion animals function as attachment figures for humans across the life span and even met Ainsworth’s (1991) criteria for attachment. Beetz suggested this might be one reason some people find it easier to bond with animals versus humans (in the case of disorganized or insecure attachment profiles, for example), which then has implications for HAI and AAIs. It seemed that activation of the attachment system in the context of HAI/AAIs provided an opportunity for beneficial social and neurobiological effects

for clients, especially since appropriate and ethical professional boundaries preclude caregiving and bonding behaviors typical of human and animal interactions such as petting and grooming.

Related to attachment and present in all mammals, the oxytocin system in neurobiological theory and a major component of attachment promoted attachment-related social behavior, development of trust, bonding between infants and their primary caregivers and buffered stress reactions, reduced anxiety and depression, and increased tolerance for pain (Beetz & Bales, 2016; Carter & Porges, 2016; Uvnäs-Moberg, 2003). This system has substantial value in explaining the mutually beneficial nature of animal and human relationships and the positive effects of HAI/AAI (Beetz et al., 2012; Julius et al., 2013). Various sources supported the role of oxytocin during interactions with animals. For example, simply petting or making eye contact with a dog increased the oxytocin in human subjects (Handlin et al., 2011). According to Beetz et al. (2012), oxytocin could be responsible for the manifold benefits found in HAI. Julius et al. (2013) advocated this is especially true in settings where touch, let alone cuddling or stroking, rarely between occurs (e.g., mental health, educational, assisted living settings). The apparent parallels among attachment, oxytocin, and the positive impact of HAI are compelling. Wells (2019) advised that the research on the interactions of concepts is still relatively sparse and reminded readers that “the mechanisms underlying the ability of companion animals to improve human health are complex, and much further research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn” (pp. 175-176).

Despite the mechanisms not being well understood, the reported positive impacts of the HAB, HAIs, and AAIs are undeniable overall. Research and documentation of the phenomenon began in earnest in the 1980s (Beetz, 2017; Fine et al., 2019). Although a broad foundation of empirical work has been generated over the last 30 years, it has been troubled with inconsistent

findings and poor execution of rigorous evaluations (Beetz, 2017; Wells, 2019). Wells (2019) found research in the area of HAIs and AAIs painted a mixed picture. Most research she reviewed indicated positive associations with the inclusion of animals in the physical and psychological wellbeing of humans and tended to support the widely accepted notion that interaction with animals was good for humankind. However, she also found a range of research indicating a much murkier and unclear association. Many discrepancies in claims, problematic methodological issues, and general design flaws confounded the validity and reliability of findings. She also noted the possibility that this area of research, because of the bias and well-intentioned positions of researchers hoping to further a line of research they believed in, might be at risk of the “file-cabinet effect” in which positive results were submitted for publication and research that failed to show significance or was neutral remained relegated to the file-cabinet, never to be disseminated (Herzog, 2011; Wells, 2019).

For example, García-Gómez et al. (2020) published a recent systematic review of equine-assisted therapeutic activities on heart rate variability, which is considered an objective variable reflecting stress levels. They identified nine studies to include in their review (six quasi-experimental and three self-controlled) all published between 2013-2019. Overall favorable, they found equine-assisted therapeutic activities in general had a positive effect on human heart rate variability. Specifically, they found the equine activities investigated in their review were performed by activating PNS, thereby inducing a state of relaxation. However, they encouraged readers to consider these results with caution due to apparent questionable research quality and the likelihood of confirmation bias of the studies reviewed. For example, in their study selection, four studies were ultimately “discarded due to insurmountable methodological deficiencies or due to a lack of data to complete the analysis” (García-Gómez et al., 2020, p. 3).

Consistent with Wells' (2019) description of the methodological lay of the land in the field of AAI, Fine et al. (2019) echoed her concerns. An unfortunate byproduct of poor research design and methodological problems was inflated representations and possible exaggerations of HAI and AAI research outcomes on human functioning. Fine et al. reviewed the state of animal-assisted interventions with respect to identifying key next steps and needs for future research in the field of AAI science: "The overemphasis on outcomes that is more anecdotal than evidence-based may have slanted some peoples' perceptions" (pp.1-2). In addition to a call for improved methodological practices and design in research, as well as the centering of animal welfare in research initiatives, they asked that researchers and practitioners both take a more balanced and realistic stance in their explanations and attributions of efficacy with AAI. A strong voice of reason stood out in the article: "The scientific evidence is still not strong enough to support such high convictions" (Fine et al., 2019, p. 2).

Summary

In the previous section of this literature review, I explored the possible mechanisms of action that might support the rationale for including the AAI in the scope of clinical supervision. Although there was debate about the quality of research (e.g., methodological issues, etc.), there was compelling evidence for the potential benefits of AAI for stress reduction, medical and psychological wellbeing, and educational benefits. Next, I review the supervision literature to demonstrate the possible place for AAI in the context of supervision.

Clinical Supervision

According to the widely read foundational text by Bernard and Goodyear (2018), supervision has been identified as the "signature pedagogy" of the mental health professions (e.g., counseling, psychology, social work; p. 2). Supervision is an interdisciplinary intervention designed to facilitate the professional growth and development of mental health professionals. It

is provided to supervisees in graduate professional degrees to meet educational requirements (ACA, 2014; Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016) or to graduate-level professionals seeking licensure or specialization credentials, and is usually provided by a more senior member of a profession to a junior member of the same profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Watkins, 2017b).

Supervision functions as a crucial element in the preparation and development of mental health professionals, serving in educational and evaluative roles (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Watkins, 2017b). The primary goals of supervision are to facilitate the development of the supervisee's professional competence, ensure client welfare, and serve a gatekeeping function to the professional field (ACA, 2014; Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; CACREP, 2016). Bernard and Goodyear (2018) placed emphasis on the inherent hierarchical structure of supervision that centers gatekeeping and protection of the community members as central aspects of professional competence.

The roots of clinical supervision can be traced back to the early days of social work (Edwards, 2013) and have emerged a specialization in the mental health field as “an intervention in its own right” (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018, p. 3). Thus, supervision requires competency regarding the issues, concepts, and methods specific to the intervention (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Borders & Brown, 2005). Supervision interventions and functions overlap in some ways with teaching, therapeutic, and consultation roles (e.g., such as fostering self-reflection of supervisees through Socratic methods typical of some pedagogical and therapeutic modalities (Goodyear, 2014; Milne, 2006; Watkins, 2017a). Carroll and Gilbert (2005) declared that at the heart of supervision is learning. Carroll (2010) extended this by adding that the medium of the supervisee's learning in supervision is their own self-reflection. Thus, supervision becomes a

dance of facilitating reflection requisite for growth. Models of supervision generally fall into three branches—those based in psychotherapy theory, those focused on supervisee development, and those that are process/social role oriented—and are utilized to guide the supervision dance of interventions and functions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018).

Best Practices in Clinical Supervision were adopted by ACES (2011) in response to growth and interest in the specialization of supervision in mental health fields (professional counseling, counseling psychology, clinical psychology, etc). The ACES taskforce assigned to develop the best practices identified a set of 12 areas for specifying practices intended to supplement codes of ethics that might already address the area of supervision in the respective field/code: initiating supervision, goal setting, giving feedback, conducting supervision, the supervisory relationship, diversity and advocacy considerations, ethical considerations, documentation, evaluation, supervision format, the supervisor, supervisor preparation: supervision training, and supervision of supervision. They served as minimally acceptable specific guidelines for functioning in the role of supervisor and to inform the clinical judgement of the supervisor. The participants of this study had a primary identity as supervisors. As such, the best practices were attended to in data collection and analysis (e.g., how were supervisors integrating the best practices in their incorporation of AAI in supervision).

A swell of literature offered theoretical speculations and empirical evidence of what made supervision work and what accounted for the productivity of supervision (Kühne et al., 2019). Literature across the mental health disciplines on supervision generally focused on identifying and investigating factors that impacted the supervision process and outcomes (such as supervisory relationship variables, supervisee development, and supervisee outcomes; Bernard & Goodyear, 2018). Dating as far back as the 1960s (Holloway, 1984), much of the supervision

research explored supervisee outcomes (Ellis & Ladany, 1997; Inman et al., 2014). The extant base of supervision research demonstrated positive effects of supervision on supervisees in areas such as self-efficacy, self-awareness, knowledge of treatment and skills, and supervisee issues that impede development (e.g., anxiety; Inman et al., 2014; Kühne et al., 2019; Watkins, 2017a). However, Hill and Knox (2013) reported a large gap remained in the literature regarding what constituted active elements of supervision.

The Supervision Relationship

In addressing the concern of supervisee outcomes, the supervisory relationship has seen a great deal of attention in the supervision literature (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Kühne et al., 2019; Watkins, 2014, 2017b). Bernard and Goodyear (2018) declared “the supervisory relationship is the pillar that supports everything else about supervision” (p. 86). Implicit in their declaration was the following concern: what makes a supervisory relationship tick? Bernard and Goodyear also noted that supervision fundamentally involved both teaching and learning. In their discussion, they assumed that supervisees had the capability to learn and turn their focus to potential motivational factors or elements that might impede supervisee ability to fully engage in the learning process inherent to supervision. Their particular concern was supervisee engagement both with the supervisor and in the process of supervision. They offered a model of six supervisee factors and three supervisor factors linked to the engagement of a supervisee in supervision and the quality of supervision. The six factors affecting supervisee engagement were resistance, attachment style of the supervisee, shame, anxiety, competence concerns, and transference (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018). Related to the supervisor side of the quality of the supervisory relationship, they identified the attachment style of the supervisor, supervisor’s exercise of power, and countertransference (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018).

Watkins (2017b) suggested the field needs a “unitary explanation” for how supervisee change occurs (in the context of active supervision; p. 203). The power of the supervisory relationship is reflected in his suggested contextual supervision relationship model (Watkins, 2017b; Watkins et al., 2015). He identified two main variables affecting the change process for supervisees: “the initial supervisor supervisee bond and its continued maintenance and ... relationship pathways that invitingly provoke supervisee change” (p. 203). The relationship pathways central to this proposition involved the focus of the “real relationship” (in which attachment and social connection are valued) between a supervisor and supervisee and “the supervisee’s participation in facilitative educational actions” (Watkins, 2017b, p. 203). Watkins suggested the result for the supervisee was twofold. He noted anxiety, shame, and doubt were common experiences of supervisees and that focusing on the quality of the supervisory relationship might both improve their clinical practices and decrease the aforementioned emotional impediments. Anxiety is a well-known occupational hazard supervisees face that has negative implications for the quality of relationships supervisees need to be able to establish (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Other proposed models addressed the nature of supervisee change and problematic anxiety impeding the growth and learning processes of supervision through the lens of attachment (Foster et al., 2007; Rogers et al., 2019). Fitch et al. (2010) proposed a relationship-centric concept highlighting the potential learning difficulties one experiences when the attachment system is activated. For example, they identified that supervisees might comprehend and have improved ability to learn when supervisory experiences are supportive and responsive in positive ways to the attachment system replicated in the supervisory relationship (as in any other social or learning relationship; Fitch et al., 2010). There are normal developmental

challenges in any profession as novice professionals enter the field (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013). Typical developmental challenges produce a certain amount of healthy anxiety that serves to energize and drive learning and motivation (i.e., zone of proximal development; James et al., 2007; Vygostky, 1978). Fitch et al. suggested such “normal” developmental tasks of supervision might activate supervisee anxiety, leading to activation of the supervisee’s attachment system, and might further set off a bidirectional reactivity loop between the supervisee’s and supervisor’s respective attachment templates/systems. An example of this was demonstrated in Rogers et al.’s (2019) study of counseling students’ ability to receive feedback (a necessary formative tool in supervision). They found both attachment anxiety and cognitive distortions were predictive of supervisee difficulty receiving feedback (Rogers et al., 2019).

Supervisory Alliance

Many concepts are translated from the therapeutic realm into supervision (Milne, 2006). A concept helpful in navigating the waters of the supervisory relationship is the supervisory alliance (sometimes called the supervisory working alliance; Bordin, 1983; Watkins, 2014). The supervisory alliance emerged in a prominent place in the literature as an important factor in the quality of supervision and supervisee outcomes (Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015; Watkins, 2014). Watkins (2014) stated in his retrospective of the supervisory alliance that it has been “embraced as the very heart and soul of supervision” (p. 20). Watkins indicated the supervisory alliance tended to be considered the supervision equivalent of the therapeutic alliance and has been a significant actor in the development of conceptualization and performance of the supervision process. A central feature of the supervisory alliance is it seems crucial to establish a firm and healthy supervisory alliance early on in the supervisory contract (Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002; Watkins, 2014, 2017b).

Watkins (2014) synthesized the postulates made by the two primary original sources of the supervisory alliance: Fleming and Benedek's (1964, 1966) concept of a learning alliance and Bordin's (1983) supervision working alliance. The supervisory alliance articulates suppositions of the supervision relationship. Watkins reported that both supervisor and supervisee are in psychological contact and due to the nature of the experience difference, supervisees are inherently vulnerable and in a state of anxiety. Further, the supervisor is responsible for providing the necessary conditions for supervisee growth and development (Watkins, 2014). The supervisory alliance tenants outlined by Watkins is like a menu of actions the supervisee and supervisor (should) agree to enact for best outcomes of the process. Watkins (2014, 2017a) asserted that an essential task of supervision is to establish a healthy supervisory alliance.

The supervisory alliance was one of the primary constructs named in the literature proposing AAIs as a potentially potent alliance-enhancing additive to supervision. Stewart et al. (2015) and Owenby (2017) centered this alliance in their conceptualizations. Stewart et al. (2015) noted that of particular import was the alliance plays a role as a model for strong counseling relationships. This echoed others' views that the supervisory alliance has direct carryover potential for clinical practices (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002; Watkins, 2014, 2017b). The positive relationship promoting qualities (e.g., supporting the establishment of trust between therapist and client, for example) of HAIs/AAIs seems to offer a unique entry point into enhancing the supervisory alliance and potentially the quality of supervision outcomes. Ideally, AAIs in supervision might offer effects that spill over into therapeutic relationships.

Polyvagal Theory

A concept relevant to the potential for AAI in supervision I believe was overlooked in supervision literature was the polyvagal theory (Porges, 1995). Having worked with children and adults who have endured traumatic experiences, I have seen the effects of Porges' (2017) polyvagal theory unfold in front of me in real-time. I am fully trained in eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (Shapiro, 2018) and have a foundational knowledge of the physiological, cognitive, and memory structures and processes implicated in trauma response. Because of my clinical work (and investigative nature), I was drawn to better understand constructs such as the polyvagal theory. Thinking that if I could just guide a parent toward seeing the biology behind their child's behavior through psychoeducation, I could shift their perspective and thus create a little space between stimulus and response between an activated child and their activated parent. So far, this has been a helpful addition to my clinical repertoire. This investigation also led me to be more mindful and reflective of my internal experiences and responses, increasing my awareness of my own activation. This personal awareness allowed me to know when to back off, set firmer boundaries, and (probably most importantly) when to hold my tongue.

This personal venture into understanding trauma/stress response systems situated me at an intersection where I saw a few relevant constructs merge. The literature on HAI and AAIs included scientifically-based proposed explanations for *why* and *how* AAIs might work. Those theories were related to a decrease in anxiety via pathways of settling the nervous system (lowering heart rate, lowering levels of cortisol, etc., as in the animal visitation study by Pendry and Vandagriff (2019)). This was interesting as it could have implications for the supervisory process since a key impediment to successful outcomes of supervision is supervisee anxiety

(Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Meola, 2017; Meola & Sias, 2016; Meola et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2019; Watkins, 2017a).

Russell-Chapin and Chapin (2019) suggested Porges' (2017) polyvagal theory has robust implications for the therapeutic relationship and, therefore, for supervisory relationships as well. Porges' polyvagal theory took to the psychological research stage on October 8, 1994 at a professional conference and was later published in 1995. It has been embraced since then by the medical and psychological spheres as a theory with far-reaching implications (including offering a testable hypothesis). According to Porges (2017), the theory has been cited in thousands of peer-reviewed articles cutting across numerous disciplines.

Interestingly, Porges' wife, Sue Carter, penned foundational work on the topic of oxytocin and social bonds (Porges, 2017). The union of these constructs—physiological, neurochemical, and social systems—has informed the world of psychological therapies in vast ways. For context, the polyvagal theory essentially provides neurobiological and physiological explanations for the well-known and frequently spotted in pop-psychology media as the fight/flight/freeze (FFF) response. Porges' (2017) work follows the 10th, and longest, cranial nerve (the vagus nerve; vagus meaning wandering) through the body, exploring functions of the nervous system responses to stressors. It explains the autonomic nervous system's highly adapted surveillance ability to perceive and feel (neuroception; Porges, 2004) potential threats that have allowed humans to survive.

Porges' (2017) work also described the evolution of the autonomic nervous system, revealing a hierarchical structure of neurophysiological reactive potential. These structures are a so-called hierarchy because of the sequence of evolution, which mirrors the sequence of activation in the FFF system. The systems developed from the bottom up—brainstem to the

prefrontal cortex (PFC). Evolving first about 500 million years ago and sometimes referred to as the reptilian brain or downstairs brain, the dorsal vagal part of the PNS immobilizes an individual in the freeze part of the FFF system. Entering the evolutionary scene about 400 million years ago, the sympathetic nervous system developed to protect survival through mobilization to fight or flee a threat. It is most related to the limbic system. Most recent is the ventral vagal part of the PNS, evolving about 200 million years ago, creating the social engagement system. This system is more related to the benefits of higher-level cognition (reasoning, decision making, delayed gratification, emotion regulation) of the PFC. When mammals are in the social engagement system (sometimes called the upstairs brain), they are able to connect to others, engage in life sustaining social activities, observe the possibility for hope, be creative, and solve problems with relative ease. As opposed to a brain in either of the other two systems where a person is effectively “offline,” they are unable to access the cognitive abilities of the PFC. A client or student in these states of activation might appear distant, depressed, slow (freeze) or hyperactive, agitated, or defensive (fight/flight).

People in these stress responses (FFF) need specific interventions to reach them where they are on the polyvagal ladder to orient back into the realm of social engagement (Dana, 2018; Porges, 2004, 2017). Such exercises involve vagal tone exercises, grounding, and mindfulness (Dana, 2018, 2020; Siegel, 2012). These exercises typically employ movement and breathing to access the stress response state from the downstairs brain to move the person back to the upstairs brain where they can then access their PFC (Dana, 2018, 2020; Porges, 2017). Clearly, the polyvagal theory has substantial implications for trauma responses and their modulation (Van der Kolk, 2015) and is a source of cutting-edge understanding of how therapists could work with biological bases of various mental health presentations (Dana, 2018, 2020).

Thus, it was logical to extend this to supervisees as Russell-Chapin and Chapin (2019) proposed. Supervisees are susceptible to the same stress responses as any other human. Supervisees come to the supervision process with varied histories and system templates that might make them respond in ways that potentially stifle their development or present ethical and competency issues (Owenby, 2017). It stood to reason that there was great benefit in having a good understanding of the polyvagal system and how it might enter the supervisory process.

Yet, even with the widely accepted notion that many therapeutic interventions could be appropriately and easily translated to the supervision process, the polyvagal theory was unfortunately missing in the supervision literature. I believe Russell-Chapin and Chapin (2019) made a reasonable suggestion that the polyvagal theory (and related components and functions of the autonomic nervous system) are suitable concepts to address in the supervision process, specifically the need for emotional safety (connection, for example, between an attuned mother and infant or offered by an attuned and “safe” therapist allowing co-regulation with an activated client): “All human beings and especially novice counselors and supervisees need to feel safe in the supervisory relationship to engage in constructive feedback and growth” (p. 112).

This was in alignment with conceptual proposals and anecdotal reports that AAIs might function to support supervisee sense of emotional safety and quell anxiety made by Stewart et al. (2015), Chandler (2017), Owenby (2017), and Jackson (2020) and was reflected in the findings of Meola et al.’s (2020) research on equine-assisted learning in supervision. These concepts, taken with idea that AAIs could be agents of stress reduction and emotion regulation, seemed to strengthen the potential of AAIs in the context of clinical supervision.

Supervisory Relationship as Vessel for Learning

In his analogy of therapy and supervision, Milne (2006) identified one of many similarities between therapy and supervision was the centrality of learning and education to promote change. Goodyear (2014) addressed the nature of learning as a part of the supervision process, the inherent pedagogy of supervision. He suggested four instructional processes (modeling, feedback, direct instruction, and self-directed learning) he viewed as essential actions of the supervisor in facilitating supervisee learning. Watkins (2017a) explained that supervision is “fundamentally powered by a theory of learning and a learning process that is far more unitary in nature than otherwise” (p. 141).

Ellis (2010) declared that “good supervision is about the relationship” (p. 106). Goodyear (2014) extended this by adding that a healthy supervisory relationship was requisite for supervisee learning to occur. Watkins (2017a) echoed this in his “common factors, common processes, common practices” perspective of supervision, stating that “a. supervision is most fundamentally a learning experience where the primary targets are therapist skills/competence and identity development, b. the supervisor-supervisee relationship serves as *the* foundation of the supervisory experience, and c. the supervisor functions foremost from a stance of developmental responsiveness and stimulating supervisee growth (p. 142, emphasis in original). Watkins (2017a) noted that a common feature of supervision (across approaches) was it is an emotionally charged and confiding relationship. Watkins (2017a) and Lampropoulos (2003) highlighted the work of Jerome Frank (Frank & Frank, 1991) regarding the installation of hope and the importance of preventing and mitigating demoralization in supervisees as being a paramount concern in supervision. Watkins’ (2017a) common factors approach to supervision proposed a concept common to all approaches and goals of supervision, “learning and re-

learning” (p. 143), which describes the supervisee’s process of digesting, constructing, re-constructing, and integrating knowledge generated from supervision.

Supervisee Learning and Transformation

Watkins (2017a, 2017b) and Carroll (2010) identified that the supervisee learning experience in supervision typically involves transformational change (Mezirov, 2000) that results from both building upon and disrupting existing beliefs, previous learning, and frames of reference that at times manifests as supervisee resistance, competence issues, and debilitating anxiety. Similar to the idea of zone of proximal development (Vygostky, 1978), Watkins (2017a) acknowledged that such disruption of previous cognitive frames could actually engage meaningful, transformative growth. This means there is the necessity for at least some level of discomfort to exist in supervisee development and it performs a function of growth.

Recently, Watkins (2020) added three tasks of a supervisor to support the learning process whereby the supervisor attends to the relationship, promotion of supervisee reflection, and ultimately supports emancipation from the confines of novice supervisee angst, imposter anxiety, and ambiguous identify structures. Watkins attended to the existence of liminality and edge emotions in early novice supervisee experiences. Liminality is a concept found in architecture, anthropology, and more recently in psychology. Liminality refers to ambiguity, in-betweenness, and disorientation (Green & Mälkki, 2017), i.e., the feeling of being not still a child and not yet an adult. In architecture, liminality refers to a literal in-between space such as a threshold or foyer. Edge emotions are those that surface when a person is teetering on the edge of their comfort zone (Green & Mälkki, 2017). Both terms eloquently and pointedly describe the experiences of novice supervisees—no longer student in the familiar arms of a classroom and not yet a fully-fledged professional and the emotional growing pains being pushed toward

developmental edges. Such a space is tender and vulnerable, requiring a special attunement from a supervisor.

This emancipatory and transformational learning (Mezirov, 2000) process reflected in Watkins' (2020) discussion reminded me of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Many people are familiar with the analogy of an ugly caterpillar cocooning and emerging later as a beautiful and graceful butterfly. What many do not know about this process is the butterfly turns to goo in its process of becoming. Yes, it is true; caterpillars release enzymes dissolving their tissues leaving only the biological necessities to complete the metamorphosis encased in the safety of the cocoon (Jabr, 2012). It seems a primary task of a supervisor, in facilitating reflection and development of a supervisee, is to also attend to the relational safety that serves as the cocoon for such metamorphosis.

Rolling with Resistance

In addition to the importance of the supervisory relationship, Watkins (2017a) broached the change process. Aten et al. (2008) created a transtheoretical model of supervision based on Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982, 1984, 1986) transtheoretical psychotherapy model and stages of change. This was an interesting addition to the supervision literature because it addressed troubling issues supervisees experience (e.g., anxiety, shame, resistance that result in an impediment to growth and change) from a perspective of eliciting and supporting supervisee change. Having worked in the addiction recovery/substance use disorders field professionally, I was deeply familiar with the importance and usefulness of motivational interviewing (MI) based on Prochaska and DiClemente's transtheoretical model in working with client resistance. Motivational interviewing is a mainstay in the addiction recovery/substance use disorders field and in working with mandated clients. The heart of MI is in aligning with a person to reduce

their resistance and guide them gently toward intrinsic motivation to change—a common phrase echoed in the hallways of treatment centers is “Roll with the resistance!” This is an exciting concept because it has implications similar to what I found as one of many values of polyvagal theory (Porges, 1995). Both are de-pathologizing and grounded in the spirit of meeting a person where they are (motivationally, autonomic nervous system activation-wise). Both of these concepts seemed at home in the framework of integrating AAI into the context of supervision.

Experiential Learning in Supervision

Milne et al. (2008) examined experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, 2015; Kolb & Kolb, 2017) as a context for understanding learning in supervision. Kolb’s (1984, 2015) model included methods of learning through experience: experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing, and experimenting. Milne et al. found 82% of studies they reviewed described results consistent with Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984, 2015; Kolb & Kolb, 2017) and called for further investigation of experiential methods in supervision. Of note, Milne et al. cited Kaslow et al. (2004), reflecting on the magnitude of their findings, that experiential methods are “powerful” and “essential” (p. 780). Kolb and Kolb (2017) described the experiential learning cycle as a holistic and dynamic process of simultaneous dialectics: (a) action and reflecting and (b) experience and abstraction. This is exactly what practicum and internship experiences need, especially in live supervision and reflective processes such as interpersonal process recall (Kagan & Kagan, 1990) or even in more contemporary creative supervision practices such as facilitating supervisee and trainee reflection through art-based techniques (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011), play therapy techniques (Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Prasath & Copeland, 2021), and sand tray (Stark et al., 2015).

There was a wealth of support and evidence of the use of experiential learning in supervision theory and practice literature. Additionally, CACREP (2016) standards encouraged experiential learning to facilitate professional counseling and counselor education students' professional and personal development (practicums, internships). Further, Rogers (1957) claimed experiential learning was the *only* kind of learning that could produce an effective counselor! He was referring to the necessity of formats such as practicum, internships, and the supervisory process in which supervisees reflect upon their work. Experiential learning is indeed at the heart of professional growth. Animal-assisted interventions in supervision offers a unique mode of enhancing the experience of supervision as within the process of interacting with animals, reflection and access to depths might be reached that only talking about one's experiences might limit. Further, it offers a unique salve to the vulnerability of many novice supervisees. Supervision has been more and more advised for utilization across the professional lifespan (Grant & Schofield, 2007; Grant et al., 2012; Wheeler & Richards, 2007) and it holds the same value for more seasoned clinicians seeking a space to process or overcome stumbling blocks. This paradigm was reflected in the application of other creative modalities in supervision (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Prasath & Copeland, 2021; Purswell & Stulmaker, 2015; Stewart et al., 2015).

Counselor Development in Supervision

Counselor development presents an appealing layer to this investigation as a fundamental cornerstone of the professional counseling occupation is professional development (Myers, 1992). Numerous models have been formulated to outline, classify, and explain the arch of the developmental process of professional counselors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Purswell et al., 2019). Counselor development models inform supervision, counselor training, construction of

pedagogical practices in academic environments, and gauge progression of counselor development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018). Further, developmental models could provide insight into the process of typical development and normalize (perhaps alleviate) counselor-in-training stress and anxiety (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Counselor development models extend influence into the accreditation bodies that monitor training programs (CACREP, 2016) and professional licensure boards.

Supervisors' intentional application of skills and competency in counselor development could facilitate development and influence the larger profession through their contact with supervisees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018). Many such models concern the development of training-stage counselor development, e.g., as the integrated developmental model (IDM; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). The IDM has been in development for over a quarter of a century, becoming one of the most recognized models of counselor development (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). The IDM has grown from earlier developmental models, blending five foundational underpinnings (learning and cognition, growth from novice toward expertise, social influence/relationships, motivation, and human development; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). A central feature of this model is the focus on the unique processes of growth, changing characteristics and needs, of supervisees over time and training. According to Stoltenberg and McNeill (2011), an effective learning environment and supervisory alliance must be attuned to the individual needs of the supervisee, facilitate the development of knowledge and skills, support cultivation of self and other awareness, foster motivation and insight, and responsive to autonomous needs of trainees.

In the IDM, counselors-in-training progress through three predictable levels of development, which influence their competency and needs, and across three overriding

supervisee structures (awareness, motivation, and autonomy; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Supervisors are concerned with supervisee competency in eight specific domains as the supervisee moves through their development: intervention skills, evaluation/appraisal, diversity/cultural awareness, interpersonal assessment, theoretical orientation, case conceptualization, treatment planning, and ethical/legal behavior.

The three levels are sequential and hierarchical, beginning as novice and growing toward more expert/independence as a clinician. Level one counselors are described as having limited training and experience and, although they have a high level of motivation to be correct, tend to have a high level of anxiety about performance and competency, often feeling insecure and self-conscious. Level one counselors are typically more dependent on their supervisors and have concrete and somewhat inflexible conceptualizations (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Level two counselors, on the other hand, have gained experience and confidence, which might decrease motivation for learning/experimenting with new techniques, be over-confident and want increased autonomy. While they developed greater ability for empathy with clients, they might struggle with balancing boundaries. Level two supervisees at times might vacillate between disproportionate amounts of confidence and doubt. This could be a tumultuous time for the supervisee and conflict might manifest in the supervisory relationship as the supervisee senses tension between desiring more autonomy and feeling dependent on the supervisor (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). By level three, counselors are stabilizing and beginning to turn toward developing a personalized approach to their practice and are more skilled at the use of “self” in their approach. At this level, counselors demonstrate more comfort in independent functioning and ability to maintain focused on the client while engaging in self-awareness and reflection (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). Finally, the counselor-in-training moves into an integrated state

of level three in which they are stable across the domains and structures (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011).

The IDM outlines supervisor approaches, considerations, suggestions for addressing supervisee conflict and blocks at the different supervisee level as well as guidance for understanding how the structures and domains interact across supervisee levels (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). The IDM has been criticized for its complexity but it remains one of the most investigated models of supervision and has garnered the most support over the years (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011).

Relational and Developmental Implications of Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

While the focus of this study was to understand the process and experiences of supervisors (and their integration of AAI-S, it would be remiss not to address the possible role counselor development might play in influencing supervisors' decisions on interventions and other matters of the AAI supervisory process. For example, level one supervisees tend to struggle with anxiety and self-consciousness as well as concrete, black and white conceptualizations.

As described in Stewart et al. (2015), the presence of the therapy dog reduced the supervisee anxiety and promoted reflection on the internal experiences of the supervisee. The second case example in the Stewart et al. (2015) highlighted the function of the supervisee-animal dynamic that supported supervisee trust in the supervisor and subsequently the supervisee's transfer of AAI experience to interactions with her classmates. In the same vein, Chandler's (2017) description of supervisees responses to AAI in clinical supervision with a doctoral student aligned also with many of the aforementioned techniques and intentions (technique example: supervisor allowed therapy animal to engage with supervisee in

spontaneous moments that facilitated supervisory discussion; intention examples: enhancing supervisee's self-confidence, modeling specific behaviors, encouraging sharing of feelings, and enhancing trust within the supervisory relationship).

From another perspective, Friedlander and Shaffer (2014) advocated for the importance of the relationship in the context of supervision, explaining that in "process-oriented" (relational) supervision, supervisors must utilize the same listening and reflection skills learned as therapists to facilitate a strong supervisory alliance. From this perspective, the above techniques and intentions could also contribute to the relational aspects central to process-oriented supervision as described by Friedlander and Shaffer such as promoting trust in the supervisory relationship, facilitating insight, attending to emotional needs of the supervisee in supervision. As discussed by others (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015), extending the therapeutic benefits of AAI to the process/relational and developmental considerations (e.g., IDM; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011) in supervision presented a logical application of AAI to supervision. Level one supervisees could profit from supervisors' incorporation of AAI in supervision to address the black and white conceptualizations and high levels of stress and anxiety typical of early counselor development. A level two application of the supervisee developmental lens was found in Meola's (2017) case vignettes. Level two supervisees might benefit from integration of AAI to address conflict such as in the second case vignette in Stewart et al. (2015).

Due to the implications of elements of counselor development and potential for AAI in supervision to positively interact with such elements, counselor development is addressed in data collection and analysis. The participants were invited to explore how development might impact

their supervision practices when it came to AAI-S. Example interview questions addressing counselor development included “How does counselor development influence AAI-S?”

Creativity in Supervision

In his assessment of analogizing therapy and supervision, Milne (2006) wrote about the parallels between therapy and supervision, substantiating the value in transferring/translating therapeutic interventions for use in supervision (such as to promote reflection or mitigate stress). Watkins (2017a) suggested that analogizing proved useful in pulling from education as well and advised attending more to lessons from education to inform supervision theory and practice (Watkins & Scaturro, 2013). An area ripe for the analogous taking is the niche in therapy literature concerning creativity in counseling. As mentioned above, examples of experiential learning activities applied in supervision were found in play therapy, arts-based interventions, and many more (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Prasath & Copeland, 2021; Purswell & Stulmaker, 2015). Some authors suggested the non-verbal nature of such experiential interventions underpinned the benefits of reflection and development for supervisees (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Prasath & Copeland, 2021). Perhaps it was the use of the non-verbal, experiential symbolic system discussed in AAI literature that functioned to lessen anxiety and open doors to learning for supervisors (Beetz, 2017; Epstein, 1994; Schultheiss, 2001). There seemed to be a strong parallel between the creative applications already widely suggested in supervisory literature and the potential for AAIs in supervision. I believe this was exactly what Stewart et al. (2015) were suggesting when they articulated the potential for deepening the supervisory relationship and propagating developmental gains for supervisees.

Gladding (2016) supported the use of creative interventions due to their fundamentally non-threatening nature and the value of the participatory, experiential process of creative

techniques. Creative interventions could include (but not limited to) journaling, making music, bibliotherapy, dance, theater, play, sand, art, or drumming. Creative interventions promote externalization and cathartic representation of internal experiences, which could lead to making the abstract concrete and facilitating insight (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Gladding, 2016; Prasath & Copeland, 2021).

Purswell and Stulmaker (2015) suggested that integrating expressive art in supervision could stimulate improved communication, awareness, tap into empathy and foster relational dynamics in the supervisory relationship, and function to improve supervisee technical/clinical skills. They described expressive arts as a primarily non-verbal therapeutic modality using creative mediums to facilitate awareness or contact with unconscious or implicit experiences. Such work is visceral and multi-sensory, which allows one to subvert rational and cognitive processes to experience differently. It accesses processing and contact with deep, internal experiences (and or memories) by journeying through the “right-brain” versus the “left-brain” (Goodyear-Brown, 2019, 2021). They and others suggested this difference in experiencing is where the benefit lies (Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Goodyear-Brown, 2019, 2021; Prasath & Copeland, 2021; Purswell & Stulmaker, 2015). It is the same dynamic play therapists acknowledge is at work in play therapy—a child (or adult) accesses emotions, thoughts, and worldviews in a way through the experience of play that could otherwise not be reached (Drewes & Mullen, 2008; Goodyear-Brown, 2021). Such access provides dynamics and entry points to processing that facilitate change and growth that talk alone cannot produce. By including creative interventions in the context of supervision, a supervisor could offer a supervisee an alternate route to understanding.

A particular piece of interest was the capacity for creative interventions to open doors for case conceptualization. Case conceptualization is a focus on professional development in supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018) and creative processes have been found to be fruitful in facilitating complex understanding of cases (Jackson et al., 2008; Lahad, 2005; Prasath & Copeland, 2021). For example, Williams et al. (2015) used a visual, experiential classroom intervention with counseling students to facilitate student awareness and consciousness of social justice dynamics in case conceptualization. They found students perceived this intervention as highly useful in developing their ability to conceptualize complex dynamics and synthesize information for richer case conceptualization (Williams et al., 2015).

In their book, *The Therapeutic Powers of Play: 20 Core Agents of Change*, Schaefer and Drewes (2013) categorized 20 active ingredients of play that promoted therapeutic change. The ingredients they included were ones a supervisor would certainly want in their supervisory recipe: direct and indirect teaching, social competence, empathy, resiliency, and creative problem solving. In short, Shaefer and Drewes' four categories of active ingredients (facilitating communication, fostering emotional wellness enhances social relationships and increases personal strengths) sounded like it could be a direct response to Watkins (2014, 2017a, 2017b) and other calls to attend to the learning and relationship of supervision (Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002; Russell-Chapin & Chapin, 2019).

Tying It All Together: Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

Up to this point, I have described the potentials for animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S) separately. First through the lenses of the compelling nature of human-animal interactions (HAI) and animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) and second through the lens of supervision, I focused on ways AAIs might address supervisory needs, goals, and processes.

In this section, I further discuss the joining of the two lenses by reviewing the small, but potent, extant literature that paved the way for the purpose of this study.

Over the years, I searched for literature on this subject and to my knowledge, I located what was in existence. So far, I found seven sources that actively connected AAIs and supervision. Three sources were purely theoretical and offered a description of how AAIs might contribute to supervision (Jackson, 2020; Meola & Sias, 2016; Owenby, 2017). Meola and Sias (2016) proposed the potential benefits of equine-assisted learning (also considered in the hierarchy of AAI as an animal-assisted education [AAE] intervention) within a supervision context and outlined suggestions for implementation. Another, while technically conceptual, provided a compelling rationale for the inclusion of AAIs in supervision and two intriguing case examples (Stewart et al., 2015). One source came from one and a fourth pages in a book on the topic of animal-assisted therapy in counseling (Chandler, 2017). The last two related to Meola and Sias. Meola (2017) and Meola et al. (2020) shared findings from research on the effects of equine-assisted learning in a graduate counseling practicum. The empirical reports appeared to relate to the same study. In the next section, I describe the contents of the sources and how the assertions and findings related to the previous sections on AAIs and supervision.

The Case for Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

Owenby (2017) articulated the potential for AAT benefits within the scope of supervision and specifically focused on the likely impact on the supervisory alliance. He identified common supervisory issues, such as supervisee resistance and anxiety, and maintained that the benefits of AAT in supervision were specially situated to these issues in supervision by enhancing the supervisory alliance. Owenby underscored his proposition, seeming to call to Milne's (2006)

analogy of therapy and supervision, that “if clients can benefit from AAT interventions, so could supervisees throughout the supervision process” (p. 147).

Jackson (2020) extended from Stewart et al. (2015) that AAI-S has great potential for promoting the supervisor relationship/alliance. Jackson’s focus was on the unique opportunities afforded by creative interventions in supervision (such as expressive art, play therapy techniques, etc.) and that AAIs were transferable to supervision as were other creative interventions. For example, the transferable potential of creativity in therapy could promote depth in therapeutic relationships (Carson & Becker, 2004) and encourage confidence and facilitate professional growth in supervisees (Graham et al., 2014; Newsome et al., 2005). Specifically, Jackson noted the functions of AAT in which animals might sense emotionality or stress and attend to the human’s needs, which translated to supervision might allay negative effects of stress-related resistance of supervisees. Jackson also suggested a facet of AAIs that might be enacted in supervision was the animal’s spontaneous behavior, which might support trust and rapport building (Kruger & Serpell, 2010) between the supervisor and supervisee. Jackson depicted in her article the application of AAIs to Bernard’s discrimination model (1979, 1997) that provided a possible framework for implementing and assessing AAIs in supervision.

The next source came from Stewart et al. (2015) who detailed the theoretical basis for implementing “animal assisted therapy interventions in supervision” (p. 1). In their article, they proposed such interventions would benefit the supervisory working alliance, prompt discussions to facilitate counselor development, and deepen the supervisory relationship. Stewart et al. provided two case examples illustrating how animal assisted therapy interventions enhanced the supervisory experience for a supervisee.

In the first case example (Stewart et al., 2015), the professional counseling student supervisee struggled with setting boundaries with clients (e.g., going over sessions time) and in her personal life. The supervisee and supervisor discussed the supervisee's desire for clients to feel safe to be vulnerable and she "'did not want to be mean' to her clients by telling them their session was almost over, especially if they were emoting and in a vulnerable space" (pp. 4-5). After several discussions and role-plays with peers, the supervisee explained that these interventions did not feel realistic or transferable to the clinical experience she struggled with. The supervisor, who was a licensed professional counselor and qualified provider of AAT, introduced an innovative technique to the supervisory session—obedience training with her qualified therapy dog.

Stewart et al. (2015) described, "[An] animal assisted intervention in counseling is obedience training between the client and the animal to help the client improve assertiveness and clear communication skills" (p. 5). The supervisor instructed and guided the supervisee in basic obedience commands such as teaching the therapy dog to sit, stay, etc. Although the therapy dog responded positively when the supervisor gave commands, the supervisee struggled to elicit the expected behavior from the therapy dog. The supervisor reflected with the supervisee why this might be and determined the therapy dog might be confused by the supervisee's passive tone. The supervisor and supervisee speculated on what might happen if commands were stated with a more assertive and confident tone. The supervisee reflected that "she was afraid to do this because she valued her positive relationship with [the therapy dog] and did not want [the therapy dog] to dislike her or be offended that Jill told her what to do" (Stewart et al., 2015, p. 5). This reflected projection of the supervisee's insecurities and anthropomorphization of the therapy dog. By processing this perspective in supervision, the supervisee was able to recognize the

interaction with the therapy dog was providing her with “authentic and congruent responses at the moment, which was something role-playing had not accomplished” (Stewart et al., 2015, p. 5).

This was a potent demonstration of the learning and reflection benefit the interaction with a therapy animal could have for a supervisee in supervision. Such authentic social feedback is difficult to orchestrate but emerges organically with AAI. The second case discussed in Stewart et al. (2015) involved another professional counseling student supervisee. This supervisee struggled to demonstrate counseling skills and presented as guarded and reluctant to reveal any semblance of vulnerability to peers or her supervisor. In a supervision session, the same therapy dog came to the supervisee and laid at her feet. After processing that this typically meant the dog interpreted some sort of emotional need in the person she responded to, the supervisee shifted and became open and processed emotions regarding fears about her performance and anxieties in relationships.

This constituted a turning point for this supervisee in which she steadily became more tolerant of vulnerability and was able to improve her counseling skills and form emotional bonds with peers (Stewart et al., 2015). In reflecting back on the supervisory experience, the supervisee noted she had been thinking about the session in which the therapy dog

sat on her feet and attended to her distress. [The supervisee] disclosed that this moment had been powerful in facilitating her own personal growth, and she realized that [the therapy dog] had not used any verbal counseling skills. She described how [the therapy dog] simply attended to her and expressed genuine empathy, and this was enough to facilitate healing. (Stewart et al., 2015, p. 6)

The supervisee expressed that the experience aided in reducing her anxiety about performing skills and taught her the importance of being present with her clients.

Both of the case examples provided a glowing rationale for the inclusion of AAI-S. It was clear to see from these stories the potential for growth, development, self-reflection, and skill enhancement for supervisees. Chandler (2017) provided a synopsis of the applications of AAIs through case vignettes based on her experience and the experiences of doctoral counseling students she had supervised. In her review of experiences with what she referred to as AAS-C, she described potent and meaningful exchanges between supervisee and supervisor that were prompted by effects of AAIs in the supervision process.

Chandler (2017) also added clarifying information about the provision of AAIs in supervision. She stated that one differentiating factor to be aware of was a supervisee did not have to be involved themselves in the profession of AAT in order to receive AAI-S but this could be the case. She added that if a supervisor was supervising a supervisee who was providing AAT, the supervisor needed to be competent with AAT themselves. This was consistent with the recommendations of ACA's adopted animal-assisted therapy in counseling competencies (Stewart et al., 2016). Chandler (2017) underscored the importance of anyone providing AAIs (supervisee or supervisor) be appropriately trained, credentialed, and provide AAIs with high regard for animal welfare and other ethical concerns.

Lastly, Meola and Sias (2016), Meola (2017), and Meola et al. (2020) described the findings of research completed while investigating the effects of equine-assisted learning. Equine-assisted learning is subsumed in the hierarchy of AAI as an animal-assisted education [AAE] intervention. The equine-assisted learning in those studies took place in a graduate counseling practicum or counseling theories course. Meola designed and carried out a quasi-

experimental design investigating the effects of an individual supervision intervention (one hour) in which an EAL was implemented (treatment group). The study specifically focused on the effect of the intervention on students' counseling self-efficacy and performance anxiety. Meola also assessed the relationship between the two constructs and sought to determine if there was a correlation between the quality of supervisory working alliance with the two constructs and if there was a correlation between the students' perceived supervisory working alliance and the effectiveness of the intervention.

The findings of Meola's (2017) study showed a significant main effect of the intervention on counseling self-efficacy and non-significance of the intervention on performance anxiety. A significant positive correlation was found between counseling self-efficacy and performance anxiety but no significance for the correlation of the quality of the supervisory working alliance with the constructs (counseling self-efficacy, performance anxiety) or the intervention. Meola's findings suggested the intervention (one hour of EAL in supervision) might improve counselors-in-training counseling self-efficacy and performance anxiety. Meola included a "debriefing questionnaire" (p.138), which was a review using content analysis methods. Meola et al. (2020), which appeared to be the peer-reviewed, published report for this dissertation study, elaborated on content analysis themes.

Meola et al. (2020) discussed three overarching categories: triggers for anxiety, coping with anxiety, and building relationships. Participants remarked on the anxiety provoked by the new experience of meeting the horse, which they likened to meeting a client for the first time (Meola et al., 2020). Participants also discussed the anxiety of taking on a leadership role as necessitated by the EAL interventions, especially in the context of feeling watched by their peers (Meola et al., 2020). Participants also aligned with feeling anxiety related to evaluation and

performance of the EAL interventions (Meola et al., 2020). Related to the second theme, participants discussed being able to access internal recourse for coping (such as mindfulness, seeking and accepting assistance from others, and finding ways to adapt to this new situation; Meola et al., 2020).

Overall, participants seemed to find this empowering (Meola et al., 2020). Lastly, regarding the theme of building relationships, participants reported they felt the intervention promoted peer connections and bonding, necessitated strengthening their assertiveness and boundaries, and feeling the focus of being in an intense circumstance (Meola et al., 2020). Interestingly, participants also disclosed they felt distracted while working with the horse—in the same way, they found themselves ruminating in their own thoughts and worries in a counseling session (Meola et al., 2020). The intervention seemed to provoke a real-life lab for experiencing parallels and dealing with them in an emotionally safe way that promoted development. Meola (2017) discussed the richness of the qualitative content analysis in her study and suggested that future research needs to attend to the qualitative nature of the experiences.

Although few, each of the publications that actively connected AAIs and supervision provided a unique perspective and offered justifying rationales for integrating AAIs into supervision. Although they focused on a highly specific type of AAI (equine-assisted learning [EAL]), Meola's 2017 and Meola et al.'s 2020 reports are promising and suggestive of the potential AAIs might offer. The next section of this literature review discusses the specific need for exploring supervisors' experiences as related to AAI-S.

Animal-Assisted Intervention in Supervision Collective Case Study

Milne's (2006) discussion of the value in transferring/translating therapeutic interventions to the supervisory context was echoed in the proposition of authors, suggesting

animal-assisted interventions had potential worth and merited consideration as interventions in the supervisory realm. Animal-assisted interventions have educational benefits, wellness benefits (stress and anxiety mitigation), and social and relational benefits. Why would they not be effective in supervision? The case was clear and intuitive to me and many others (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola & Sias, 2016; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017). The job now is to begin investigating the implementation and documenting the benefits!

Supervisors integrating AAIs into their clinical supervision practices offer a unique portal for exploring this intervention. Supervisors become the orchestrators of a supervisory experience that has the potential to foster reflection and supervisory relationships in a way vastly different from other modalities. In the summer of 2017, I completed a qualitative case study in my research internship investigating the experiences of both supervisor and supervisee in the case of AAI-S. Although I was not sure at the time if I would end up following that thread of research agenda through the dissertation process, I was captivated by the idea of AAIs in Supervision.

The study I completed in my internship revealed that both the supervisor and supervisee found AAIs in their supervision process provided great opportunities for the supervisees' personal and professional development. For example, the supervisee reported "it was really cool to feel that energy shift" in relation to the dynamics present in the supervision between herself, the supervisor, and the animal involved. She reported that the animal involvement provided a buffer for her performance anxiety and moments of levity (like the time a horse released flatulence in the middle of a supervisory session) that eased tension and stress. She also stated that at the same time, the involvement of animals sometimes highlighted her insecurities and allowed for the processing of clinical and supervisory dynamics that might have remained uncovered otherwise.

A major takeaway the supervisee had from the experience of AAI in her supervision was the ability to feel and deal with case conceptualization in the here and now because of the involvement in supervision situations. For example, she referred to the event told in the story leading into Chapter I of this manuscript and processed that being able to feel and reflect on the parallel of the horses' hierarchy allowed her to experience by proxy how and why her child client might have been feeling. This shift in energy in the arena gave her a platform to revise her conceptualization and reorient how she would approach the situation differently.

For the present study, I am proposed a deeper exploration into the case of AAI-S through the view of supervisors. Certainly, supervisee experiences should be addressed and would as a suggestion for future research. However, supervisors are the provider and facilitator of the interventions. They house the rationale needed to understand the foundation of this unique supervisory intervention. Additionally, there was relatively little in the supervision literature pertaining to the experiences of supervisors; the majority examined the experiences of supervisees (Grant et al., 2012; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). Perhaps this was due to the desire to understand what worked in our continued search for evidence-based practices (Milne & Reiser, 2012)—the supervisee would be the voice to measure regarding outcomes. Yet, there is much to be learned from the voices of the experienced (Grant et al., 2012; Wheeler & Richards, 2007). This collective case study investigated the case of AAI-S from the view of the supervisors who were currently implementing the interventions.

Summary

This literature review provided an overview of the human-animal bond (HAB), human animal interactions (HAIs), animal-assisted interventions (AAIs), an orientation to relevant elements of clinical supervision, and the potential benefits in the supervisory relationship of

AAIs. My hope was a clear foundation and rationale for including AAIs in the scope of supervision was provided.

In Chapter III, I explain my investigative philosophical stance, research design, methodology, methods, provide participant and data collection information, and the essential components of the analysis framework used. Chapter IV provides rich, thick descriptions of the three cases and the findings from within and across cases. Chapter V provides discussion of the findings and quintain, implications, areas for future research, and limitations of this research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) are widely accepted as productive and beneficial in many ways. In the last six years, AAIs have surfaced in the supervision literature as a potential means for enhancing the supervisory relationship and supporting supervisee development. However, there was little extant research to support this suggestion. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to learn about the phenomenon of animal-assisted interventions in AAI-S from the voices of those who know them: supervisors who are already integrating AAIs in their clinical supervision practices. In the current study, I utilized a collective case study design grounded in the philosophy of constructivist inquiry. In the following sections, I detail my stance as a researcher, the qualitative approach, philosophical framework, methodological framework, methods, rigor and ethical considerations, and finally, the analytical approach to the data.

Research Questions

As presented in Chapter I, Stake (2006) called for the framework of a binding concept to guide a multi-case case study. The binding concept acted as the primary research question for this study. Extending from this binding concept were two secondary research questions that steered the design, methods, and analysis of this study. Together, they are presented here:

- Q1 Why are supervisors integrating AAIs into supervision?
 - Q1.a What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAIs into supervision?

Q1.b How are supervisors integrating AAI's into clinical supervision?

The current study is a qualitative collective case study. The nature of the purpose for this study and the research questions posed are fundamentally qualitative. When seeking to understand experiences of a phenomenon to produce a thorough account of the phenomenon, qualitative research is indicated (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the following section, I describe the nature of qualitative research and its relevance to my purpose and research questions.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is characterized by several primary guideposts. It is concerned with understanding the meaning humans make and apply to phenomena and is primarily inductive, meaning it casts a net searching for possible explanations or theories rather than designing methods to test a theory (as in quantitative research). Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate when there is a need for a detailed account of a phenomenon to facilitate understanding of a complex issue (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), such as understanding the process and experiences of supervisors integrating animal-assisted interventions in their practices of clinical supervision (AAI-S).

Qualitative research is an approach to inquiry that includes multiple design choices and methodologies such as ethnography, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each model of qualitative research proposes a unique route to investigate a social phenomenon. Determining the appropriateness of a model to carry out a study is based on the purpose of the research and research questions guiding the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). Each choice and method involved should be purposeful and aligned directly with the research purpose and research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Central to the work of qualitative research is the core idea that the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering the information (data collection and analysis) and the collection of information should involve as little disruption to the participant's environment as possible. This is why Lincoln and Guba (1985) originally described this type of research as "naturalistic inquiry." They also defined that qualitative research is inherently interpretive and inductive, following the data to where they tell a story about the phenomenon of study (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Merriam (1989) summarized that

all types of qualitative research are based in the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how they make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world. (p. 6, emphasis in original)

Through the process of making sense of what the participants have made sense of (researcher constructions of participant constructions; the participants process, meaning and understanding of their own experiences), researchers endeavor to produce a rich and complex, dynamic description of the phenomenon of study (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Because the researcher is the primary instrument gathering and analyzing the meanings of others, matters of validity and reliability are called into question (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Earnest, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To address this issue, Lincoln and Guba (1985) constructed a framework of criteria to satisfy needs for validity and reliability. Their framework provides what is intended to parallel positivistic concepts that serve as

equivalents to the standards of qualitative approaches: credibility = internal validity, transferability = external validity, dependability = reliability, and confirmability = objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Later, Lincoln and Guba (1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) promoted the addition of “authenticity” to the criteria for trustworthiness they founded. Authenticity is generally concerned with assessing the degrees to which researchers “fairly and faithfully” convey the range of multiple realities within the research (Earnest, 2020, p. 78; Shannon & Hambacher, 2014). These concepts are further discussed in the analysis section of this chapter.

Philosophical Framework

Another facet of qualitative research concerns the philosophy embedded in a such an inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (2013) referred to their 1985 publication, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, and shared that it was the first time for a “discussion of the idea of ‘constructed realities’ (p. 23). They furthered this discussion in *Fourth-Generation Evaluation* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) by suggesting the concept of “‘constructivist paradigm’ as a coherent belief system” for qualitative research (p. 23). In the same foundational text, they articulated that

the paradigm in question is no longer called ‘naturalistic’ but ‘constructivist’ and the relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, and hermeneutic methodology of constructivism are even more sharply contrasted with the realist ontology, objectivist epistemology, and interventionist methodology of the ‘conventional’ belief system. (p. 23)

This indicated that as far as Lincoln and Guba were concerned, all qualitative research is at its base constructivist. The nature of qualitative research being founded on the gathering of multiple realities qualified this. I appreciated this delineation by Guba and Lincoln (1989) and identified that, indeed, my inquiry was inherently constructivist.

In *Constructivist Credo*, Lincoln and Guba (2013) thoughtfully and coherently outlined “tenets” of constructivism as a golden thread to connect all aspects of a researcher’s journey through a study. I aimed to follow their recommendations and golden thread throughout my study from the translation of my research purpose and research questions to an inquiry framework of design, methodology, methods, and analysis. What follows is a description of Lincoln and Guba’s (2013) constructivist tenants.

Constructivism

Although initially discussed in earlier work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the notion of constructivist inquiry was later refined in Lincoln and Guba’s (2013) *Constructivist Credo*. They outlined presumptions within the constructivist frame (ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology) and conjectures they found to be inherent to constructivist inquiry (issues related to the beginning of inquiry, constructions, shared constructions, knowledge, dependence and voice, paradigms, inquiry, hermeneutic/dialectic methodology, quality criteria application, change, ethics and politics, and issues related to the case reports). Descriptions of the presumptions and conjectures of constructivism put forth by Lincoln and Guba in their 2013 book, *Constructivist Credo*, follow.

The Presumptions

Ontology. The presumptions Lincoln and Guba’s (2013) outlined were those of ontology (the nature of reality or what can *be known*), epistemology (the relationship between knower and knowable, which is directed by the answer to the question of ontology), methodology (relating to how one goes about acquiring the knowledge, which must align with the previous answers to epistemology and ontology), and axiology (which refers to what is the value of the knowledge acquired, “which is most truthful, ... most beautiful... and... most life-enhancing”(Lincoln &

Guba, 2013, p. 37). They declared that the ontology of constructivism, as they saw it, was relativism and that matters of definition and convention only lived in the minds of persons contemplating them (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Epistemology. Regarding epistemology, Lincoln and Guba (2013) identified that for constructivism, as they saw it, transactional subjectivism was the basic presupposition of constructivism. That is, the relationship between known and knowable is highly individualized, context specific, and created through a transactional process between the knower's context (lived experiences, cultural influences, etc.) and that which is to become known (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Methodology. Lincoln and Guba (2013) discussed methodology, in reference to constructivist inquiry, as being inherently of hermeneutic/dialecticism premise. They suggested that hermeneutic/dialecticism follows appropriately from there presuppositions of ontology and epistemology in that this methodology centralizes in depth exploration of the psyche and meaning making of the knowers involved in the phenomena of study. They described further that there are two points of action the researcher must uphold. The first is to “uncover the constructions held by the various knowers,” which is “best accomplished by a process whereby the constructions are successively disclosed and plumbed for meaning” (p. 40). This requires the researcher and participants to collaborate as equals, which they connect to methods of hermeneutics (the cycle of interpreting, understanding, returning, and cycling through again for coherence). Second, they suggested the constructions identified by the “individual knowers must be confronted, compared, and contrasted” which is typical of the methods of dialectics (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p.40). I proposed a framework for carrying out this study that consists of an overarching design using collective case study methodology (CCS; Stake, 2006).

Axiology. Last, they discussed axiology. They identified that they rejected the objectivity of positivism and asserted that researcher and participants “co-create knowledge and create a new, shared reality” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 41). They went further to say that the value systems of each must be uncovered and made transparent.

The Conjectures

The nature of conjecture is it is *conjecture*. It means a conclusion has been drawn “from inadequate or insufficient grounds to ensure proof” and invites further investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 44). I think Lincoln and Guba (2013) were acknowledging, in their reference to these implications of constructivism as conjectures, that their understanding of constructivism was their *construction* of it. Guba referred to this on page 29: “Since what I ‘know’ is itself a construction, it is subject to continuous change – to reconstruction – as available information and sophistication improve.” Earlier he stated his aim and hope of this credo was it provided an “educated guess,” a logical flow of metaphysics he believed to be “the most informed and sophisticated fit for social inquiry” (p. 29). As such, his *educated guesses* were “more conjectural than definitive” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 29). This is the true spirit of constructivism.

Lincoln and Guba (2013) outlined their developmental process of how they came to understand constructivist inquiry in *Constructivist Credo*. They included a total of 133 conjectures, I provide a brief description of each in the following paragraphs.

The conjecture called In the Beginning discussed elements of what it means to *know*. This section disrupts notions of objective reality and builds towards a conclusion that, thus, *reality* and *truth* are relative to a knower. In the conjecture *Constructions*, Lincoln and Guba (2013) discussed the basis of a construction: “A construct is a mental realization” and a

“construction is a coherent, articulated set up constructs” (p. 47). Constructions could be simple or complex and created individually or jointly with other individuals. They stated that culture is a “powerful transmitter of constructions” and humans are often subjected to ‘inherited’ cultural references, such as gender, class, and race (p. 48). They suggested all constructions are open to continuous reconstruction as one exists in the world, thereby building on existing constructions all the time. They defined that “shared constructions” are not just of the individual and might be shared with others on a small or large scale (large scale being culture). Such social constructions might be reified over time become crystallized as cultural reality.

Knowledge was explained as “the organized remembrance of experience” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 54). Lincoln and Guba (2013) added that shared knowledge is a “cumulative reconstruction” (p. 55), a consensus. Knowledge is always context bound and mentally formed. Dependence and Voice are issues explored in relation to the nature of the transactional and subjectivist epistemology, wrestling with the privilege of the inquirer. It is to this end that makes a call for representation of oppressed voices in knowledge produced by a researcher. They also suggested this dynamic of constructivism is a

compelling reason for the maintenance of a reflexive journal on all inquiries pursued by constructivists: to come to know, continually, the nature and shape of prior constructions, including most especially those which are held tacitly, and which may previously be unknown to the inquirer. (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 57).

They encouraged the use of reflexive journals and urged that they be returned to on a regular basis, in and out of the field, for granting insights into the researchers’ held constructions.

Lincoln and Guba (2013) explained that Paradigms functioned as a fundamental set of beliefs and constructivism was one such paradigm. Importantly, they explained that paradigms

might not necessarily be reduced to a common set of standards. Extending from paradigms was Inquiry, which they contended was “the achievement of continually improved understanding and extended sophistication which is accomplished through the reconstruction or extension of existing constructions and/or the development of new constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 61). They delineated three forms of inquiry: research, evaluation, and policy analysis. They further defined inquiry as a “conscious, systematic, and disciplined sense-making effort” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 61), intended to develop and inform understanding of a phenomenon. They described inquiry as having two stages. One they referred to as Discovery, wherein there was an effort to describe the phenomenon’s state and context, and Assimilation, which is the process of incorporating the new discoveries into existing frames or develop new ones.

Lincoln and Guba (2013) urged researchers to ensure methodological choices were carefully suited to the assumptions of a paradigm (e.g., ontology, etc.) through their discussion of hermeneutic/dialectic methodology. This approach to methodology is carried out over multiple encounters with respondents, which aids components of trustworthiness (e.g., prolonged engagement, member-checking). The hermeneutic dialectic process deconstructs and reconstructs, finally arriving at the research product. Lincoln and Guba explained an updated view of trustworthiness in their delivery of quality criteria.” They proposed that the quality of a hermeneutic/dialectic methodology could be determined through authenticity criteria but could be paired with other sources for trustworthiness (such as credibility, transferability, etc.). They suggested the following methods for each criterion of authenticity: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Fairness is a concept recommended, for example, for using informed consent procedures, prolonged engagement, member checking, and use of a peer debriefer aimed at carrying out research that is

fair to the participants. Ontological authenticity is ensured through the researcher's use of reflexive journaling, being open and transparent about the purpose of the inquiry, and forming a caring and trusting relationship with respondents. Educative authenticity is recommended as a means of ensuring the researcher could promote learning among the intended audience through the report of the research. This might be ensured through auditing, peer debriefing, and reflexive journaling. Catalytic authenticity is aimed at promoting co-construction of meaning with participants, finding consensus, accessibility of the final report, and use of an audit trail. Tactical authenticity promotes the researcher's negotiation with participants regarding interpretation and reporting, maintenance of confidentiality, consent forms, member checking, and transparent discussions about power dynamics of the research relationship. I describe the actions I took to address authenticity later in this chapter in the methods section.

The conjecture of Application was in reference to encouraging inquirers to acknowledge that not all knowers would hold the same constructions and there might be competing ideas within participants and settings. The conjecture Change was described by Lincoln and Guba (2013) as most relevant to action research in which change is an anticipated outcome. They discussed options for creating a power shift in a situation and identified the inquirer as the primary change agent. A core to all research initiatives regardless of paradigm and methodology, is Ethics and Politics. Lincoln and Guba explained that "every human institution and every human in action, including inquiry, is both profoundly ethical and profoundly political in nature" (p. 74). They urged the inquirer to be attuned to potential "malconstruction" (overlooking or not reporting what one does not want to hear) as well as carry out the typical safeguards of ethics such as maintaining confidentiality, using informed consent, and engagement with an Institutional Review Board.

Lastly, Lincoln and Guba (2013) explained that a Case Report is an expectation for constructivist inquiry. They instruct that a final “report of a constructivist inquiry is most usefully made in the case study format” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 79). They advocated that case study format was a particularly helpful design because it

delivers sufficient scope and depth to afford vicarious experience..., sufficient understanding to suggest working hypothesis, sufficient richness to point to useful metaphors, and sufficient detail... to permit a reader to test a personal construction, all of which are important means to facilitate application in other non-local settings. (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 79)

Here, Lincoln and Guba focused on the potency of case study design for transferability.

Interestingly, they declared that “case study is perhaps the only format that can remain true to the moral imperatives of constructivism, that is, to serve as a credible representation of various local constructions encountered and of any consensus construction... that has emerged” (p. 80).

The philosophical framework of constructivism laid out by Lincoln and Guba (2013) provided a natural and substantial foundation to carry out case study research, which according to Stake (1995, 2006) is inherently constructivist.

Qualitative Case Study Design

A case study involves in-depth exploration of a phenomenon that has natural boundaries (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Stewart (2014) discussed that case study research is an overall approach to research rather than a methodology with innate philosophical suppositions or a specific method. However, Yin (2018) described case study research as having a trilogy of dynamics: case study research as *mode* of inquiry, case studies the *method* of inquiry, and the case as the usual *unit* of inquiry in a case (p. xx). Stake (1995, 2006) identified that case study research is not a methodology so much as *choices* of what is to be studied. Others presented it as

a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or comprehensive research strategy (Merriam, 1998; Schwandt & Gates, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2016) identified case study research as a standalone methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, an object of study, and the product of the inquiry. With the disagreements in terminology of case study, whether it is a method, methodology, etc., I chose to utilize case study research as a design. Merriam (1998) referred to case study as a design and I believed this was its best use in serving the purpose of this study. It was the foundational design element of my inquiry scaffolding. Case study design provided the stage I used to frame-out my inquiry theater.

The origins of modern case study research are in early anthropological and social sciences research (Stewart, 2014). The primary function of a case study design is gathering information for an in-depth exploration of a specific case. Such a deep dive into the functioning of a case provides insight into the dynamics and rationales or actions by the players in a case. Case studies are a popular research design in a multitude of fields (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). One reason for the popularity of case study research is the rich and thick description resulting from an in-depth exploration of a case (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The benefit of such depth of description is it allows readers to visualize the case and reflect on the possibility of themselves in the bounds of such a case or measure the case against their own frame of reference to determine its usefulness to them (Stake, 1995, 2006). Case study is almost like an immersive experience but is typically manifested in written communication. Since some of the usefulness of case study research is it can convey a situation in great depth, it is particularly suited to dealing with how and why questions (Yin, 2018). Merriam (1998) shared that case study was also a suitable design for understanding a process and this design might be chosen for its uniqueness and for how it might reveal about a phenomenon. Stake (2006) described a central tenet of case

study research as the concern of learning about a phenomenon with as little intrusion as possible, observing the phenomenon in its everyday context.

The primary differentiating characteristic that separates case study from other approaches is the inquiry must be of a single unit or bounded system. A system may be bounded in several ways and from the singular to the multi-layered and complex. The case might be bound by time, location, or as a system, organization, or culture (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Programs, events, or activities might also represent a bounded case. Merriam (1998) specifically noted that an intervention might constitute a “case.” The most common instances of cases researched in this design are ones with straightforward and obvious boundaries binding a system for inquiry (Yin, 2018).

However, Merriam (1998) suggested that case studies might also be initiated to investigate an innovative program or a unique instance such as a program or intervention that worked very well or one that was an outlier revealing problems to learn from. An example of the latter was in Asmussen and Creswell’s (1995) book, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. Asmussen and Creswell completed a case study of a university campus shooting and the university response to the tragedy. The study commenced two days following the violent incident and followed each turn of the administration responding as well as the student and community response. Their decision to document an event unfolding in real time provided a unique and timely opportunity to capture the experiences and observe the response. Their study was published in the *Journal of Higher Education* and served to inform the higher education community of the experiences and responses that impacted the local and campus communities. This was an example of a case being bound through its uniqueness and intrinsic value (as well as location, time, and context). Merriam offered that a case might also be selected because it is

intrinsically interesting and studying it would serve “to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible” (p. 28).

Merriam (1998) pointed out that some authors differed in their concept of “case” and that “case study” might refer to the process of conducting the case study (verb) and/or the unit of study (noun). Yin’s (2018) definition of case study focused on the research process of case study: “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and contexts are not clearly evident” (p. 14). This contrasted with Stake’s (1995) view. His focus was on the unit itself. Merriam stated that a case study might be defined in terms of its “end product: ‘A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit’” (p. 27). Merriam shared Becker’s statement on the purpose of case study was twofold: “to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study... and... to develop general theoretical statements about regularities and social structure and process” (Becker, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 29).

Principles and Benefits of Case Study Research

Merriam (1998) provided a summary of the essential principles of case study research. Case studies are also known as particularistic, meaning there is an intention to delve into the particulars of the phenomenon. The case is a vessel, of sorts, for what is revealed about the phenomenon. Another characteristic of a case study project is it is descriptive, meaning its function and usefulness lies in its thick description of the phenomenon. Case studies also have a heuristic quality. Their essential role in the world of research is to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon.

Stake (1981, as cited in Merriam's 1998, pp. 31-32) emphasized that case study research is helpful because the knowledge learned from it is fundamentally different from other research knowledge. He explained that knowledge from case studies is concrete, allowing resonance with people's personal experiences due to their vivid and sensory presentation. Further, he argued it is contextual. The phenomenon is being investigated in its natural setting, embedded in its own context which provides the wealth of information. Lastly, Stake (1981, as cited in Merriam's 1998, pp. 31-32) discussed the cycles of understanding (similar to the suggestions of Watkins [2017a, 2017b] regarding supervisee learning and re-learning). He suggested the knowledge held in the case study became enhanced by interaction with the readers and the readers brought with them their own experiences (constructs). In interacting with the findings of the case study, the case study might be elaborated on based on how people connected the findings with their own experiences and that readers were able to reference populations of import related to their own frame—readers will apply the knowledge they create as related to their own frames (Stake, as cited in Merriam, 1998, pp. 31-32).

I found the heuristic quality to be most useful and purposeful for this study. The goal was to present a holistic account of the phenomenon that reflected reasons for the instance, background, events that influenced decisions, what worked/or did not work, discussed and evaluated the actions, and ultimately summarized findings in a way that offered potential applicability (generalizability). The strength of case studies is in exactly this principle: the researcher produced a holistic depiction of a situation (phenomenon, etc.) with such detail and depth that the reader is able to process the findings, determine for themselves whether the case or findings “fit” for them, and if the findings were applicable to their lives or circumstances. Could

they see themselves participating in AAI-S? Could they imagine themselves integrating AAI-S? This captured the value of a case study design for the purposes of this study.

A primary principle of case study research is the need for multiple sources of data (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2018). Multiple sources of data could be in the form of multiple types of data (e.g., interview, documents, artifacts, field observations, etc.). Multiple sources of data might also come in the form of multiple informants such as in a multiple case study or involving multiple participants to share their individual insights to create a larger tapestry of the case (Stake, 2006).

Collective Case Study Design

Collective case study is also referred to as multiple case study and multi-case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2018). I chose to use Stake's term, collective case study (CCS), for the title of this study because it resonated more with me personally and connoted the spirit and intention of this research, which was to provide a collective view of the phenomenon of animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). However, to remain connected to the methodological literature, where multiple case study and multi-case study are used more frequently, I used the terms interchangeably throughout the remainder of this research.

A completed CCS is the investigation of multiple instrumental cases purposefully chosen to represent a binding concept and are analyzed to understand a larger phenomenon (Stake, 2006). A CCS connected to the purpose of the study in that I was seeking to explore the experience and processes of supervisors who had integrated AAI-S into their supervision. A CCS allowed for that investigation and offered a foundation for analyzing and presenting the findings in a way that was helpful to the intended audience (e.g., counselor educators, supervisors, and other mental health professionals). A multi-case study, according to Stake (2006), might be

constituted of cases from two categories: intrinsic and instrumental. An intrinsic case is one that is designed for exploration in which a researcher might be guided by their interest in the case itself rather than for extending theory. Meaning the interest in the case is *intrinsic* to the case itself. An instrumental case is one in which

the case itself is secondary to understanding a particular phenomenon. The difference between an intrinsic and instrumental case study is not the case but rather the purpose of the study... In instrumental case research the case facilitates understanding of something else. (Mills et al., 2010, p. 2)

In other words, an instrumental case is one that is utilized as an instrument of understanding a larger issue. The interest is extrinsic to the case itself and investigation is for the purpose of understanding a larger phenomenon. Stake (2006) extended this distinction by describing the difference in single case studies versus multiple (collective) case studies. He clarified that an intrinsic case is one that is more appropriate for investigation in single case studies, whereas instrumental cases are preferred for a multiple case design. Stake explained that this is because instrumental cases provide insight into the larger phenomenon of interest; the focus is not on the individual cases themselves but in what they illuminate about the larger phenomenon, as in a multiple case study. Thus, the cases representing the larger phenomenon of AAI-S were *instrumental* cases. These instrumental cases constituted the holistic account of the overarching, binding concept, which Stake refers to as *the quintain*.

Cases and Quintains

With the central concern of answering how and why questions emblematic of case study research, multiple case study designs become interested in the larger, wide-angle view of an overarching phenomenon. The overarching binding concept was what Stake (2006) referred to as

a quintain. Quintain historically refers to the mark a medieval knight aims his lance at when jousting, shaped as a weight or shield. This word evokes the image of a knight aiming for just about anywhere on this board as they fly by on horseback in hopes of “tilting” the mark to win. Stake discusses the case study quintain as the *whole* (or mark) that the researcher is aiming for, like the jouster aims for the quintain in his game. The mark of the quintain is what the research is hoping to understand through investigation and triangulation among individual instrumental cases. The concept could also be imagined as a scatterplot of individual cases that comprise the fundamental nature of the *whole* the cases represent. Stake discussed a dilemma that surfaces in light of the decision to undertake multiple case study research: the “case-quintain dilemma” in which the researcher struggles with the tension and demand for attention between the cases and the quintain. I imagined this as similar to family systems dynamics, wherein tension exists for the therapist in addressing individual issues versus the family systems issues that might contribute to or perpetuate the individual’s presentation for therapy. For a family systems-oriented therapist, the attention would be directed toward the systemic issues in the family. In this metaphor, the multiple case researcher is like a family therapist.

Cases in a multi-case study are bound by their categorical relationship to one another: their common thread. Stake (2006) discussed,

Each mini-case then will be constrained by its representation of or relationship to the program. But if the study is designed as a qualitative multi-case study, then the individual cases should be studied to learn about their self-centering, complexity, and situational uniqueness. Thus, each case is to be understood in depth, giving little immediate attention to the quintain. (p. 6)

Later, after the deep dive into the complexities and uniqueness of the instrumental cases, the researcher might turn attention to the whole depicted by the cases that comprise the quintain. Stake held that researchers are free to determine where and to what proportion they give their attention to—cases or the quintain.

In a CCS, cases are selected purposefully and carefully for their ability to represent the central aspects of a phenomenon. This is what Yin (2018) referred to in the following replication logic: the researcher would replicate the same actions (data collection methods, analysis) across each case for the purpose of developing understanding of the broader context. A benefit of CCS is it offers an opportunity to investigate across multiple cases to determine if cases are impacted by certain environmental issues or if there are certain conditions in which the cases perform better or worse (Stewart, 2014; Yin, 2018). A significant element of CCS is that having multiple cases involved could strengthen the results by demonstrating similarities and findings across a spectrum of natural settings.

Creswell and Poth (2016) and Stake (1995, 2006) offered procedures for conducting case study research. They agreed the first step is determining if case study research is appropriate for the purpose of the study and to clearly outline the boundaries of the “case.” In the current study, I aimed to understand the overarching concepts of how and why clinical supervisors were integrating AAIs into their supervision practices through investigation of purposefully selected instrumental cases. These instrumental cases were comprised of multiple sources of data from three cases of AAI-S. The participants were representatives of the case of AAI-S as individuals who had been providing AAI-S. The concern with how and why was the overarching and binding concept that made the quintain for this collective case study project. The following overarching research question addressed the quintain for this study:

Q1 Why are supervisors integrating Animal-Assisted Interventions in supervision?

Data collected and interview questions were designed to uncover the how and the why of this binding concept. Each of the instrumental cases (participants and their data) served to inform that which constitutes the quintain—the whole of the quintain.

Stake (1995, 2006) was consistently cited in the methodological literature on collective case study design and analysis and his sample recommendations are regularly referred to in dissertations and other published research. Stake advocated for no less than four and no more than 10 cases for a multiple case study investigation. He maintained that less than four cases might limit a thorough enough investigation to yield applicability to the quintain and, on the other end of his range, more than 10 might dilute the particularities and contextual factors central to the rationale for using case study research in the first place. This multiple case study included three cases, which was less than the recommended sample size Stake has put forth (see sampling and recruitment section for explanation of efforts and barriers to higher sample size for this study).

The next step Stake (1995, 2006) articulated in designing a CCS was defining the data to be collected and how they would be collected. Baxter and Jack (2008) explained that multiple data sources are a “hallmark of case study research” (p. 554). Common data sources include interviews, observations, documents, physical artifacts, archival records, and other materials that could lend insight into a case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995, 2006). Baxter and Jack employed an analogy of a puzzle to illustrate the function of multiple sources of data for understanding a case. They explained that each source of data acted as a puzzle piece constituting a larger picture or image of the whole (for individual cases and aggregated into an even larger image for the quintain). This added strength to the findings of the case study

research, allowing for rich and thick description of multiple facets of the phenomenon. Data sources and collection methods are discussed further in the methods section.

Regarding the next phase of case study research—analysis, Stake (1995, 2006) centralized that analysis should not be for the purpose of creating generalizability but rather for the sake of understanding the depth of the case itself. Creswell and Poth (2016) and Stake (1995, 2006) explained that the final phase in completing a case study project before preparing the final case report is that of interpretation. Stake (2006), however, described analysis and interpretation as having two main decision points. He suggested that case study research could be directly interpreted or be analyzed through categorical aggregation. These analytical decisions are discussed in further detail and with respect to what was completed in this study in the analysis section of this chapter. Lastly, specific to CCS, Stake (1995, 2006) and Creswell and Poth (2016) suggested that researchers should conduct those analysis procedures both within and across-cases to provide rich and thick description of each case as well as a final report of the quintain.

Researcher Stance

Before moving further into this chapter with description of the methods and procedures, I provide an articulation of my positionality as a researcher. I felt it was important to do so at this point before going further as I name potential biases and stances that might influence my choices of methods and procedures as well as my implementation of those choices. Being as transparent as was possible about my researcher stance here allows the audience member an opportunity to understand my stances and interpret my choices knowledge of my identities and stance.

My stance as a researcher in the current study held several positions and identities relevant to by presence in this study. Beneath all of my professional and academic positionalities is my personal history. Throughout my childhood and adult life, I had family pets and love of

animals. An illustrative anecdote of this love was that in middle school, my class engaged in a guidance and career development activity in which we had to write a paper on our *dream job*. I chose to write about being an animal psychologist. In my conceptualization of this vocation, which I made up, I would be act as a therapist to animals helping them through emotional suffering. My teacher surely chuckled at this notion and kindly redirected me toward a more realistic vocation as a veterinarian. I interviewed our family veterinarian to learn more about that occupation. Later, in high school and college, I worked at the same veterinarian's office and learned about the health and welfare of animals as well as social interactions of the workplace. In my adolescence, I had intended to go to veterinary school and pursue this vocation. However, upon taking and struggling with chemistry classes, I shifted vocational trajectory toward social sciences. Regardless of my vocational location, animals and my pets have been and continue to be a major part of my life. This love of animals figured prominently into the happenstance path leading me to an interest in animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) and the intersection of the fields of AAI and supervision. From this perspective, it was clear to me that I had been drawn to this interest area from developmental experiences.

The next layer of my researcher stance included my current professional and academic identity. I have been a practicing professional counselor since 2006 and am currently completing a doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision. At the time of this study, I work as a professional counselor and am an adjunct instructor in a counselor education program teaching master's level course. I have a professional identity as a professional counselor and counselor educator and have been immersed in the educational and supervisory processes of counselor training from my work experience and doctoral training. This situatedness created the lens through which I viewed the phenomenon of AAI-S. A benefit of this lens was I had knowledge

of the common conceptual and empirical frame of counselor training and supervision. A potential limitation of this lens was I might lack awareness of other fields' training modalities (e.g., social work, occupational therapy) and models of content relevant to this study (e.g., supervision). I might also be at risk of valuing modalities of training and supervision with which I am familiar. These were issues I worked to maintain awareness of and track through reflective journaling and peer debriefing to understand the potential impact of my identities and positionality on the data collected and analysis process.

Lastly, I wished to articulate awareness of parts of my overarching identity that were relevant to my stance as a researcher. I hold multiple interacting identities that impact how I situate myself in the world that undoubtedly influenced my research. I hold many majority, privileged identities that enabled my movement through many situations. I strove to maintain awareness of these identities and continually "checked" them to ensure I was not "riding the coat tails" of my privilege or I was doing harm to another person (or system). I actively sought ways to deconstruct and challenge systems of oppression when I came across them in my daily life as well in my research work. The theoretical and procedural frameworks I planned supported my clarity and reflexivity as I carried out this inquiry as well as my trustworthiness procedures (e.g., reflection journaling, peer debriefing, member-checking, etc.).

Methods

The current study is described next including methods used and procedures followed. This study attempted to gain foundational understanding of the overarching, binding concept of AAI-S through a multiple case study approach in which three AAI-S supervisors represented three instrumental cases of AAI-S. To do so, I began by developing a conceptual framework based on literature relevant to understanding AAI-S. As presented in Chapter II, literature from

the field of AAI's and supervision created the scaffolding for this conceptual framework. The framework included concepts such as mechanisms of action of AAI's, benefits of AAI's, as well as professional issues related to competency regarding AAI's in the mental health field. Additionally, the framework included concepts in supervision such as experiential learning, transferability of therapy interventions to the realm of supervision, supervisory working alliance, supervisee development, and common issues affecting supervisee development. These concepts guided the construction of methods and procedures for this study such as case selection, sampling/recruitment, and types of data collected.

Sampling Frame

Since the ultimate goal of this research was to understand the quintain of AAI-S, I needed to identify and recruit participants who could act as potent informants of this phenomenon. I engaged in criterion-based, purposeful sampling with inclusion and exclusion criteria aimed at capturing essential qualities needed to illuminate AAI-S. Patton asserted that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 168, emphasis in original; as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The sampling criteria were designed to provide rich data collection opportunities focused on locating participants who had specific professional identities, levels of experience, and commitment to the professional standards associated with supervision and AAI's.

Based on the desire to have information-rich cases that also allowed for reasonable comparison across cases, participating supervisors needed to meet the criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants must be fully licensed professionals in a counseling related field (specifically professional counselor, clinical or counseling psychologist). Participants needed to have

completed formal supervision training related to educational standard or credential (e.g., formal graduate training or continued education for a supervision provider such as approved clinical supervisor) and have at least three years of supervision experience beyond training. Participants needed to have completed training in AAI or AAT, have at least three years of experience with AAI or AAT, and have a history of registration with a therapy animal credentialing body (such as Pet Partners).

Participants also needed to have been implementing AAI-S for at least one and have practiced AAI-S at least within the last month year at the time of the study. Although AAI are interdisciplinary and clinical supervision takes place in multiple mental health professions, participation was limited to professional counselors and psychologists due to the known similarity between the two professions regarding supervision. Specifically, the role of supervision, research on supervision, expectations and function of supervision is so similar within professional counseling and clinical and counseling psychology, there was likelihood potential participants would have the same or similar frame of reference and training in supervision. This exclusion of other professions, such as social workers, made understanding participants' experiences of supervision clearer and more unambiguous for the purposes of this study. Additionally, fundamental differences across non-counseling professional identities could create confusion or difficulty interpreting data. Thus, the decision to exclude social workers and other non-counseling mental health professionals was made in the interest of data source parsimony.

Recruitment and Selection

The goal of achieving a sample size between 4 to 10 participants was directly related to Stake's (2006) recommendation of range of possible cases in a multiple case study. To address

this relatively wide range in recommended sample size, I structured recruitment using personal network of colleagues I knew implemented AAI-S and snowballing for further potential participants. I intended to cease recruitment when saturation was met or at 10 participants. Since I knew of approximately four individuals actively providing AAI-S, I planned to contact those individuals first and then engage in snowballing to identify additional potential participants outside of my professional network (including social media messaging). I kept a recruitment log as part of my audit trail documenting contacts, how they were contacted, their response, follow-ups, next steps, inability to participate, and unsuccessful outreaches.

Initial outreach began in September of 2021 after receiving University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study (see Appendix A). First contact was made via email and included an attached recruitment letter (see Appendix B), informed consent (see Appendix C), and IRB approval documentation. The body of the email introduced the study with a short explanation and invitation to participate. In my initial round of recruitment contacts, I successfully recruited one participant. Following that round of recruitment, I reached out to individuals who were suggested from my initial round of contacts and contacted additional individuals I found in the professional networks outside of my personal connections. I “cold connected” individuals in professional networks (via social media) that either had documented engagement with AAI-S or were likely to have provided AAI-S. This round of recruitment yielded two successful recruitments, one from snowballing and one from cold-contacting a professional I identified through professional networks. I continued to reach out and recruit for additional participants but efforts were unsuccessful. Following the initial outreach if there was no response, I followed up by email one week later. If there was no response following my second email, I called the participant (using contact information found

online such as academic, business, or practice websites). If there was no response after a phone outreach, I took the non-response as a “no” response to my invitation to participate. Posting in social media groups (groups related to AAIs in mental health professions) yielded no responses.

In total, 10 individuals were contacted (not counting the social media group posts). Seven responded to my initial contact and invitation to participate. Three were screened out; two were not actively providing AAIs in supervision and one met all criteria and was willing to participate but had to be excluded due to professional identity (e.g., social workers excluded from study). One, who was identified through snowballing with a participant, responded saying they were interested and would like to participate but could not commit the time to do so. Another responded indicating no ability/interest in participating but referred me to an organization that might have recruitment possibilities. One did not respond at all. Ultimately, three participants joined the study and were involved in data collection (off and on) from September 2021 through July 2022.

Participation Incentive

Participants were offered a small incentive for participation: a \$25 gift card to a retailer of the choice or donation to a non-profit of the participant’s choice. Participants were also provided with a zip file of collected literature and resources related to AAI-S (articles from the literature review, professional organization literature related to AAI-S). Participants were also informed they would be notified if this research was presented at a professional conference and they would be provided a copy of a peer-reviewed article of this study should it become published. The participants all voiced appreciation and interest in the incentives, although they each shared they were interested in participating for the intrinsic value associated with their love for AAI-S.

Consent for Participation

Consent forms were reviewed with participants at two points in the data collection process. The initial review was upon participant screening into the study and their agreement to participate was obtained. The second was upon the beginning of the initial interview (to confirm consent). The consent form described the study, outlined participation tasks, stated risks and benefits of participation, and provided a list of their rights as a human subject (e.g., right to withdraw at any time; see Appendix C). Consent to continue participation was addressed throughout engagement after it became clear more time for participation was required. This occurred in each interview contact with the participants.

Participants

Three participants represented each of the three cases for this study. Each participant and animal partner were given pseudonyms that were used throughout the remainder of this study. The participant for case number one was Roseanna (pseudonym). She is a counselor educator in a training program in the United States and works with a rabbit and dog as animal partners in her education activities with students and in AAI-S. She is fully licensed and has been practicing supervision for 10 years, animal assisted interventions for 20 years, and then combining AAIs in supervision for 10. The participant representing case number two was Clara (pseudonym). She is a counselor educator working in a private practice in the United States and is fully licensed in her state. She is a registered play therapy supervisor. Clara provides AAT to her clients and AAIs to her supervisees partnering with rabbits, dogs, cats, and a fish. Clara has been practicing as a supervisor for seven years, animal assisted interventions for seven years, and combined the two for seven years. Martina (pseudonym) was the participant representing case number three. She is a Ph.D. level counselor who is fully licensed and works in an AAIs training program in an

interdisciplinary health service professions department in a university in the United States.

Martina partners with a dog and a horse in both the provision of AAT, instruction of AAI, and provision of AAI-S. Martina has been a supervisor for 10 years, worked with AAIs for 25 years, and combined AAIs in supervision for 10 years. Table 1 provides a summary of demographics and backgrounds for each participant.

Table 1

Summary of Participant Demographics and Inclusion Criteria

Participant	Gender Identity	Ethnicity	Highest Education	Occupation	Licenses/Credentials	Years of experience
Roseanna	Female she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Faculty in Counselor Training Program	Fully licensed in state of residence, Supervisor credential	Sup: 10 yrs AAI: 20 yrs AAI-S: 10 yrs
Clara	Female, she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Private practice owner, Therapist, RPT, Supervisor	Fully licensed in state of residence, RPT- S	Sup: 7 yrs AAI: 7 yrs AAI-S: 7 yrs
Martina	Female she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Faculty in Interdisciplinary Training Program	Fully licensed in state of residence	Sup: 10yrs AAI: 25yrs AAI-S: 10yrs

Participants were communicated with via email and text messaging. Interviews (including virtual tours and animal introductions) were virtual using video-conferencing (Zoom) and recorded through that platform (Zoom).

Data Collection

Types of Data

Qualitative data from multiple sources were collected for this collective case study. Such data included direct quotations about people's experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge base (Patton, 2015). The following section describes the types of data included in this study.

Data Collection Matrix

The following data collection matrix allowed for transparency of how the types of data related to the purpose and research questions of this study. The matrix also provided a brief introduction to the types of data further described in this section. The types of data collected in this study were (a) demographic/background information, (b) interviews, (c) virtual tour (of the context/setting of AAI-S), (d) animal introductions (of animal partners involved in AAI-S), and (e) AAI-S related documents (e.g., supervisory disclosure statements). The following matrix was initially described by Castillo-Montoya (2016) as The Interview Protocol Refinement Framework. Castillo-Montoya suggested use of a matrix for mapping interview protocol alignment with research questions. Since all data collection activities should be purposeful and methodologically driven, I adapted the matrix for use with all data types to ensure coherent connection to the research questions. Following Table 1 was a description of each type of data. Table 2 provides a synopsis of the data collection matrix.

Table 2*Data Collection Relevance Matrix*

	Binding Concept: Why are supervisors integrating Animal-Assisted Interventions in supervision?	RQ 1 What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAIs into supervision?	RQ2 How are supervisors integrating AAIs into clinical supervision?
Demographic/Background Data	X	X	X
Interviews	X	X	X
Virtual Tour	X	X	X
Animal Intro	X	X	X
Documents		X	X

Note. Adapted from The Interview Protocol Refinement Framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Demographic and Background Information

Demographic and background information was gathered at the beginning of the initial interview to open up conversation about setting, participant background, and establish a researcher/participant relationship. Information gathered in this process included age, gender identity, professional training and educational background (including with AAIs and supervision), and information about the setting in which they provided AAI-S (see Appendix D).

Interviews

To gain a detailed depiction of participants' experiential and procedural knowledge of AAI-S, I conducted initial interviews and follow up interviews using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described semi-structured interviews as flexibly using structured and unstructured questions intended to be explored and elaborated upon by respondents. Both the interview guide for the initial and second interview were semi-structured. The openness of semi-structured interviewing allowed me to probe for further

information when clarification or detail was needed and to facilitate description of experiences and procedures as necessitated in the methodological framework of collective case study.

The initial interview served to gather the bulk of the data. However, due to the unanticipated depth of the interviews and need for additional time, follow-up interviews were scheduled and addressed additional data collection such as virtual tours or animal introductions. I had expected the initial interview to be approximately two hours but in each of the three cases, that amount of time proved to be far too little. Interviews, at various stages for each case, also included a virtual tour of the setting and animal introductions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that conversation is often interwoven throughout observations and other forms of data collection. As expected, there was overlap in types of data collection resulting from the flow of natural conversation, meaning that parts of the semi-structured protocol for the interview might have taken place before or after the virtual tour or other parts of data collection procedures based on the flow and natural progression of conversation

Follow-up interviews served to gather remaining data (completion of the semi-structured protocol, etc.) as needed as well as initial member-checking on preliminary analysis. For example, I was able to share with participants commonalities across cases after having initial interviews that allowed them to challenge or affirm my initial understandings of their case and preliminary across case themes. Interviews, including virtual tours and animal introductions, were recorded using Zoom. Recordings were used for review and familiarization with data during analysis and for transcription of interview data for thematic analysis within and across cases.

Virtual Tour

Another component of the prolonged engagement with participants was the virtual tour. I asked each participant to show their space and areas where they provided AAI-S (through the video conferencing platform used for the interviews). Participants used phones or tablets for carrying out the tour of their setting. The tours included indoor or outdoor areas, small and large animal housing structures, and other places of importance in their facility. The intent of this component of the interview process was to become familiar with the participants' experiences and context. The importance of context in multiple case studies underpinned the rationale for this data collection. The virtual tour replaced what might otherwise have been an in-person observation if not for the distance between myself and participants and limitations on travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Observations are a common occurrence in many types of qualitative research, taking place in the natural setting of the phenomena of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, it was not feasible to travel for observations. The virtual tours were informative and fun.

Animal Introductions

The animal partners participants partnered with were important to the context and provision experiences of AAI-S. Including them in the interview process acknowledged their contribution to the process and inherent relational meaningfulness to the participant. I asked participants to introduce me to the animals they partnered with in their provision of AAI-S using the same methods as the virtual tour (video conferencing on a device allowing their mobility). During this section of the interview process, I asked participants to share stories about their partners in relation to AAI-S. This provided a source of temporal closeness to memory of previous AAI-S sessions and provided a unique insight into the experiences and processes of the

participant's AAI-S work. Additionally, while introducing the animals, participants were able to provide more examples and stories of AAI-S.

Documents

Yin (2018), Creswell and Poth (2016), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998) highlighted document review as a common component to case study methods. Each participant was asked to provide relevant documents (such as supervisory disclosure statements). Additionally, I reviewed publicly available information related to respective cases such as websites (e.g., university pages and faculty bios, training program webpages, and private practice webpages). Additionally, my research documents such as researcher reflection journal, notes, and memos created throughout the research process were included as data for analysis (Miles et al., 2018).

Ethics and Trustworthiness

I guided research design and analysis primarily using classic trustworthiness criteria described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that included credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Credibility refers to the researcher's efforts to create a comprehensive and high-quality explanation of the data (Hanson et al., 2019). To address credibility, I was involved in prolonged engagement with participants by conducting multiple interview contacts, collecting multiple sources of data, and debriefing and review of themes with a peer involved with familiarity of counselor education and supervision as well as AAIs (peer debriefing). I also provided participants with preliminary themes during follow-up interviews and final themes during member check contacts.

Transferability refers to the relevance of the findings and the ability for readers to apply to other settings (Hanson et al., 2019). To address transferability, I developed rich and thick descriptions of the individual cases as well as the quintain of AAI-S. Dependability refers to the

coherence between methods and findings, transparency, and evidence of the research process, such as an audit trail (Hanson et al., 2019). To address dependability, I triangulated sources of data (through multiple participants and types of data) and maintained an audit trail.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings and interpretations reflect the knowledge shared by participants (Hanson et al., 2019). To address confirmability, I engaged in member checking by providing participants with preliminary and final themes, seeking their affirmation or identification of incongruence of the themes. Lastly, maintenance of the researcher reflection journal provided a method for attending to all four categories of trustworthiness. I systematically kept reflections during and after interview connected as well as during analysis. In Table 3, I outline my methods for addressing trustworthiness.

Lincoln and Guba (2013) recently articulated authenticity criteria described earlier in the constructivism section of this chapter. The following methods aligned with authenticity criteria as described by Lincoln and Guba: (a) informed consent procedures, (b) maintenance of confidentiality, (c) prolonged engagement with participants, (d) transparency about the purpose of the inquiry, (e) formed a caring and trusting relationship with participants, (f) utilization of peer debriefing, (g) reflexivity journaling, (h) negotiated co-construction of meaning with participants, (i) created an accessible final report (discussion in Chapter V), (j) used an audit trail, (k) made the power dynamics inherent in research transparent to participants, and (l) abided by the IRB standards and the American Counseling Association's (2014) *Code of Ethics*.

Trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative study also depended on the credibility of the researcher (Patton, 2015). Therefore, I engaged in regular consultation with my peer debriefer and research advisor to process and reflect on my experiences with this research.

Table 3*Trustworthiness Methods*

Trustworthiness Criteria	Techniques	My Method
Credibility	Prolonged engagement	Two lengthy interviews
	Triangulation (sources, methods, investigators)	Multiple sources of data (participants, data collection methods)
	Peer debriefing	Debriefing with a peer and review of themes with a peer involved with AAI and supervision.
	Member checks	Providing participants with themes generated through data analysis.
Transferability	Thick description	Rich and thick description
Dependability	Overlap of methods (triangulation of methods)	Multiple methodological frameworks, methods of data collection
	Dependability audit (audit trail)	Audit trail
Confirmability	Confirmability audit	Member checking
All Criteria	Reflexive Journal (about self and methods)	Researcher Reflexivity Journal and memoing

Note. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985) trustworthiness criteria.

Data Analysis

The following section provides a description of data analysis methods and procedures including actions taken for analysis preparation within and across case analysis.

Conceptual Framework and Analysis Organizational Strategy

Both deductive and inductive approaches were used to structure the analysis process. A conceptual framework was constructed of concepts from the literature (i.e., AAI concepts,

supervision concepts) and intention of the research questions (i.e., context, experience, process, how and why). The concepts related to AAI and supervision allowed me to understand how the concepts prevalent in the literature might show up in the data and participants' stories. The intentions of the research questions allowed me to stay connected to the purpose of the research and focused on the specific issues being addressed in the research questions.

Miles et al. (2018) explained that conceptual frameworks are in some form or fashion “the main things to be studied... and the presumed interrelationships among them” (p. 20). They elaborated that conceptual frameworks might be driven by theory, causal, descriptive in nature, or even simply common sense. Like a cartographer mapping out a territory, the researcher uses a conceptual framework as a working model or current iteration of the researchers understanding of the “territory” of the phenomenon under investigation. As the researcher moves through the wilderness of the study, the researcher can see the terrain more clearly and is able to plot and mark the map more distinctly. Ultimately, the backcountry of the phenomenon is mapped for others to read and navigate. They also noted that a framework developed at the embarking of the study often evolves as the researcher blazes a trail through the data, learning and defining trails as she goes.

Identifying what the bins were and what the definition of each bin was developed through a recursive process of immersing myself in the data, returning to the bins and fine-tuning the purpose and definition, going back to the data, and back again to the bins to ensure fit of the categories they represented. This was analogous to the processes of identifying initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Much like thematic analysis, the bins/categories went through multiple iterations before becoming solidified.

The intellectual bin context, experience, process, how, and why were related directly to the research question intentions in the following ways. Context is related to the nature of case study research in that contexts and settings are essential for understanding of the wholeness of a case. Stake (1995, 2006) explained that the rich and thick description of case contexts and settings was essential for audience members to understand how the findings might apply to their own world and lived experience. Experience was explicitly named in the research questions (What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAI-S into supervision?). Implied in the research questions was the issue of process (what are supervisor's experiences and how are they integrating AAI-S into supervision); meaning, what is happening when supervisors implement AAI-S? The overarching, binding question of this multiple case study was that of "why." Why are supervisors integrating AAI-S into supervision? Thus, how and why were also used as titles of two of the intellectual bins because case study research is grounded in answering how and why questions. Although very similar, how and why were distinct from process as I discovered in the recursive process of discerning and solidifying the bins. The process bin housed data related to that which the participants believed to be what made AAI-S function. For example, participants reported relational dynamics and theories that guided their work in AAI-S and that explained what they witnessed as supervisee growth and development in AAI-S. The how bin housed references to implementation, logistics, application, and considerations for application. This bin held data specific to how one might go about doing AAI-S (implementation). The why bin housed data specific to the participant's rationale for implementing AAI-S. Essentially, *why* represented the participant's reason for providing AAI-S when it was more complex and carried higher risks than traditional methods of clinical supervision.

Miles et al. (2018) described the use of the conceptual framework as providing structure, maintaining focus of the study, and dividing concepts into like-categories for further analysis. Miles et al. called the categories the data were dividing into as intellectual bins. They explained that researchers, especially novice, might benefit from organizing strategies such as this for dealing with large amounts of data. This was also supported by Baxter and Jack's (2008) qualitative case study suggestions for novice researchers. Although purposed as an organizational strategy, the use of a conceptual framework and these intellectual bins could have a tendency toward deductive approaches. Therefore, it was essential that I used strategies such as reflective journalizing, peer debriefing, and member checking to maintain fidelity to the inductive approach of my multiple case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Additionally, the deductive nature of this organizational strategy was balanced by use of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017) to operationalize and carryout within and across case analysis. Thematic analysis allowed themes to emerge within the conceptual framework of intellectual bins that might have been lost with simple reduction and deduction. Thus, themes were identified within experience, process, how and why intellectual bins, and within cases and across cases that led to elaboration of the conceptual framework based on concepts from the literature regarding AAI and supervision. Themes also included emergent content that was new or not clearly articulated in existing literature for this specific context (AAI-S).

Direct Interpretation and Categorical Aggregation

Stake (2006) advocated for both direct interpretation and categorical aggregation for analysis of single cases and multiple case studies. This study was centered on investigating the experiences and processes of implementing AAIs in supervision. The nature of the study and the data collected were very straight forward, which lent itself to the direct interpretation suggested

by Stake (2006). I asked questions during interviews aligned with the research questions and participants answered very clearly, giving straightforward clear information about their personal experiences with AAI-S. Further, this study included only three cases, making direct interpretation straightforward. Indeed, case study research is purposed for revealing the particulars of a phenomenon in action so others might learn from it and decide for themselves if what was presented was applicable to their context. This was why Stake (2006) advocated for direct interpretation. However, data could be unwieldy (especially for this novice researcher) and I felt compelled to substantiate my analysis methods with some sort of structure that could logically trace the connections between the data and the assertions I made from of my data. Thus, I was interested in using an analysis approach that allowed for the other method Stake suggested: categorical aggregation.

Stake (1995) explained that “two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases or through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class period case study relies on both of these methods” (p. 74). He went on to say that no matter the “type” of case study (intrinsic, instrumental, multiple cases), the researcher has times they need to detail the sequence of events, categorize patterns or aggregate instances, making categorical aggregation a useful addition to direct interpretation. Stake recommended that the researcher should stay attuned to important moments and instances, even if they were single instances, so as not to lose important features to aggregation of data. Striking a balance between direct interpretation and categorical aggregation allowed for attunement to the intricacies and commonalities among cases. Stake (1995, 2006) and others (Baxter & Jack, 2008) left the decision of how to pursue categorical aggregation in

case study research open to several methods. To carry out the categorical aggregation approach to case analysis, I chose thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021).

Within and Cross-Case Analysis Using Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) as a frequently used method for analyzing qualitative data carried out in six steps or phases. Nowell et al. (2017) reported that although thematic analysis is highly recognizable and cited in qualitative research as an analysis method, it remains poorly understood and defined. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) attempted to remedy this through explicit and concrete directions for carrying out thematic analysis, specifically in the field of psychology. Braun and Clarke described the phases of thematic analysis as follows. First, the researcher must familiarize themselves with the data. Immersing oneself in the data by re-reading (usually multiple times), reviewing recordings, and reflecting on the data offers an opportunity for the researcher to engage with the data after collection and begin understanding the “lay of the land.” Second, the researcher generates initial codes by theorizing about meanings of the data. This activity allows the researcher to note the characteristics of the data. Next, in phase three, the researcher initiates a search for themes. This activity allows the researcher to begin bringing together fragmented pieces of data into more meaningful chunks.

The fourth phase of TA is where the researcher addresses themes by reviewing them for fit and coherence. At this point, a researcher might find that some themes should be divided, collapsed, or reassessed altogether. Phase five calls for the researcher to define and name the themes after they have been solidified in previous steps. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021) advocated for describing a story the theme tells and giving names to themes that are compelling and interesting so themes might resonate with readers. Lastly, the sixth phase (producing the

final report) of thematic analysis is where the researcher takes the established themes and develops a final report to provide a concise and potent account of the themes. This last step is analogous to the final report of the quintain Stake (2006) called for as a final product of the multiple case study project.

Because I was using the intellectual bins described by Miles et al. (2018) and Baxter and Jack (2008) to organize the analysis activities, I implemented thematic analysis within each bin for each case and then again for each bin across cases. For each case, I parsed the data into the five intellectual bins (context, experience, process, how, and why; previously described in the conceptual framework and analysis organizational strategy section). I then applied thematic analysis to analyze, from an inductive approach, the contents of each of the bins (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Miles et al., 2018; Stake, 2006). In essence, each single case contained each of the five intellectual bins and thematic analysis was used to analyze the contents of each bin for each case. After each single case was analyzed using these methods (within case analysis), the methods were repeated across cases at the theme level. This meant the within case themes were compared to each other (cross case analysis) in an adapted thematic analysis format. My adaptation of thematic analysis for cross case analysis involved going through the fourth and fifth phases outlined for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). In this process, I reviewed the within case themes in relation to each other, assessing for fit, coherency, and “testing referential adequacy” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4). Here, I could see how the within case themes were relevant across cases and if they were able to adequately inform the quintain. For phase five of thematic analysis in cross case analysis, I used the same procedures as within case analysis for phase five but at the cross-case level, meaning I defined and named the cross-case themes according to what was represented across cases and developed

a succinct description of each cross-case theme. To increase trustworthiness of my within case and adaptation of thematic analysis across cases, I followed trustworthiness recommendation as described by Nowell et al. (2017) such as peer debriefing and maintaining memos on the codes, categories, and theme definitions and names.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the constructivist philosophical framework, collective case study design, methods, and analytical framework. Cross-case themes were presented as overarching “lessons learned” about AAI-S. The lessons learned constituted the report of the AAI-S quintain. The cases, within case themes, cross case lessons learned, and quintain are described in detail in Chapter IV. Chapter V provides discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, implications, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings of the analysis of this qualitative collective case study. Animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S) have been discussed in the literature and reported anecdotally in the field for some time. The rationale for inclusion of animal-assisted interventions (AAIs) in the context of supervision seemed clear but there was little evidence to explain, guide, or support it. The purpose of this collective case study was to examine the experiences of supervisees who have integrated AAIs into supervision and understand the processes through which AAI-S occurred. The following research questions guided this inquiry:

- Q1 Why are supervisors integrating AAIs into supervision?
 - Q1a What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAIs into supervision?
 - Q1b How are supervisors integrating AAIs into clinical supervision?

Three participants were involved in this research, serving as representatives of the cases. The cases themselves were the objects of investigation. The cases provided what Stake (2006) referred to as manifestations of the overarching, binding phenomenon that was the target of the investigation: the AAI-S quintain. Within-case themes and cross-case themes were analyzed using thematic analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). Analysis at the within-case and cross-case levels was organized using what I refer to as an analysis organizational strategy as presented in Chapter III that constructed from “intellectual bins” (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles et al., 2018). This strategy was tied directly to the research questions and guided the data organization and analysis. The analysis organizational strategy consisted of the following

intellectual bins: (a) context, (b) experience, (c) process, (d) how, and (e) why. The analysis organizational strategy was also used to organize presentation of cases, themes within the cases, and cross-case themes. I have presented each case in the order it was initiated for data collection as Case 1, Case 2, and Case 3. Each case begins with an orientation to the case, the context section, in which I describe the case in rich, thick detail, elements of which are participant, the setting, and the happenings of that case. After establishing the context of the case, I present the findings following the remaining analysis organization elements of experience, process, how, and why.

Within-Case Theme Organization

The participants for this research served as representatives and informants for their respective case of AAI-S. Each participant brought unique insights from their experiences and echoed commonalities. The analysis organizational strategy structure directed the analysis and served as the organization for presenting the themes.

1. “Context” housed any data that had to do with the context of the case such as participant demographic data, setting, and animal partners.
2. “Experiences” referred to the experiences of the participant as related to AAI-S. Experiences in this intellectual bin included explicit provision of AAI-S as well as lived experiences from the participant’s life that informed their draw to AAIs and informed their personal “why” behind inclusion of AAIs for supervisee benefit.
3. “Processes” included the process material at play in the tripartite AAI-S relationship, the relational dynamics, the learning that occurred, the mechanisms of action the participant believed occurred in the AAI-S triad.

4. “How” subsumed any information about the logistics, considerations, actions, and implementation of AAI-S.
5. “Why” held the information separated out from the rest of the data specific to why one would want to implement AAI-S. This corresponded with questions such as “Why does the supervisor do AAI-S” and “What makes this worth understanding.” Essentially, this is what made AAI-S a compelling additive to clinical supervision.

The themes from within-case analysis are presented along with each case presentation.

Table 4 provides a summary of the within-case themes across the analysis domains.

Table 4

Summary of Within-Case Themes

Case	Experiences	Processes	How	Why
Case 1: Counselor Training Program-Based AAI-S	1. Transformative Power of HAI and AAIs	1. Experiential, Relational Lab.	1. Welfare, Consent Front and Center 2. Importance of Supervisor AAI Competence	1. Transferability of AAIs from Clinical to Supervision a. Supervision Relationship b. Supervisee Development
Case 2: Private- Practice Based AAI-S	1. Personal Transformative Experiences 2. Discovery of AAI-S 3. AAI and Play Therapy Parallel	1. Human-Animal Relational Theory 2. Relational Depth	1. Intentions in Sessions 2. Safety, Risk, Liability	1. Neurobiology of Human-Animal Interactions 2. Transformative Power of AAI-S
Case 3: University-based AAI-S	1. Personal Connection to Animal Assisted Therapy	1. Transferability 2. The Container	1. Safety, Credibility, and Welfare 2. Organic and Structured Interventions	1. Experiential Learning Container

The three participants representing the three cases had extensive training and experience with AAIs, supervision, and the integration of AAIs within supervision. Table 5 provides a brief overview of the participant demographics.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender Identity	Ethnicity	Highest Education	Occupational Title	Licenses	Years of Experience
Roseanna	Female she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Associate Professor, Program Director	LPC	Supervision: 10 yrs AAI: 20 yrs AAI-S: 10 yrs
Clara	Female, she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Owner, Therapist, Supervisor	LPC RPT- S	Supervision: 7 yrs AAI:7 yrs AAI-S: 7 yrs
Martina	Female she/her/hers	White	Ph.D. in Counseling Field	Assistant Clinical Professor, Program Coordinator	LMHCLP C	Supervision: 10yrs AAI: 25yrs AAI-S: 10yrs

Single Case and Within-Case Themes

Case 1: Counselor Training Program-Based Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

Roseanna is the representative for the first case of AAI-S. She provided her perspective of AAI-S from the perspective of a university-based graduate counseling program.

Context

The context for this case consisted of the data collection experiences, the participant and setting particulars, and the animals involved in Roseanna's AAI-S.

Data Collection Experience. I knew Roseanna personally as a colleague in the field of AAIs and knew she had been actively integrating AAIs into supervision for years. We have known each other for about five years. Roseanne knew of this study from our previous

conversations in collegial settings and enthusiastically agreed to join the study when it was time. After officially confirming Roseanna's agreement to participate in this study (following IRB approval and successful proposal of this dissertation study) a week prior, we had our first interview meeting that lasted approximately three hours, which neither of us expected but we both happened to have availability to continue our time together that day. Several times during the meeting, I stopped to check in with Roseanna about time and her availability, making sure she was not fatigued or needed to end. At one point she said, after agreeing that she was able to keep going, "This important research. I think you're going to end up in this situation with the other participants, too." She went on to say that based on her knowledge of professionals in the field and the passion they had for what they are doing, "I think people who are doing this, want to talk about it. And you could probably get their participation without any kind of incentive... it's nice, but..." We giggled—both at the miniscule incentive I was offering my participants and my naivety that this could be done in a short period of time.

We ended up meeting for about three hours that afternoon. During this initial interview, we covered the demographic questionnaire (personal demographics, background, career development history, animal information), the semi-structured interview protocol, Animal Intros, and the Virtual Tour. Roseanna provided her supervisory disclosure statement used in supervision in her academic setting and when she provided supervision for licensure (case document).

Roseanna. Roseanna is a White female in her early middle age living in the United States. She holds a Ph.D. in the counseling field and is fully licensed in the counseling profession in her state of residence. She is a faculty member in an accredited graduate counseling program (Master of Arts [MA] and Doctor of Philosophy [Ph.D.]) at a university in the United States. She

has developed and is the director of a certificate program in AAI at her university. The AAI training program is specifically designed as graduate coursework for counseling students at her university and for post-graduate counseling professionals seeking training in AAIs in the counseling context. Most recently, she has developed and is the director of a research program involving human-animal interactions at her university. Roseanna has over 20 years of experience partnering with therapy animals in a variety of professional educational and clinical contexts. She has specific content expertise in the field of AAIs, having authored numerous publications and been presenter for a multitude of national and international presentations. As an authority in the AAI field, she has been active in contributing to development of standards of practice.

Rosanna reported she “operate[s] from an integrationalist lens of Adlerian (Carlson et al., 2006), Feminist (Brown, 1994), and Relational Cultural (Jordan, 2017) Theories.” She also believed her clinical theoretical orientation informed her supervisory orientation.

Oh, of course! I believe theoretical orientation is more than a set of techniques, I believe it's the lens that you look at the world through. And I can't change that based on the different hats I wear. I think your theoretical orientation is a thread that stays consistent throughout your roles. I may layer additional models as needed like Andragogy (Merriam, 2001) if I'm teaching and supervision models in supervision, but my core stays the same. ...My clinical theoretical orientation forms this foundation of my supervision in my teaching, and training for that matter. But for supervision, I also layer on the Integrative Developmental Model (IDM; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011).

In a later portion of our interview engagement, Roseanna expressed familiarity with and conceptualization of AAIs using the human-animal relational theory (HART; Chandler, 2017; Otting & Chandler, 2021). Roseanna explained that HART fit well with her foundational

theoretical orientation, as described above, but allowed for specific understanding of the relational dynamics in AAI in her therapeutic, educational, and supervisory practices. She shared that HART “allows us to be specific when identifying a relational target as well as operationalize AAI skills for teaching AAI.”

Roseanna’s clinical counseling background included work with adjudicated youth and in a college counseling center. She has completed specialized, advanced training and supervision in several experiential approaches. Roseanna reported that she not had formal training in AAI aside from her Pet Partner’s training with her retired dog partner, Bonnie, and her Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) adaptive riding credential. The reason for this is that during the time Roseanna was “coming of age” in her counseling career and integrating AAI into her clinical practice, there were very few formal training programs in AAI, particularly specific to AAI in therapy/counseling. Thus, she relied on the mentorship and supervision from several multi-disciplinary professionals she worked with in her previous professional life. Prior to entering the counseling field, she had extensive practice and training with PATH as a former adaptive riding instructor.

Roseanna reported she has integrated AAI-S in her supervision practice for about 11 years, beginning in her doctoral program supervision training and internship. She estimated in that time she has implemented AAI-S with roughly 60% of the supervisees she has seen, which translates to about 50 supervisees.

Animal Partners. Pooka, the rabbit, Bonnie and Kelpie, the dogs, are presented next. This section was informed through interview and “Animal Intro” data.

Pooka. Small, white, and lively, Pooka is a spayed female, “highly social”, domestic rabbit who was adopted from a local rabbit rescue in the first year of her life. She is estimated to

be about four-years-old. Pooka was selected as a potential candidate for AAI's given her observed enjoyment of human interactions. Pooka is calm, curious, and seeks engaging activities with humans she establishes trust with such as learning tricks and playing positive reinforcement-based games. Given Pooka's natural temperament and enjoyment of the setting, she was chosen as a suitable animal partner for inclusion in AAI-S by Roseanna.

Pooka lives in Roseanna's faculty office on campus; she is present whether she is actively participating in AAI's or not. Pooka regularly goes home with Roseanna at the end of the workday but on occasions might stay in Roseanna's university office overnight. Pooka has everything she needs in Roseanna's office for an overnight stay (plenty of food, water, hay, litterbox, etc.). She is never left over the weekend or if Roseanna will not be on campus for an extended period of time (breaks, being out of town). However, Roseanna, explained that Pooka sort of preferred her home in the office to her home at Roseanna's residence. Pooka, as is typical of rabbits, do not transport easily, especially when it is hot outside. Roseanna makes every effort to avoid transport if it is over 80 degrees outside. This has to do with Pooka's species specific needs. Roseanna noted that rabbits have no temperature regulating adaptation, such as sweating or panting, and that the only way she can help herself in the heat is to burrow. This is a clear example of the importance of the humans in the human-animal therapy partnership to be knowledgeable of the species they work with and the particulars of the specific animal they are partnering with. Otherwise, the animal could be placed in dangerous or life-threatening situations.

As described in further detail in sections that follow regarding the setting for this case, Pooka has relatively free reign in this university department and is a welcome member of the faculty hall. Aside from her involvement in AAI-S, Pooka also is a frequent "guest-lecturer"

accompanying Roseanna in the Trauma and Crisis Intervention course and the Multicultural and Diverse Populations course in the master's program. Pooka is well equipped, as a prey animal, to uniquely convey (in experiential learning activities) subject matter such as consent, trust/rapport building, importance of the relationship in counseling, and broaching cultural differences.

Bonnie. Between the first and second interview meetings, Roseanna's long-time companion and retired therapy dog partner, Bonnie, died. Bonnie was a 70 pound, nine-year-old, tri-color Collie-mix. Roseanna shared that Bonnie was an outstanding therapy animal partner who was attentive to emotions and possessed an air of "sassiness" that communicated volumes when she was with clients and supervisees. Though I did not get to meet Bonnie, I wanted to include her in the description of Roseanna's animal partners because she had such impact on Roseanna's development of AAI work, specifically, her integration of AAIs with Bonnie into supervision in her early doctoral years. Roseanna and Bonnie were pet partners, certified as a therapy animal team, and worked together for seven years before Bonnie's retirement.

Kelpie. Kelpie is approximately 50 pounds of shepherding dog enthusiasm. She is a brown, spayed female adult dog that was adopted by Roseanna at about two months old. She is a purebred breed of dog known for their high intelligence, vigilance, and desire to remain close to their humans. This breed of dog is a keen learner and often displays social behaviors (such as nurturing and protection) to their humans. Kelpie is a representative member of her breed, exhibiting all of the above characteristics, and is eager to explore surroundings and the people in her spaces. Kelpie's personal temperament makes her quite suitable for partnership in AAIs. She is observant of the presence of stress and anxiety states of humans she interacts with. She is affectionate and responsive to their symptoms with nurturing behaviors and at times signaling concern for the distressed human.

Although Kelpie is suitable for partnering with Roseanna in AAIs, her need for stimulation via high-intensity exercise and preference for outdoor activities limits her inclusion in the university setting. It is more so that her behavior on campus is okay but she becomes stressed unhappy there. Kelpie might accompany Roseanna to campus on occasion but generally is involved in outdoor AAI-S sessions. Such sessions might involve physical activity like hiking, walking, or playing games. Ecotherapy-based activities provide opportunities for Kelpie's unique AAI skills to shine. She is masterful as a Mindfulness Coach for supervisees, modeling being fully present in her AAI-S outdoor excursions. According to Roseanna,

Kelpie is my outdoor partner and Pooka is my indoor partner. Kelpie is really, really active physically and psychologically. So, asking her to sit still in an office all day isn't good for her. I can give her [food toys] and puzzle toys but she doesn't have enough choices here in this setting to help regulate herself. So, the outdoor settings allow her more choices *and* choices that she naturally prefers (Emphasis added).

Setting. Roseanna opened our zoom meeting on her iPad and walked me around her office and her department at the university. Her office is painted a light blue and outfitted comfortably, which softens the cinderblock, institutional context of the university. There are bunny-related items, a sofa, windows, her desk, and personally meaningful items. Roseanna brought me over to see Pooka's hutch and residence in her office. Pooka's food, toys, and treats are located on one side of the room, easily accessible to students if needed for Pooka in supervision or advising sessions. Pooka's litterbox and hutch (her private room) are located in the corner of Roseanna's office under a table with a tablecloth covering it to the floor, protecting Pooka's domain. You cannot see anything indicating a rabbit lives there. Roseanna says this gives Pooka some protection and allows her to "choose to be really removed at any time." No

one but Roseanna is allowed to touch Pooka's area; "no one is allowed to even go in and peek if she's in here that's her room." This ensures that Pooka's area remains safe to her and provides a figurative lesson in boundaries and consent to those entering into this space. Usually, Roseanna says, "people sit on the couch she'll come tickle their feet and sometimes jump up with them. Sometimes people will interact with her by bending down to pet her and then some folks like to sit on the floor with her." Roseanna explains that this setting is a little unusual in that Pooka can choose to leave the room entirely:

I'll leave the door cracked with a bunny size crack so if she really doesn't want anything to do with things, she can leave the room. This is our faculty hallway and there are doors that for fire code have to stay closed. And so, she gets free reign of the hallway and some faculty like it when she comes to visit so they'll leave their doors open. And she also gets, if she would like to, she gets to visit the front office.

Roseanna shared that this is where the department administrative assistant is located and is the primary entry point to the department. Pooka really likes the Administrative Assistant Paula and frequently helps herself through the conference room and into the main office to visit. In summary, the spaces Pooka typically has access to are Roseanna's office, the faculty hallway, the conference room joining the hallway and front office, and the front office (with Paula). There is a baby-gate to the main entrance to the front office.

Pooka's freedom and access to the hall and beyond came about during the lock-down era of early COVID because there were so few people on the hall with Roseanna and Paula liked spending time with Pooka. As people returned the office, folks seemed to enjoy her coming to visit. With Pooka being fairly non-invasive and litter-box-trained, a lot of people enjoyed her coming to visit.

Roseanna admits, though, that if someone were to show her a similar free-reign sort of set-up for a therapy animal she would not be ok with it. However, in this particular department, the circumstances are such that she is more comfortable with Pooka's range of territory:

It just so happens that in our department we're very lucky in that all of the employees that interact with her, so all of our faculty as well as Paula in the front office, have accepted me giving them an orientation to what we do with Pooka and what we don't do with Pooka. What Pooka can have in terms of treats and also that if a student, client, or advisees happen to walk in at the same time as Pooka they need to sort of ask Pooka to leave their room. I've had people ask like if their client coming, 'is it okay, if I close the door with Pooka in here and we play with her?' And the answer is always 'No', because they are not trained or experienced in AAIs. So, she's allowed to go visit faculty but not participate with them in any kind of animal assisted intervention.

Having so many colleagues and staff trained and agreeable to handling Pooka with care has been helpful. It is somewhat an environmental luxury that many environments, especially university settings, might not have. Having the departmental coworkers trained and informed on how to interact with and handle Pooka fosters a larger cultural tone in the department around humane treatment, animal welfare, and safety for Pooka.

Experience Theme

A thread of "planned happenstance" wound throughout the evolution of Roseanna's career course, landing in the present with her now in a position of training graduate-level students and professionals (Mitchell et al., 1999). In her youth, Roseanna rode horses and later was in competitive riding and showing. She still has a special, "almost spiritual connection" to horses and although there have been significant tragedies in this part of her life, she found she

must have horses in her life. She reported that to not have horses in her life at all would “be like losing a limb.” After the sudden and unexpected death of her horse, Rosanna was devastated, lost, and numb. This created a shift in identity, life-goals, and professional plans. Roseanna said, “Because, since I was 10 years old, my goal was to ride professionally. And my whole identity was wrapped up in it so without that I had no idea who I was.” This translated to her meandering path in college, struggling to find a major she was both interested in and seemed fulfilling.

During college, she was working at a barn and teaching riding lessons on the side, and the director of the barn, a counselor, assigned Rosanna to work with a horse “needing special attention.” Unbeknownst to Rosanna, the counselor had strategically placed Rosanna with a horse, not because the horse needed special attention but Roseanna did. The giant grey horse was colloquially referred to by the other barn professionals as “the grief counselor.” In working with this horse, Rosanna began to form a bond and embarked on a transformative, healing experience that pointed her down the initial steps in her professional counseling career journey:

And I remember I started brushing him, and it was and its first time I’d gotten out my saddle in years. So, it was brushing them and caring for him and he was sweet horse; I liked him a lot. I just I sort of felt this message of “I know I’m not him honey. Let’s go for a ride.” And [he] put me back together. I got back into riding, and I never went back to competing because that’s not something I was interested anymore but got fully invested in animals and horses again.

Roseanna explained it was as if a piece of her was brought back to life. That simply through the interactions with this horse, she was getting grief counseling from the horse: “I was in the process of being healed by the horse. I didn’t know I was getting counseling from a horse.

There was no one facilitating it, it was just me and him. But yeah, I was. I was getting grief counseling and trauma counseling from a horse.”

In roughly the same era at the barn, a psychologist ran equine assisted therapy groups with adjudicated youth. Aware of Roseanna’s recent switch to a major in psychology, the psychologist invited her to help with her equine groups. Rosanna was hooked: “And so, I didn't even know that was a thing. That you could do what I was learning in psych with animals with horses. And oh my gosh it was so much fun!”

This barn was a certified site for therapeutic riding (PATH) and several health professionals (physical therapist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse) provided PATH equine assisted services, therapeutic riding, hippotherapy, and private riding lessons. Roseanna got to shadow all the professionals and had an inside look at the professions and the equine assisted/HAI nature of their specialized work. By the time Roseanna was close to college graduation, she had been shadowing the physical therapist with adaptive rising lessons for children with a variety of physical and intellectual/developmental disabilities. With encouragement from the physical therapist she had been partnering with, Roseanna decided to become an adaptive riding instructor. This involved a very long training and evaluation process, not unlike that required of master’s level professional programs.

After qualifying and getting situated in her new profession, Rosanna worked for some time as an adaptive riding instructor. Things seemed to be moving along, she was happy, and settled. Then, she began noticing limitations in her training related to the families and individual needs of those she was working with. Although she was proficient with adaptive riding practices and disabilities, she found it was helpful to develop a relationship with the families she worked with but was unable to navigate more complex family systems issues and clinical mental health

issues that were inevitably a part of the person's context. One particular motivational crisis came in the form of a parent disclosing suicidal and homicidal ideation during a routine parent/caregiver check in before a riding session. Rosanna felt ill-equipped to navigate this:

I was like, 'Wait a minute, I am a riding instructor! I don't know how to deal with that!'.

After that I decided I needed a counseling degree. So, I got my master's in counseling so I could better support the families and children I'd been working with from that previous modality.

The next turn in her planned happenstance journey of arriving at a Ph.D. career in AAIs in counseling came in her master's program. In her counseling master's program, she experienced alienation and "ridicule" from faculty and supervisors directed at the intersection of HAI and therapy that she had come to know and value from personal experience and the value seen in her work with children and their families. Her years of experience told her there was deep value in these approaches but the academy argued that without significant evidence to support what she was seeing and experiencing between humans and animals, there was no professional value in the context of her professional clinical work.

It was well established that there was a lack of supporting research over the years and relatively recent calls for improved methodology and stronger research had gone out (Fine, 2019a). Rosanna was finding that this lack of evidence in the eyes of the academy constituted a lack of credibility of a therapeutic craft she had experienced and was committed to integrating into her clinical work:

That whole experience taught me that I there was difficulty justifying this approach because there was really not a lot of research on it and the research that's out there often had major limitations and methodological issues. Which contributes to how this part of

the field is not taken seriously. And if it's not taken seriously and there's so little research that leads to why people aren't well trained. From there, why clients can't have access to it, because it will be not reimbursed since it lacks robust evidence. So, kind of like before, I thought, 'well I can help do something about that. I guess I've got to get a PHD!

Another planned happenstance turn later, Roseanna was getting a Ph.D. in the counseling field with the intention of doing some research, strengthening the literature base, but maintaining a primary identity in therapeutic riding, counseling, and staying "in the barn". She soon realized, though, that her plans would shift again and she would fall in love with teaching: "The days I had to teach were the days that I didn't have to set an alarm for!" It was a surprise because this new professional activity did not involve horses at all, yet she was just as energized and excited by it! Soon, she recognized the research she intended to do was so important and her love for teaching so keen that she would end up keeping one foot firmly "in the barn" and one foot "in the classroom":

There are a lot of people who think they know something about this field. But they usually don't, or at least don't know enough. And the ways that they don't know things makes them really dangerous. So, again, I realized that this is where I needed to be. I decided I was going to teach people how to do it instead of focusing on doing it just myself.

This was where the seeds of future professional endeavors, such as creation of an AAI in counseling certificate and research program dedicated to HAI in counseling first were sown. Roseanna's Ph.D. mentors were not AAI professionals but they recognized Roseanna's connection to it and supported her growth and development in expertise that would allow her to justify AAIs and situate her to train future professionals—carrying forward credible and

supported professionalism into the world. Roseanna acknowledged the notion of planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999) as a part of her developmental trajectory from heart-broken teen horsemanship star to Ph.D. level educator and researcher in counseling:

There's a lot of being in the right place at the right time and running into some incredibly powerful women that were my mentors, who saw a direction that I was trying to go in but didn't know and encouraged me there. And a whole lot of seeing a problem and realizing that nobody else is going to do anything about it. So, now I'm here.

During Roseanna's Ph.D. program, she was trained in clinical supervision as is typical for doctoral-level counseling-related programs. Her training included supervised practice of supervision of counseling master's students in her department. At that time, Roseanna had a dog named "Bonnie" with whom she was registered as a Pet Partner's Therapy Team (Bonnie retired in the last year from her therapy animal role). Bonnie partnered with Roseanna in animal-assisted therapy (AAT) in her clinical work in her Ph.D. program seeing clients on her campus. Since Bonnie was on campus with Roseanna already, there were instances Roseanna saw supervisees for supervision with Bonnie present. This was simply by accident initially. But Roseanna noticed such meaningful differences in the ways supervision played out when Bonnie was present that she decided to pursue it further:

On days that Bonnie was there with me at my clinical site we saw clients together. She was with me and went everywhere I went, sort of attached to me, so we ended up just having Bonnie with us and supervision. And realized, 'woah, this is a different thing!' I was still learning about supervision, much less supervision with Bonnie included in this mix. So, I [got permission to do a] second supervision internship with Bonnie. So, I did my first supervision internship without Bonnie, and I asked if I could do a second one

with Bonnie. ...so Bonnie helped me provide some site supervision and she came with us to [supervision of supervision group].

Roseanna recognized something profoundly different was taking place in supervision session when Bonnie was there. The mere presence of Bonnie in the supervision space shifted some elements of the supervisory process, the supervisory relationship, and potentially the outcomes in supervision (counselor-in-training [CIT] development, learning, reflection, etc.):

I already knew that the animal's presence made a triad [instead of the traditional supervision dyad]. The triad made things different, which I knew that from counseling. So, I figured it was no different with supervision, but the roles were different, and I needed training in managing the roles and the way the triad made things different than the dyad.

Roseanna went on to include Bonnie in supervision sessions, developing her sense of the mechanisms at play in the triad and as she continued to develop her expertise in AAIs (publications, creating trainings, leadership roles in the AAI community), she also honed and developed expertise in this novel supervisory approach. Upon entering her professorship, she expanded her repertoire to include animal-assisted education ("co-lectures" from Pooka) and partnering with her therapy animals in advising activities with students. Roseanna has continued to integrate AAIs in supervision for nearly a decade. She found it to be rich with developmental opportunities for counselors in training and enjoyable to students.

This section presents the experiences Roseanna had that shaped her worldview and compelled her to follow her intuition about AAIs. There was a clear connection between her personal experiences with AAIs and HAIs and the why central to doing AAI-S. The why was the

essential, driving force behind implementing AAIs in supervision for Roseanna. The why was the rationale for doing AAI-S and the significance of it that makes it worth knowing more about.

Process Themes

Roseanna described several processes pertinent to the provision of AAI-S. The processes she described ultimately were grouped into one overarching process of AAI-S themes: the relational lab. Animal-assisted interventions within the context of clinical supervision created a “relational lab” of sorts for supervisees to experience, learn, and modulate relational skills conducive to counseling practice.

Experiential, Relational Lab. To illustrate this concept, Roseanna shared how she discovered the impact of AAIs in supervision. During her doctoral program, Roseanna discovered by chance that the dynamics she was learning about in her supervision training were shifting into an unknown, but potent, well of potential when her therapy animal partner, Bonnie, was present in her supervision sessions. Here, she reflected on the processes at play in her early experiences with Bonnie in supervision:

I think Bonnie helped us a lot. With giving us information about how we impact others. She doesn't have to worry about social rules or social norms...she reacts completely concurrently. If your presence is impacting her in a way that's uncomfortable, she's going to be authentic and leave. She's not going to worry if it hurt your feelings. If you do something different, she's going to come back. If you show up differently than you normally do, she's going to attend to you differently so. Bonnie would communicate a lot about how our presence impacts someone else in our environment in ways that I often couldn't approach directly, without potentially damaging the relationship.

Difficult or sensitive topics could be broached or a message would be received from Bonnie differently, usually with more acceptance than it would have been received from Roseanna as the supervisor. In some ways, Bonnie acted as sort of a litmus paper for relational and stress-response data in the supervision space. In turn, Roseanna and the supervisee could process Bonnie's behavior and what it might be communicating about the supervisee's stress, anxiety, relational ruptures in the supervisory alliance, or whatever the issue might have been in the moment:

Animals respond to how you show up right now. They're not responding to how you showed up last week which humans do. So, then we'd get to process, 'okay, why do you think Bonnie chose to leave? Or why do you think this or that' and we got to practice with new ways of being. Which Bonnie would give us immediate feedback about if that changed our presence.

Bonnie was like a fluffy, dog-shaped bio-feedback machine, delivering instant readings of stress responses far beneath the surface of what Roseanna could pick up on and probably below the supervisee's awareness as well: "For clients it translated to a lot of their relationships. And with counseling students it's the same thing. If you're impacting someone in the room, it's how your clients are feeling. So, it's essentially the same."

Counselors-in-training often have difficulty grasping intangible, abstractions like "presence" and "the relationship" in the context of counseling (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011).). The tools of this trade are relational ones. Without adequate relational skills and competence in exercising these skills with clients, the vessel of the relationship fails to be established. When the relational vessel is not established, is faulty, or lacks the grit to weather ruptures, nothing else will be able to occur. A prime example of the importance of the relationship and presence could

be found in foundational trauma and crisis intervention training. Working with trauma survivors and individuals in crisis requires beginning by establishing trust (Briere & Scott, 2014).

Roseanna found that when Bonnie was involved in supervision, the abstractions of presence and relationship seemed to be more tangible to students. They could see and experience firsthand relational feedback from a sentient being that communicated volumes about themselves without a power dynamic, without punishment, without shame. This feedback from Bonnie was easier to handle and receive. Roseanna explained that in these ways, the AAI and AAT principles that guided her work with and conceptualization of a client in clinical work translated to supervision almost exactly:

So, the non-directive elements [processing the therapy animal's response to the supervisee's presence] end up being really close to the same. Pooka helps us out a lot, in similar ways. I can teach you a lot of trauma-specific and trauma informed skills. What I can't teach you, [is] how to work on your presence so that survivor feels comfortable with you in the room. But Pooka can in large part because Pooka is a prey animal. The first thing you have to convince her of to build a relationship is that you're not going to eat her. And that you're not going to try to trap her or do anything to her that it's going to make her feel scared or vulnerable. And so, sometimes if CITs are having trouble with clients not coming back, then, we'll work with Pooka. And we'll work on getting to a calmer place and trying to regulate our presence in a way where Pooka ends up approaching you. So, then the AAI-S context sort of is like a 'lab'. A in vivo experiential lab for learning about relationships and your stuff. Your personal relational stuff comes up really quick. The student-animal relationship is like an amplifier.

Roseanna was sure to differentiate between the “lab” she referred to as analogous to the learning lab of group therapy or skills training labs and not a “laboratory” in which scientific experiments or animal testing might take place. The benefit she discussed here was the animal’s authentic and natural behaviors provided in the moment feedback to the student about their presence, stress state, and approach to a vulnerable being. Capitalizing on the immediate feedback from the therapy animal allows the supervisee to have awareness of themselves raised, practice skills to change the situation, and then experience the consequences of their change in the moment. In a unique way, Pooka’s behavior compels a supervisee to modulate themselves so they *can* successfully recruit Pooka to them. Roseanna and I discussed that difficulty with teaching or coaching a supervisee to modulate their stress response or presence. Roseanna elaborated on the rationale for Pooka’s valuable teaching methods:

If you are showing up in a way to where the rabbit regularly feels comfortable approaching you and even asking for touch, then your presence in the room is suitable for trauma work. Your skills are a different thing entirely. She teaches us a lot of lessons about what’s perceived as pursuit. As humans we are not aware of what that may look and feel like to a vulnerable being. Pooka will test someone before she’s comfortable really letting them touch her, to make sure they’re not going to try to grab her or that they’re going to allow her retreat. So, a lot of times when she’s first getting to know someone she’ll come up and she’ll kind of “boop” you [with her nose]. And she’ll just kind of look at you and wait. If you then go pursue her, she’ll run away. What Pooka wants to know is, ‘can I come see you without you trying to hold me... without you trying to restrain me.... She teaches us a lot about testing for safety.

Speaking from my own clinical experience, this clearly paralleled the relational dynamics often accompanying work with trauma survivors, resistant adolescents, perhaps mandated clients. This is a dynamic, replicated in AAI-S by a bunny, that any client with relational baggage might play out in the counseling context, consciously or unconsciously, to ensure relational safety. If that safety was not perceived or felt, the client would likely disengage from treatment. Roseanna stated, “A human nervous systems and rabbit nervous systems are remarkably similar.” Meaning, the rabbit’s behavior and response to stressors in their environment and with humans are about its survival. Their behaviors and responses could model what a child or trauma survivor might experience. This in turn portrays the importance of a safe and secure relationship with the counselor in order for further therapeutic work to be done. This is a relevant neurobiological sentiment clearly articulated in Chandler’s (2017, 2018) human-animal relational theory.

Roseanna added that another reason animals enhanced the therapeutic and supervision process was they were aware of physiological changes much earlier than humans and perhaps detect changes in hormones and stress when humans cannot at all:

They can tell us things earlier They can detect very minute changes in us, particularly as prey animals. Most animals can smell physiological evidence of emotional changes with us, particularly related to the amygdala. [giggles] Animals can smell your amygdala. But rabbits especially are so attuned to body language, and dogs are too, but a rabbit’s survival is dependent on it.

Another example of Rosanna’s AAI-S practice was with Kelpie. Roseanna shared that Kelpie is a “great mindfulness mentor” for supervisees. Roseanna outlined what a typical outdoor walking AAI-S session with Kelpie looked like:

I like to start out outdoor supervision sessions with five minutes of mindfulness mentorship from Kelpie. She's so good at it, we asked her to be our mentor. So, then after being present with Kelpie, we follow her to do something called a "sniff-ari" [giggles]. If we're in a [open space], we're on a on a trail and she's on her six-foot leash and she'll go explore the environment, like a dog does. Then we are silent, and we follow her. We practice using all of our senses, just like her. We try to be fully present in the environment, just like her. We follow her lead and if she finds something interesting, we go investigate it. If we find ourselves off in thoughts, well, there's a cute little dog and she redirects our focus to observing what she's in to, and we're back to and using all five senses explore our environment and to be present. Usually, this is just a session opener, and then we'll move along with the walk and. We negotiate with Kelpie. about where we want to go and the pace we're doing.

Exploring the environment as negotiated with Kelpie mirrored the negotiation of session leadership Roseanna wanted her counseling students and supervisees to allow their clients to do.

How Themes

The themes central to Roseanna's implementation of AAI-S included (a) humane treatment, animal welfare, and having consent front and center; and (b) importance of supervisor AAI competence.

Humane Treatment, Animal Welfare, Consent Is Front and Center. Roseanna provided a copy of her Supervisory Disclosure Statement/Informed Consent (SDS/IC). She explained that she had a version of this she uses in teaching and in her clinical work. She reported that her Disclosure Statement is explicitly guided by the *Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies* (Stewart et al., 2016) and *AAII Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al.,

2022). Roseanna developed her current informed consent while working in a college counseling center and was informed and endorsed by that university legal advisors. She has continued to update it over the years to reflect her professional development and changes in practice standards as they evolve. The main sections of her supervisor disclosure statement are as follows: (a) AAI-S definition, (b) supervisor description, (c) risks and expectations of AAI-S, (d) animal-partner preparation and rights, (e) individual animal partners, and (f) statement of informed consent and hold harmless agreement. The section on Animal-Partner Preparation and Rights included Brambell's Five Freedoms (as cited in the *AAII Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022) and the Therapy Animal Bill of Rights (Howie, 2015). Roseanna explained that she wanted her supervisees to have explicit preparation and expectations of how to positively interact with therapy animals with their welfare in mind at all times.

Roseanna stated the section on risks and expectation was possibly the most important and essential component to the SDS/IC due to the liability and risk implications of possible injury from animals. She shared a story from the news of a therapist in California who was sued because her therapy dog bit a child. In the story, the child had accidentally startled the dog while it slept. The therapist's main mistake in this case was there had never been mention of the potential risks inherent in work with animals in their informed consent or related risk management documentation.

In the sections for Pooka and Kelpie, Roseanna articulated both ways supervisees are encouraged and discouraged to interact with the animals. Outlining the encouraged and discouraged interactions reiterated the importance of supervisees knowing the limits of safe and consensual interactions with the animals to avoid harm. Further, Roseanna provided a list of

specific behaviors/interactions to avoid with the animals such as playing chase with Kelpie and not picking up Pooka.

Beyond the SDS/IC used in Roseanna's AAI-S teaching and advising, she explained that the emphasis on safety and welfare extended to her co-workers. Understanding of the risks, benefits, and other concepts in her informed consent was an expectation of her academic colleagues and they often joined her in advocacy efforts regarding animal welfare and safety in their department:

So, everyone is trained. And sometimes Pooka will go up front if she hears a new voice and say hello. Paula has worked pretty closely with me on how to advocate for Pooka and [people will ask], "oh, can I pet the bunny?" [Paula will say] "Well let's ask her and here's how you ask."

This intentional environmental culture reached the student body of the department as well:

The masters and doctoral students, on the first day of class, all get an orientation from me about sharing your environment with a therapy animal. We work with 'Sunny Bunny'. This is Sunny Bunny (Roseanna holds up a life-sized plush bunny toy), our proxy Pooka. So, we practice working with Pooka with Sunny Bunny to show where Pooka likes to be touched, where it's okay to touch Pooka, and where for it's not okay to touch Pooka.

This was no superficial exercise or meaningless thought experiment with students. The orientation to sharing space with Pooka was as serious and significant in this environment as it was in the majority of the AAI community at large. Animal welfare is taken very seriously. Typically, AAI trainings spend a significant portion of the training period examining the

paradigm shift in philosophy about animal welfare and consent that is a central tenant of the AAI relationship and professional landscape (Stewart et al., 2016; Winkle et al., 2022). This culture and respect for animal autonomy was reflected in a department informed consent (acknowledging the presence of therapy animals in the department setting).

There are very strict limits if you try to pick this rabbit up, you'll [have significant program consequences]. You know, know pursuing her, etcetera. You can pet her in her areas if she comes up and says yes. So, they've all had an orientation to interacting with a rabbit appropriately and they've all signed and informed consent.

Roseanna acknowledged that occasionally someone might interact with Sunny Bunny in ways that were truly accidents and where the behavior was unintentional. The strict rules are in place and given such regard because the underpinnings of respect, welfare, and humane treatment of the therapy animals have been infused into the department philosophy. According to Roseanna, "Intentionally harming an animal is taken as seriously as intentionally harming another human. And we have no tolerance for that. And we believe that with Counselors-in-Training it's reasonable to expect them to not intentionally cause harm to any living thing."

Students are provided an informed consent related to the presence of therapy animals in the department place at two separate points in their program—initially at the above general orientation with all master's and doctoral students and then later when students entered into courses, supervisory, or advising relationships with Rosanna in which animals were involved. Roseanna explained that this served the purpose of a general informed consent since Pooka is a popular "guest-lecturer" in a couple of the classes she teaches. In essence, the initial informed consent covered potential, incidental intradepartmental interactions with the therapy animals as

and classroom experiences in which Roseanna's therapy animal partners might be present and involved in a learning activity.

The second round of informed consent took place *if* the student had elected to engage in supervision (or in some cases are an advisee of Roseanna's) with Roseanna and her animal partner(s), Pooka and/or Kelpie. Roseanna explained the second informed consent was a part of her Supervisory Disclosure Statement. This second round of informed consent for supervisees and advisees was implemented regardless of intention of the supervision—whether for general CIT supervision as would be appropriate for master's and doctoral students practicing in the training program or for students seeking supervision of their AAT work (as would be appropriate for students in the AAI certificate program at this university). Bottom-line was it did not matter what type of CIT clinical supervision would be taking place—if a therapy animal partner was involved in the supervision process, then the second round of informed consent specific to AAI-S (Roseanna's supervisor disclosure statement) was used.

The second round of informed consent (via the supervisory disclosure statement) served as a refresher of the initial orientation to Pooka, Kelpie, dynamics of AAIs, the therapy animals' roles and nature of their presence in the department. It added to the initial orienting frame of AAIs and animal partners in the department and extended further into more pertinent supervision-related information and nature of AAI-S. This document is discussed further in the following section describing the supervisory disclosure statement as an important piece of document data gathered.

Roseanna reported that though there is explicit informed consent around the presence and possible involvement of therapy animals in this department, the student has every right to decline interaction with the animals. Individuals might do so for a variety of reasons. Most common are

history of trauma related to D\dogs or allergies and health conditions. There was no repercussion in this department for a student's decision not to be involved with any of the animals. Roseanna followed up with students who voiced concerns or removed themselves from interactions with the animals to ensure they are okay and, if needed, devised a kind of agreement to protect the student. For example, Roseanna shared the following possible circumstance:

It's okay if you're not an animal person. We have had students before saying you know, "I don't really want the animals near me in class but, I'm not phobic or allergic enough to where I wanted to deny my peers that." So sometimes I'll follow up with them and be like, are you sure, like you're not doing this, just to be nice and we'll talk about what is [the person's] sort of proximity window. Because if I know that if I see the animal coming towards them, I can redirect the animal very easily. ... Most people aren't afraid of her.

This ethos/cultural value for animal autonomy and welfare was also reflected in the department webpages on the university's website. The animals Roseanna has currently and previously partnered with are even on the university's program website. There are bios and histories for current and previous animal partners in the department. In this way, informed consent for potential students begins on the website. From there, they are able to see AAT is a thing in this program and animals are present. Roseanna shared:

Some of the stuff that's made it a success here is because it is so integrated. It's on the website, it's part of the culture here, and I'm able to orient every single student and faculty from day one. It makes [AAI] able to be a part of the department culture, and I think that's one of the reasons it's so successful here. So, we're able to infuse the principles as part of everyday operations. It's the everyday philosophy here. So, I do

think we're able to do things that wouldn't be possible if we didn't have so much buy-in. It definitely increases the quality of what I am able to offer.

Roseanna shared that she has trust established with her colleagues but incoming students present sort of an unknown element that she addresses by providing instruction and laying out expectations for behavior toward the animal partners in program orientation around Pooka's presence in the department and how to interact with her. Roseanna saw this as an explicit moment to teach about autonomy, safety, consent, and provide opportunity for faculty to observe student responses to those constructs. While autonomy and safety were being applied here in reference to Pooka, they might reveal the student's attitude about careless or harmful behavior toward a living creature, which could be seen as their attitude toward all living creatures including future clients.

It was clear there was a great deal of respect and understanding for the nature of the human-animal relationship here and the resulting openness and embracing of her peers to abide by safety and handling structures for the protection of the animal partner. It struck me that this is probably a unique situation and that getting that many people on board and agreeing to anything in a university setting could feel impossible. That this might be an instance in which this case had limited transferability to the general world; many institutions and academic departments might not carry the same amount of appreciation for Roseanna's work and respect for her animal partners in their environment. Perhaps this was a limitation in transferability/generalizability that could raise awareness of the need for such acceptance by the environment and ignite advocacy efforts by professionals seeking to integrate AAI-S in their institutions.

Importance of Supervisor Animal-Assisted Intervention Competence. The importance of AAI competence in AAI-S was evident in Roseanna's design of her certificate

program and implementation of AAI-S. She reported that before she would recommend any supervisor begin implementing AAIs in supervision, they needed to have a high level of competency in both supervision and AAIs. She reported that based on the *AAII Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022) and the animal-assisted therapy in counseling competencies (Stewart et al., 2016), it was exceedingly clear that there must be firm foundations in both specializations. Without them, the individual invited elevated risk and liability. Her elaboration was consistent with *AAII Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022), American Counseling Association Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies (Stewart et al., 2016), and Chandler's (2017) recommendations:

It is important to understand the science of this. And to be knowledgeable about the species you are working with. You have to know your animal-partners inside and out, too. This is all stuff from the competencies and the standard of practice. I would say that anyone wanting to do this work, AAI-S, needs to have outside evaluation, too. Like with Pet Partners at least for like the first 10 years. Some employers may require being registered. My [previous job] required it. Most importantly, you just need to be qualified, competent, and be informed of all the potential risks.

Why Themes

Transferability of Animal-Assisted Interventions. The theme of AAI transferability was evident from the data. This transferability included (a) the supervisory relationship and (b) supervisee development.

Supervision Relationship. When I pressed Roseanna for more about what she suspected was happening in the sessions Bonnie was in that accounted for the differences and enhancements in the supervision process, she explained:

Bonnie's responses to my clinical work helped inform counseling interventions. Bonnie's responses and interactions with my clients [pause] they told us a lot. We didn't always know what they were telling us, but we trusted she was telling us something important. I noticed her start, of course, doing the same thing with my supervisee, but I didn't know exactly how to translate that into supervision interventions, rather than counseling interventions. She didn't know if we were doing counseling or supervision. But she knew her job. She knew her job was to observe and respond and tell us things that we might not be able to perceive as easily with our limited human senses.

Roseanna went on to share that she ended up learning that Bonnie's responses were exactly the same as they were in counseling sessions:

But instead of translating me them into clinical work, Bonnie just showed us something important. What does that mean for your wellness [in a counseling session for a client] versus in supervision Bonnie just showed us something important. Now, how do we use that to improve your clinical skills, your client presence. I thought initially it'd be more different than it actually is.

Roseanna explained that the primary distinctions from clinical application to supervision were "roles and goals." The goals of supervision were evaluative and focused on the professional development of the supervisee. The role of the supervisor was inherently different from those of a counselor (or other mental health clinician), but did share some overlap such as risk assessment and safety. Although there are distinct differences in the provision of AAT and AAI-S, the relational dynamics and learning processes are essentially the same.

Roseanna shared that including her animal partners, Pooka and Kelpie enhanced the relationship in various ways. She reported that one significant way they lent to the quality of the

supervision relationship was they offered opportunities for Roseanna to model her trustworthiness and repairs of mistakes when she made them with the animals.

AAI-S allows me to model for students the way I respond to mistakes. Like when we're on a walk for supervision, and Kelpie does something that we would rather her not do. We redirect, we refocus, and we move on. I don't call her a bad dog. I don't yell at her. I don't say "Gosh I wish Kelpie was different." Or even apologize for her being a dog and having dog behaviors. I get to say, it's Okay, we need some extra support and we're going to work on it. And right now, we're going to move on. So it's a way for a supervisee or a student to assess the way I respond.

Supervisee Development. Turning back to an earlier discussion of the influence her clinical theoretical orientation and supervisory orientation had on her implementation of AAI-S, Roseanna explained how developmental models informed her of AAI-S decisions and design. She was guided by the principles of her theoretical orientation and used the integrative developmental model as she evaluated and worked with supervisees in AAI-S. She explained that IDM helped her determine what to focus on in AAI-S:

I think that helps me choose. A lot of my animal-assisted supervision, like my clinical work, is spontaneous and non-directive. But, looking at supervision from the IDM, it can help me decide, out of all the spontaneous [human-animal] interactions, what to maybe pull out and reflect on, and if I need to design a structured intervention, like the target training. ... This helps me decide because there's unlimited things that we could focus on, or draw out, or reflect on in the spontaneous animal interactions that helps me decide which ones, out of all of them.... It informs my way... my choices with my animal partner. And at different developmental stages [students and professionals] have different

developmental tasks and developmentally 'normal' looks different. For example, we've got tons to work with with the Level One [CIT] where there's a real desire for concrete solutions. They want step-by-step. But I can give you all the instructions in the world, but it doesn't account for this other living thing and her choices and her actions and her feelings, so we get to work with the ambiguity in our relationships with animals.

The HAIs happening in AAI-S mirrored and translated into the relationships with clients. Thus, Roseanna got to push the CIT toward the edge of their zone of proximal development (Nye, 2007). That supervisee, who was considered to be a Level One supervisee in the IDM (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011), might need concreteness while having a supervisor supportively allowing them to safely lean into the discomfort of the ambiguity through this AAI-S process.

Roseanna commented:

It also helps us in real time examine the importance of the relationship. So, with a lot of earlier stage counselors, they want concrete solutions and directions, but they also [have urgency] about "client's presenting concern is X in this session, we have to do something, to *fix* something, to *do* something, we have to get to our goal!" And so, it's often hard to communicate the importance of building relationship. Because you can't do anything without it. SO, when we're working with Pooka doing target training, we can't get to our goal, and you can see it really clearly, until you build a relationship with her. You can wave this in front of her, and she knows what it means, all you want, but she's not going to choose to participate unless she feels comfortable with you, and she knows. And they get to see how working on the relationship *is* a step towards getting to whatever the goal is.

Roseanna shared that sometimes supervisees might be working with Pooka doing the target training and Roseanna would notice that after a few attempts, or over a few sessions, if Pooka declined several times that they needed to go back and re-examine the relationship. Put the toys away and just focus on connecting with Pooka. It occurred to me that this could provide a lot of permission and modeling for the CIT to keep track of the goals and stay attuned to the relationship throughout the counseling process. Experiencing this lesson with Pooka helped the supervisees realize the relationship does not always stay the same and you need to stay aware of it so you can notice when it needs to be cultivated and nurtured. You could return to the basics of the relationship, re-connect, and then go forward.

Roseanna continued to share that sometimes there were other issues that came up with CITs in which Pooka was uniquely able to assist. Sometimes, there were developmentally appropriate behaviors in CITs that Roseanna was able to address with Pooka's help:

I've noticed some counselors, especially new ones, and this developmentally normal, want to be overly directive in sessions. Especially the school counselors [in training] I've worked with who feel the pressure of here's a kid with a plan [e.g., behavior plan, 504 Plan, Individualized Education Plan] to improve some of their behaviors, and we got to get to it. And they end up screwing themselves because they are overly direct. And so, we've used target training and teaching the students to target train Pooka. To help them learn that you can teach something specific you can do a specific intervention without being overly imposing. For example, if you are working with a child and every time they see the counselor it's 'let's get down to business and doing my agenda to learn these skills', the kid's not going to want to come to counseling or engage. They're also going to sort of resist if they have any shred of ego strength, which is something we want.

Roseanna demonstrated how to use target-training with Pooka as a supervision intervention and explained all the steps in preparing Pooka for the training, doing the training, creating challenges in the training, and how the supervisees were able to then translate this to school counseling frames for practice. The supervisee must get Pooka to “boop” the target, a ping-pong ball hot glued to the end of a slender wooden dowel. On the other end of the dowel is a training clicker. A clicker is used to mark and isolate a desired behavior with a loud “CLICK” sound. Usually, in most dog-training scenarios, the clicker is paired with some sort of positive reinforcement like a yummy treat. Ultimately, the treat could be phased out and only the clicker used (or variably paired with the reinforcer). Here, though, the intention was to use the loud sound as a representation of something scary or provoking. It would be intrinsically strange or unsettling to a prey animal. Therefore, it made a good metaphorical stand in for a child’s disdain or disinterest in seeing the school counselor. Pooka’s response to the clicker was actually one of curiosity and she was not startled by it—rather, she was inquisitive. The supervisee learned through target training with Pooka, that although the clicker was somewhat strange to her, the fun of the “boop” challenges and the reward of the treat over-rode the novelty of the clicker. Importantly, this exercise was designed using reward-based reinforcement principles (Greenebaum, 2010; Winkle et al., 2022). There was no coercion as Pooka engaged voluntarily. Desired behaviors are positively reinforced and other behaviors are simply ignored. Pooka showed a powerful lesson here:

In doing the target training, and its super fun, it shows you that you can go in with a specific goal in mind that you're working towards together. But also, in a way that honors the other’s choices and doesn't force them into anything that they don't want to do, or that they don't agree with. ... if we approach it this way. Then, when we get out the [target] or

in the metaphor of counseling with kiddos, the counselor. This becomes a good thing, this is an exciting thing, this is something that sometimes is a challenge, but that it's something we get a choice in and it's something we look forward to. ... It's got some behaviorism components in [the intervention with Pooka], like learning how to target train is strictly behavioral but it's what target training represents. That's relationship based. [The way the] training is the important part... how it honors choice, honors autonomy, and honors consent.

We discussed how this directive, specifically designed intervention provided an experiential learning opportunity for the CIT. This intervention conveyed permission to the CIT that there was freedom in their practice, that they do not have to stick to a rigid agenda with their school counseling students (or any clients for that matter):

Right! And if I get [the target] out and she doesn't respond, there's no consequence for her. It's okay. She decided she's not wanting to do that today. And then we'll reorient and say, 'what would you like to do instead, Pooka? Usually it's something like, 'I want to take space for myself and retreat' and sometimes it's 'I want to lay here and have you pet me'. And we say okay, and we go with that, even if we're disappointed.

Getting to address the CIT's potential disappointment in things not going the way they planned, hoped, or predicted could be a powerful lesson in tolerance of ambiguity and respect for the other person's autonomy and consent. In this way, Pooka helped embody and convey the fundamental principles of professional ethical behaviors (ACA, 2014) such as autonomy, justice, and fostering the right to control the direction of one's life.

Case 2: Private-Practice-Based Animal-Assisted Intervention- Supervision

Clara was the representative for this case of AAI-S and shared from the perspective of private practice-based AAI-S. She owns and operates a private practice in which she provides AAT and supervision for individuals training in AAT and AAI-S for supervisees not involved in AAT specialization.

Context

The context for this case consisted of data collection experiences, the participant and setting particulars, and the animals involved in Clara's AAI-S.

Data Collection Experience. I knew of Clara as a provider of AAI-S from personal contacts in the field but I did not know her personally. I contacted Clara by email and quickly received a positive response from her indicating her interest in the study and willingness to participate. We scheduled our initial interview (by Zoom) for the following week. Since the initial interview with my first participant far exceeded my estimates for length of time we needed, I warned her it might last longer than an hour and we might need to meet again. As Clara owns and operates a private practice, we worked around her scheduling needs and ended up meeting three times over four months and then having a member checking meeting a few months later. Clara was at her private practice with her animal partners in each meeting.

During our initial interview, which took about two and a half hours, we were able to cover the demographic questionnaire, complete most of the semi-structured interview protocol, the animal introductions, and the virtual tour. About a month later, we met virtually again for clarification of concepts from the first interview and to complete the interview protocol. We met for about 45 minutes and she emailed her supervisory disclosure statement (a case document)

after this meeting. Our third virtual meeting was about a half hour and served as an opportunity to review any reflections that might have emerged since our last meeting and for member-checking my understandings of elements from the first two interviews. Our last virtual meeting lasted about an hour and was primarily for follow up clarifications from earlier interviews and to member-check the overarching themes I had discovered across the three cases. Our total meeting time was approximately four and a half hours. In our longer meetings, I checked in with Clara to continue to obtain consent to move forward in case she was fatigued. We never needed to end earlier than expected. Throughout the prolonged engagement with Clara, she was enthusiastic, open, informative, funny, and engaging in each of our meetings. I relayed what my first participant said about this being important research and that I might find that it would be a longer process than expected. Clara agreed it was important research and she was personally invested in this approach because she had seen a remarkable impact of AAI-S with supervisees.

Clara. Clara is a White female living in the United States. She holds a Ph.D. in the counseling field and is fully licensed in the counseling profession in her state of residence. She has the state designation for supervision in her profession and is a registered play therapy supervisor. In addition to her specialization in play therapy, Clara specializes in AAT. She received formal training in both approaches while in her doctoral program. She has been practicing play therapy and AAT for over seven years. Clara has provided trainings regarding AAT and has authored peer-reviewed publications on the topic of AAT. Clara and her recently retired therapy animal partner, Ralphie, had been a registered Pet Partners team for a few years. Clara has also completed some training in natural lifemanship (a nature-based equine-assisted therapy approach) and in child-parent relational therapy.

Clara's professional clinical background included inpatient, hospital settings, clinical practice in her doctoral program, and her current private practice where her caseload is approximately 25-30 individuals (some are families). She said about a third of her clients are children between age three to nine, a third are teens and tweens, and a third are adults. Many of them elected to come to Clara's practice because she offered AAT.

Clara's clinical theoretical orientation was what she called "Developmental Constructivist." Specifically, she named the influences of solution-focused therapy (De Shazer et al., 2021) and strengths-based therapy (Jones-Smith, 2013), HART (Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021), and relational depth (Mearns & Cooper, 2017). Clara reported she also had a value for incorporating nature into her clinical and supervision practices (nature-based therapy; Harper et al., 2019). All were viewed through the lens of human growth and development:

Constructivist in the sense of coming to interventions from a place of not knowing. The client is the expert, and the families are the expert on their child. I view them holistically by taking into consideration life order, relationships, work and school alignment, leisure activities, and strengths that can be built upon. All of this is couched within a developmental lens for conceptualizing the client and informing developmentally appropriate interventions.

She said this orientation also served at the core of her supervisory approach:

I am at my core a constructivist, so this extends to supervisee conceptualization and development as well. Additionally, I may bring in instruments for assessing professional counselor development. I appreciate using those for assessing skills development and professionalism. I also consider where the individual is in their lifespan development. I

want to pay attention to those nuances while taking their life experiences into consideration.

After graduation, she opened her private practice and continued her AAT training including trauma specific, equine assisted therapy training. Clara's private practice is a practicum and internship field placement site for local (master's-level) counselors-in-training (CITs). She supervises all the CITs at her practice and routinely integrates AAI-S into supervision. She noted that she has implemented AAI-S with five more supervisees since her doctoral program, making the total number of supervisees receiving AAI-S as 13.

The individuals Clara supervises are either graduate students (practicum or internship CITs from a local counseling master's program) or individuals seeking licensure supervision. Some supervisees are seeking specific AAT supervision and some are simply seeking what Clara and I called "general supervision" to help us distinguish the two. Regardless of the intent of the supervision, AAIs were frequently integrated into her supervision activities.

Animal Partners. Clara currently partners with six animals on a regular basis. On occasion, the outdoor cat invites himself into therapy sessions. Clara also explained that because of her setting, being in a somewhat rural wooded area, deer frequently visit and are integrated into sessions from a distance. Integrating the wildlife present in this natural setting aligned with Clara's values of connectivity to the natural world and infusing nature and the surrounding ecology into therapeutic activities whenever possible and helpful. There are elements of nature-based counseling (Greenleaf et al., 2014) throughout her setting and practice.

Ralphie. Between the first and second interview meetings, Clara's long-time compassion and therapy dog partner, Ralphie, died. I met Ralphie during our initial interview and during the animal introductions. He had been a significant part of Clara's personal life and her career path

with AAT. He was a medium-sized, dark grey, mixed-breed dog with a flop of hair that fell over his eyes. When I met him that day, Clara bent down to introduce me to Ralphie, who was curled up in his dog bed napping, and she gently pulled that flop of hair away, revealing his deep brown eyes. The tenderness and love between them came through the computer screen clearly. This was a “soul” animal. Ralphie had been with Clara for many years and seen her through hard times. They had a very special bond.

Ralphie was affectionate and attentive to the stress responses and psychological states of the clients and supervisees Clara saw with him. Clara shared a story about Ralphie’s ability to alert her to something important in supervision.

This supervisee was having a really hard time [with vulnerability] and was not wanting to process any of that or address how it was getting in the way of their ability to work with clients, and Ralphie, [Clara giggled] he was having no part of it. He repeatedly did this thing where he would stand, I mean square up with somebody about two feet away from them, and his little tail would go up in this fast wag, and he would bark at them. Bark these just [sharp, short] barks. It was almost like a ‘Hey! Hey! Hey!’, like ‘What was that! Something’s going on here! Alert! Alert!’ And his front paws would come up off the ground. Every single time!

Clara shared that Ralphie was particularly skilled at “calling people out” when they were “blocked.” She explained that Ralphie could pick up on the stress hormones a client or supervisee was excreting and respond to it by alerting Clara and the individual to it. Usually, this was something Clara might have a suspicion about but have no concrete evidence for until Ralphie pointed it out with his keen dog sense of smell.

Jem. Jem is a middle-aged chocolate lab mix. He is frequently involved in therapy sessions with Clara. Jem loves playing soccer with kids and teens and has a knack for helping clients process issues related to attention-span and impulse control. He is the only one of the three dogs trusted to be in the yard with clients because the other two might try to attack the rabbits. Clara shared that “generally, what happens is clients will come here [to the fence], we talk, and they'll just start telling me about their day, and then we'll stand here until they decide that they're either ready to move on, or they want to bring Jem into the session.” Jem and Bert typically greet every visitor to the practice at this fence. I met Jem in the side-yard of the home/practice. He sallied up to the fence for sniffs and a head scratch as Clara introduced us through Zoom.

Bert. Bert is an older dog but has quite the personality. He is also a mixed-breed dog and has spots. He looks like a living Snoopy. Bert is less involved as an animal partner but is always present in this setting as a resident of the practice/household.

Bengal and ZsaZsa. Bengal and ZsaZsa are outdoor cats that live on the property. They are sometimes included in AAT sessions. As with all of the animals, they choose whether they wish to be included in AATs. I only met Bengal the day of our interview. ZsaZsa was not around. Bengal greeted Clara and I at the side yard as she took me on the virtual tour and proceeded to collapse in the walkway at Clara's feet, demanding scratches and attention before Clara could pass. She coyly slipped by as Clara reached down to pet her. Quintessential cat. Bengal then slithered through the fence where the dogs were standing and rubbed her face on Bert. Bert took it in stride and they pranced off together.

Snuffleupagus (Gus), Peets, and Viktor. These are the facility rabbits. Gus (palomino) and Peets (palomino) are brothers and Viktor (black and white spotted, flop eared), another male,

live together in a “bunny barn” located across the yard from the main building. During my visit to the bunny barn, Gus and Peets hopped over to investigate what we were doing in their space.

Clara got a hello “boop” from Peets. Clara shared an interesting story about the bunnies:

We've actually had to separate these guys, because when they when they hit puberty, they all started trying to rip each other apart. So, we had to separate them because rabbits apparently hold grudges.... They remember their fights and so when we tried to reintegrate them, they were just they were like still mad so, here we are!

Clara went on to share that this adolescent rivalry between the bunnies came up a lot with adolescent clients, curious about the separation. This historical saga between the rabbits provided good therapy fodder for processing relational issues in clients' lives.

Omar. Omar is a Betta fish and an unexpected (to me) addition to the menagerie at Clara's practice. Omar lives in a well-sized tank in the playroom. The playroom is also across the yard from the main building, just past the bunny barn. Omar's tank is safely pushed to the back of a table in the playroom, far enough to ensure his safety when curious children are in the area. He is a spectacular shade of blue with a brilliant red tail. Omar swam over to the side of the tank facing Clara as we walked over to him. He appeared curious and followed us from one side of the tank to the other. Clara held the iPad she was using for our virtual tour over to the tank so I could see him better while she got out his fish food. He swished around and showed off his colors and I swear we made eye-contact. Clara shared that “every time a new person walks into the room, Omar swims over... every single time to see that person and greet them just like he did with you. So, he'll, swim all the way over here to the corner and be like ‘who are you, what are you doing.’”

Setting. The setting is Clara's private practice located in a semi-rural area. The area is somewhat wooded and remote but about 20 minutes from a larger metro area. It is beautiful. The main building is a house where Clara and her family also live. All of the animals live here on the property. The house is separated into their living areas and office space. Visitors park in the front in a small parking area and enter through the side yard beside the house. The yard is long, shade-filled, and has an array of seating areas (patio table and umbrella, etc.) and toy/activity instruments (balls, swing, frisbee-golf goals, a drum-set constructed from upside-down buckets).

On the side of the yard is the bunny barn and then the playroom. Because these units are detached from the house, both are insulated and have air conditioning—thoughtful components for ensuring animal welfare. The two-leveled bunny barn is large enough for at least two adults to be in with the rabbits. The size and structure allow for a comfortable living space for the bunnies including bunny doors to outside fenced in areas to keep them protected. The playroom is a typical child-centered playroom with a bathroom, sink, and all of the usual toys/activities in such a playroom. There is a sofa next to the table where Omar's tank is. Under the sofa are bunny accoutrements for when one of the bunnies visits the playroom: "I keep this underneath, a rabbit playpen and a box of hay, so, I can just pull that out easily. Cause depending on what the intention of the supervision, we may bring the rabbits in here or sometimes we go directly to the barn."

Back in the yard, I could see several raised garden beds. Clara explained that this was where they grew much of the rabbit food. There was also a composting area and rain barrels nearby. She shared that clients and supervisees appreciated that they could witness the whole ecosystem for the bunnies here. It provided an opportunity to broach and process life cycles "sustainability, all of that... how everything is connected." Even the smell of the area is pleasant.

Clara remarked that “the supervisees love the smell of the garden area. It’s relaxing and grounding.” Relevant to the theme of sustainability and ecology, Clara also mentioned that often deer came to the fence and watched the goings on of the yard. This naturally occurring wildlife presence provided opportunities for broaching subjects like fear and parallels between animal and human responses and behavior.

Clara explained the rationale behind the design and functioning of this intentional environment. They chose this location specifically for its openness and embeddedness in the natural environment. The practice had been located in an older, historical building that was stifling and not conducive to AAT facilitation. They found this house, with its ideal location and natural elements, and it happened to come with two separate entrances. Thus, the home/office was born. Clara saw the ability of the animals to reside in the place where AAT/AAs happen as an essential component to her work and the humane support of the animals:

[The animals] are all already there. And they didn't have to go anywhere, and they didn't have to be distressed. I mean it was really ideal, with the exception that the only thing separating my office and my living room was a wall [laughter]. ... So, it’s not always ideal for me, but it is ideal for the animals. They don't have to leave, and they just get to be themselves. They get to do what they do, and that in and of itself is important to this. In their being, the animals are curative for supervisees and clients.

Clara explained that these values and structure came from travel abroad where she was able to see how AAs were carried out in different settings. The particular philosophical influence to have the animals in the environment and be able to be themselves came from AA practices in the Middle East and South Asia. She said, “They really instilled in me letting the animals be the animals. The animals are innately therapeutic. It is important for me to have

appropriate training to keep animals and humans safe. It's [my job] to know what they are telling me through their behavior.”

Experience Theme

Three themes overarched the personal experiences influencing Clara's connection to AAI and led to her integration of AAI in supervision: (a) personal transformative experience, (b) discovery of AAI-S, and (c) the AAI and play therapy parallel.

Personal Transformative Experience. Counseling is a second career for Clara. She was an educator for about a decade when she decided she wanted a change. She went back to school to become a counselor and sometime around the middle of her counseling master's program, she serendipitously read an article in *Counseling Today* about AAT. She was enamored with what she read. The article spoke to a part of her that had experienced the healing power of animals. She instinctively saw pieces of her counselor training and her personal healing experience with Ralphie come together:

It was an article that was written about [AAT], and my dog Ralphie had just been such a lifesaver for me. I had gotten him from a shelter within a year of when my dad died, and he was so healing for me. I thought, there's something to [AAT] because he literally gave me a reason to get up during that time, and so I thought, “Ralphie could do that, we could do that.” So, I started training him and I didn't really know exactly what I was training him for at the time. But I had read the dog needs basic obedience training, and so from there, that's when I started pursuing [the doctoral program]. It was so clear I needed to be a part of this.

Discovery of Animal-Assisted Intervention in Supervision. Determined to learn as much as she could about this interesting new approach, Clara sought a Ph.D. program that could

fulfill her wish to develop expertise with AAT. She realized in her first AAT course, “I just really loved it... I totally fell in love with it.” From there, she continued to gain experience with AAT and play therapy. She had the opportunity to work closely with her mentor and AAT expert and engaged in research and writing about AAT.

Like Roseanna, Clara discovered the possibilities and richness of AAIs in supervision in her doctoral program. However, because Clara’s Ph.D. program included a specification in AAT designed and implemented by a leader in the AAT field, Clara was also the recipient of AAI-S as a supervisee.

[Supervising AAT faculty] would bring her dog, Ringo, and she would supervise us with Ringo, and we’d would watch video of ourselves or our peers in the supervision group doing their work with their animals. ... and there was the expectation that like in order for you to work with your animal in the clinics at [University], the program required an hour a week of Animal-Assisted Supervision.

Here, Clara was referring to “animal-assisted supervision,” meaning supervision of her animal-assisted therapy work as a trainee. Part of her doctoral training included specific supervision training that required practice of supervision with master’s in counseling students. She calculated that she had implemented AAI-S in the doctoral program with eight CITs.

The timing of it was such that I started the supervision course and I was working with Ralphie in AAT in the same semester. Then in the next semester I was required to supervise master’s students, and so I just immediately started integrating AAIs into supervision.

Animal-Assisted Intervention and Play Therapy Parallel. Clara shared that when she was training in play therapy and AAT during her doctoral training, she could see overlap with

the philosophies and intentions of the approaches. She shared that in AAT, the therapist had to be able to “read the behaviors,” which is parallel to how a play therapist would need to work with a child, particularly in child centered play therapy (CCPT; Landreth, 2012). The therapist is responsible for understanding the human-animal interactions and play behaviors, and then making sense of those: “The play training was pivotal for me in my AAT work. I use HART (Chandler, 2017, 2018] in my AAT and I noticed that it’s a lot like Child-Centered Play Therapy language.”

She went on to explain CCPT and HART language, meaning the orientation of the therapist and spirit of the approach are very similar. She explained that they both share focus on allowing the client to lead and emphasis on the therapist highlighting interactions in “the room.” For instance, a common technique in CCPT is tracking child behaviors and reflecting emotion, content, and feeling (Landreth, 2012). In HART and in Clara’s practice of AAT, she explained she used very similar skills and techniques. She mentioned that processing and integrating AAls in supervision looked a lot like group play therapy (Sweeney et al., 2014). She gave the following example:

If I am trying to teach my supervisee the HART framework and ways to process Significant Human and Animal Relational Moments (SHARMs) and identify therapeutic impact actions... I’ve had my supervisee sit in the playpen with the rabbit and just interact with the rabbit. And then I’ll demonstrate my version of HART. It’s really similar to child-centered play therapy language because I’m reflecting and tracking.

Process Themes

The process theme demonstrated the guiding principles and theoretical structures informing AAI-S. Clara's AAI-S process was driven largely by HART (Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021) and relational depth (Mearns & Cooper, 2017).

Human-Animal Relational Theory. As previously discussed in Chapter II, human-animal relational theory (HART) was developed by Chandler (2017) and refined over recent years. In her foundational text, *Animal Assisted Therapy in Counseling*, Chandler defined HART as a “set of constructs... designed to explain the value of therapeutic process and resulting therapeutic impact of human animal interaction” (p. 140). Chandler explained that in a HART session, the therapist “can observe a series of human-animal relational moments that occur ...between the animal and client, between the animal and therapist, or between all three at the same time” (p. 140). Chandler related that there are more valuable relational moments she calls “significant human-animal relational moments” that might occur during these interactions and provide fodder for processing between the client and therapist. This is what she called “human animal relational processing.” Providing an exhaustive description of HART and its components was beyond the scope of this study; recommended readings are *Animal Assisted Therapy in Counseling* (Chandler, 2017), an article by Chandler (2018) about HART, and a 2021 article titled “Credibility of Human-Animal Relational Theory” by Otting and Chandler.

Clara distinguished here between supervisees seeking supervision for AAT and supervisees seeking general supervision not specifically related to AAT. She described a situation with a supervisee and how she might begin to bring animals into the supervision context. Specifically, she described how she integrated HART as a part of her methods in supervision:

So generally [using HART] is how I would show up in the beginning. I typically start with Omar, the fish, unless they specifically asked for a rabbit or a dog. A scenario that comes that comes to mind, because it's what happens every time a new person walks into the office, is Omar swims over to greet you. And so, I would offer that up. I would process that out loud as a SHARM. I might say, 'Oh, Omar came over to greet you', and if that supervisee dismissed that or blew it off, then, that would let me know that they may not be ready for that type of direction or depth.

She also shared that in her understanding of relational depth and HART, she “rolls with the resistance” and does not force discussion or processing of the SHARM or other HART elements.

Relational Depth. Mearns and Cooper (2017) explained that “relational depth” in therapeutic relationships is a transtheoretical phenomenon describing the experience of reflective, therapeutic interpersonal connection. They discussed that the building blocks of relational depth are moments of relational depth. These moments are essentially amplified experiences of unconditional positive regard, genuineness, acceptance, and other humanistic conditions for therapeutic change. Clara emphasized the importance of relational depth in both her AAT practice and AAI-S:

It forms the basis of our entire profession. I believe that the healing happens within the relationship and so as a counselor I'm always moving toward relational depth with my clients. That is also part of my guiding theory that is my way of working as a supervisor. Now of course that's still within a professional context, but I believe that we can have relational depth among and between colleagues and supervisors and supervisees.

She explained that seeking and highlighting moments of relational depth both created a supervisor context and relationship of safety and acceptance conducive to supervisee development but it also allowed her to model relational dynamics, particularly through HART:

That is always my intention and I'm going to do whatever I can do to facilitate that process. One way that I know to do that is through my specialization with AAT and to include animals in that process [of supervision]. ... We have research on it, we know that it works, we know the science behind why it works, and so that's why I invite animals in and why I offer that to supervisees."

How Themes

For Clara, the main logistical considerations for "how" to implement AAI-S involved (a) intentions of supervision and (b) safety, risk, and liability. Clara explained that in terms of logistics and procedures for implementing AAI-S, some of her decisions were informed by the supervisee's goals for supervision. She had different approaches for supervision depending on if the supervisee was seeking AAT-specific supervision or if they were seeking supervision not specific to their acquisition of AAT skills and experience. Distinguishing between the intent and purpose of AAI-S and her theoretical approach to AAI-S guided how she knew what to do in AAI-S.

Intentions in Session. Clara explained that at the very beginning of the supervision relationship, she and the supervisee had conversations about the intent and purpose for supervision. This helped her determine if the supervisee was seeking AAT experience and training or if the intent was general supervision (e.g., seeking licensure, etc.) but not specialized AAT supervision. In the case of the former, supervision was focused on supervision of their AAT skills development and case staffing. This was what Chandler (2017) called "Supervision

of AAT-C.” Clara might or might not integrate AAI into these sessions, although typically animals were involved. There was more emphasis in supervising, training, and teaching the supervisee to learn and implement AATs.

The other track of supervisees, those who were not seeking supervision of their animal assisted therapy and counseling, were more likely to have AAI-S for the purpose of facilitating supervision. The intent here was more the supervision process and how it was enhanced through the inclusion of AAI to promote supervisee reflection and deepen their personal counselor development:

It’s a conversation in the beginning of the relationship about what they are hoping to get out of supervision. Are they wanting hours and think it would be a bonus to have animals around or do they want to learn this this modality? That determines for me how I then integrate those things.

If the supervisee was seeking AAT specific supervision, Clara had specific competency expectations of the supervisee:

If they are coming for supervision because they want to learn this craft, then I expect them to do the Pet Partners Handler Training at a minimum. They don't necessarily have to have an animal to work with yet, but they need to do the training. I also recommend that they read, at least begin with Chapter seven of Chandler's book because it describes the HART framework. We need to share the same language. I am versed on other things and modalities, but my primary mode is HART. And so, I encourage them to be familiar with that as well because we will use it in every meeting. I also expect that they have a site where they can practice AAT and ideally where they can record their sessions so we

can review them. In my experience, being able to see body language, etc, is the most effective tool for supervision.

A significant difference between supervisees seeking AAT supervision and those seeking general supervision was that a supervisee seeking AAT supervision needed to learn how to “put it into practice”:

If a supervisee who is learning AAT is here, what we would actually do is we would go out into the barn and start in the barn. I’d have them focus on building relationship and trust with the rabbits until the rabbit gives the supervisee permission to pick him up and bring him in to the office. And that could take several meetings.

Clara explained the in vivo, experiential learning practices typical of a practicum or training program. It is important for the AAT learner to understand the animal welfare and consent issues implied in partnering with animals. Thus, they begin with the basic elements of developing the human-animal partnership relationship. With supervisees seeking general supervision where learning AAT is not necessarily the goal, Clara did not need to structure supervision to include animal partnership building and development. This was because Clara was the provider of the AAIs and she already had established a working relationship and partnership with her animals. The supervisee was the recipient of the impact of the tripartite AAI-S context:

If it's that I am working with the animal to enhance supervision through AAIs, I am setting the stage I am doing all those things... and facilitating it with HART. But if I am teaching a supervisee how to do AAIs, then I'm teaching AAIs, but doing so through supervision.

Safety, Risk, and Liability. Clara shared concerns about the risks and potential harms implied in the unqualified provision of AATs and, further, with AAI-S. She reported she had concerns about unqualified and under trained professionals implementing AAI-S and AAI-S:

The lack of oversight and training right now. There's not really anybody that really could say that they do this with a lot of oversight. And people end up doing this without a lot of training, and so I think that's a risk. With the appropriate training, safety is less of a risk. However, without the appropriate training, knowledge of animal calming signals, or knowing your animals, or setting and holding boundaries of course there's a risk for people or animals to get hurt. And of course, there's risk related to not giving appropriate Informed Consent. That these are animals, and they have teeth and when they are scared, they can bite. But the thing is, most of those risks can be mitigated by informed consent, clear communication, and appropriate handler training.

Clara also expressed her gratitude for the Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies endorsed by the American Counseling Association (Stewart et al., 2016). She explained that because there now existed guidelines about what constituted competency in AAT-C, there was more awareness of the need for safety measures, risk management, and welfare awareness:

The competencies are really helpful. I'm so glad that [Stewart et al., 2016] did that. Because it gives us at least a starting point. Similar to learning ethics. When we're first starting out we read the ethical codes but then we start *using* them in our decision making. And that's what needs to happen with oversight and the competencies. It's got to be more than a thought experiment.

Why Themes

Resounding throughout the interviews and time spent with Clara were two overarching themes for her rationale for including AAI in supervision. She shared that there was value in AAI in all relationships based on neurobiology, which extended to implications for the supervisory relationship. She also noted her personal experiences with the transformative power of AAI-S was a central driver for her inclusion of AAI into supervision. The “why” themes were (a) neurobiology of human-animal interactions and (b) the transformative power of AAI-S.

Neurobiology of Human-Animal Interactions. Clara shared that if someone wanted to begin integrating AAI into their supervision practice, they needed to consider competency and ethics as well as animal science. This was consistent with literature in the field such as the ACA competencies (Stewart et al., 2016), *AAI Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022), and other literature (Chandler, 2017; Fine & Griffin, 2022):

It is most beneficial to really understand the science, the neurobiology of it all. The needs of the specific species they might be partnering with. By neurobiology I mean that in AAT we know there are similarities and hormone responses for mammals, meaning the animals and the humans both have an increase in dopamine, endorphins, and oxytocin and a decrease in adrenaline, cortisol, and aldosterone. The result of that, in layman's terms, is that the social response system is stimulated which means there are implications for relationship building and at the same time the stress response system to be calmed.

Transformative Power of Animal-Assisted Intervention in Supervision. When asked explicitly why Clara integrated AAI in her supervision practices, she answered with a simple declaration:

Because I have seen the transformative power of it. I experienced it as a supervisee, I experienced it as a counselor, and as a human, too. It fully aligns with who I am in the world. I'm a nature-based, animal-based human. I like to get my hands dirty and my feet in the mud and honor that part of the earth in my practice. It's congruent with who I am. I think that's real 'why'. I find a sense of purpose in that. I believe in it, I have seen the evidence of transforming power of animals and nature for humans.

She tied this back to her affinity for relational depth (Mearns & Cooper, 2017): "I have found that including animals and nature into my practice, provides the infrastructure for a superhighway toward relational depth. And some of the barriers that often are in the way of getting to depth and relationship with [individuals] are more easily overcome." She explained that the benefits of AAI-S spoke for themselves. That including AAIs in supervision created an "avenue" to

analyze the human-animal interactions and what they can teach us about ourselves. This intervention gives us, in supervision, an opportunity to practice counseling skills with other sentient beings who are non-threatening. [giggling] I don't want to say they're nonjudgmental, because they are for sure. But they are safe and yet authentic at the same time. And if we mess up in that learning process, we can experiment and practice and there's an opportunity for immediate repair.

Referring to a study by Odendaal (2000), Clara explained that AAI-S also "helps me in my working alliance with supervisees because they generally perceive me as more trustworthy and reliable."

Case 3: University-Based Animal-Assisted Intervention-Supervision

Martina was the representative for the final case of AAI-S. She provided her perspective of AAI-S from the perspective of a university-training program.

Context

The context for this case consisted of the data collection experiences, the participant and setting particulars, and the animals involved in Martina's AAI-S.

Data Collection Experience. Martina and I are professional colleagues and have known each other for about four years. I met Martina, like Roseanna, through AAI professional activities (conferences, etc.). I knew Martina integrated AAIs in her clinical supervision at her university setting and has been involved with training and leadership roles in the field for many years. Given her experience and background in this field, I knew she would offer insight and wisdom to this study. After reaching out to Martina and explaining the purpose and procedures for her participation, she enthusiastically agreed to participate (following IRB approval of this dissertation study). Martina is a faculty member at a university and has a complex academic schedule given her various roles in her department. Our research engagement began in January 2022 and consisted of three meetings over a two-month period.

Like the previous two participants, there was a necessity for longer and additional meetings due to the richness and amount of information. Our first meeting in January lasted nearly three hours and included completion of the demographic questionnaire and about one-third of the semi-structured interview protocol. Our second meeting included continued interviewing (guided by the semi-structured interview protocol) and lasted about an hour and a half. Our final meeting (in February) lasted about three hours and took place at the barn where Martina did AAT training and supervision so we could complete the animal introductions and

virtual tour. Prolonged engagement in interviews spanned seven hours in total. During our lengthy interviews, I stopped to check in with Martina about time and her availability, making sure she was not fatigued or needed to end. We were able to meet for the times we expected. Martina was open, thoughtful, and excited to share her experience and insight for this research.

Martina. Martina is a middle-aged White female living in the United States. She holds a Ph.D. in the counseling field and is fully licensed in the counseling profession in her state of residence. She is a faculty member in a department of behavioral-health professionals within a university. Martina works directly with allied health profession students and master's level counseling students from an accredited counselor training program at a university in the United States. Like Rosanna, Martina has also developed and is the director of a certificate program in AAI at her university. A difference in Martina's training program for AAIs is it is open to many of the health professions in her college, meaning students in any of the behavioral-health graduate disciplines such as nursing, public health, sports and exercise science, nutrition, special education, social work, psychology, and counseling could enroll in her certificate program. There were interns and post-graduate fellows in her clinical training programs. Additionally, non-degree seeking students might enroll in her certificate program through the university.

Martina explained that because of the interdisciplinary nature of her department, there was a high degree of collaboration and interdisciplinary cross-pollination she found energizing and conducive to the growth of the AAI field. Martina had completed formal doctoral level supervision training and estimated that over the years, she has supervised over 150 supervisees in various forms of AAT and roughly 25 individuals receiving general/non-AAT specific supervision (e.g., master's counseling students, individuals seeking licensure supervision). She

has provided general supervision for over 10 years and AAT-specific supervision for approximately five years.

Martina also directs AAI-related programming within the university that serves college students and the local community. Martina has secured grants during her time at this university to fund her various programs. She reported that in the years the AAI certificate program has existed, it has become one of the most successful and well-attended certificates in the department. Martina has roughly 25 years of clinical experience as a professional counselor, the majority of which included integration of AAIs with equines, canines, and other animals in counseling. Martina completed numerous trainings specific to creative and expressive arts in counseling, somatic and spiritual integration in counseling, and trauma treatment (including specialized clinical experience and training with childhood sexual abuse survivors and offenders including forensic interviewing and risk assessment).

Martina's clinical theoretical orientation is described on her private practice website as holistic, integrative, and driven by her client's needs. In our interviews, she referenced two primary theoretical influences: process-experiential therapy (a pre-cursor to emotion-focused therapy; Elliott & Greenberg, 2007) and relational integrative psychotherapy (a psychodynamic relational approach; Finlay, 2015). Martina explained that these theoretical orientations established for her a foundation through which she conceptualizes all human and human-animal interactions including those within the context of supervision.

She has specific content expertise in the field of AAIs in counseling as evidenced by professional activities including authorship and contribution to numerous peer-reviewed publications on the topic of AAIs in the mental health field. She has also presented at a multitude of professional meetings (conferences, trainings, etc.). Martina is also involved in leadership

roles in the counseling field related to the professional development of AAI's in counseling. She and her primary therapy animal partner, "Dutch" (canine), are registered as a therapy team with a national therapy animal team registering organization. Martina has a small private practice where she provides AAT and Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy. She is PATH certified as an equine specialist in mental health and learning. Her private practice website reads, "In my practice, [AAT] is provided in partnership with a diverse team of animals including horses, donkeys, chickens and visiting wildlife when we are in the therapeutic farm setting or in the office with my canine partner, [Dutch]."

Animal Partners. Dutch, the dog, and Holly, the horse, are Martina's current primary animal partners. Martina shared that she is currently interviewing horses for fit and suitability in her training and clinical practice.

Dutch. A four-year-old solid black neutered male Flat Coat Retriever, Dutch engages in AAI's with Martina on campus in her training forums, at the barn during training and supervision, and in her clinical private practice. He comes up to about Martina's knees when on his four paws but if stretched out in a leap or standing on his hind legs, he is much taller. Martina shared that he is very intelligent and an avid swimmer. As a result, he requires a good bit of exercise and enrichment for stimulation. They have even partnered in competitive animal watersports together. Dutch is present at most of Martina's university work. He has even been designated as an official staff member of the university. Martina explained that he is well suited for AAI's due to his keen sensory skills, affiliative-ness with humans, and responsivity to human stress. He responds with nurturing and comforting behaviors and at times engages in activities to facilitate human awareness of potential change opportunities in counseling sessions.

Holly. Holly is a 15-year-old gelding Thoroughbred. He has a silky dark brown coat and flowing black mane and tail. He is about 16 hands tall. Martina reports that she has had Holly since he was about four years old. Holly has never been ridden competitively but Martina works with her riding “in classical dressage to build that relationship so that's he's my therapy and training partner. He's my long-time horse-partner love.”

Setting. The setting is two-fold. There is the formal classroom training setting of the university and there is the more informal natural setting of the barn. The university setting consists of the departmental areas involved in Martina's AAI training programming and the campus and community clinical services she and Dutch oversee and direct. On campus, she has an office but is generally out around campus with Dutch or is at the barn. Of note is the clear support from the university for Martina's AAI endeavors. It is clear the university powers-that-be have embraced the impact and qualities AAIs bring to a variety of health professions. The AAI certificate program web-homepage on the university's website has an introductory video of Martina and Dutch introducing the program. Martina's program has several community partnerships geared toward community program development of AAI services. In a campus newspaper article from 2020, Martina was quoted, “Animals are social lubricants.” The article went on to share her experience of Dutch on campus: “Dogs are always in the moment, and they make great support animals because of this. Dr. [Martina] says that students love to interact with him [Dutch], and has observed that, in class, [Dutch] decreases anxiety and increases enjoyment.”

During our third (final) interview meeting (virtual), Martina was at the barn. She had arranged to be there on a Sunday so we could meet and tour the location. The barn is a privately owned boarding barn. Martina showed me around the stable and I met the horses she works with.

Holly was every bit as beautiful as Martina described. And full of personality! Holly reached over the gate to her stall to sniff the iPad where Martina was video conferencing with me. Martina took a walk over to the field adjacent to the stable area to show the arena and larger field.

Martina went back into the barn and settled in for the remainder of our meeting. I could see several trainees around carrying on with their daily duties. She explained that anyone engaged in supervision or training was tasked with all of the typical equine care responsibilities (mucking stalls, grooming, feeding, all day-to-day care activities). Trainees at the barn typically had already completed Martina's certificate training at the university. Sometimes, trainees were seeking further training or practice with equine specializations and came to the barn to complete requisite equine practice. This was an extremely important element of trainees' learning and practice. They must establish relationships with the horses in order to work with them, even just to groom and be near them in their stalls. As a result, before any therapeutic integration could occur, the trainees first worked solely with the horses for a long time.

Martina shared a story of a recent near accident with a horse that happened with an experienced horseperson and trainee. The person essentially fast-forwarded through trust and relationship building with a particular horse who was relatively unknown because the horse was new to the barn and was being interviewed for suitability in the program. Because horses are prey animals, they can become scared very easily. While she was in the stall with the horse, the horse became stressed at her presence and pushed the trainee into the stall wall. In an enclosed space, like the stall, even a small movement by the horse could be deadly to a human. Though a scary situation, this was a reminder that having an established trusting relationship with the

animal partner is essential. It is a lesson that clearly paralleled establishment of trust and relationship in clinical work.

Experience Theme

Similar to both Roseanna and Clara, Martina had also had significant, meaningful experiences with animals in her life that influenced her career path and rationale for implementing AAT and AAI-S. Her long history integrating animals into therapeutic interventions started in the late 1990s.

Personal Connection to Animal Assisted Therapy. Counseling was a second career for Martina. Upon entering the counseling field, Martina worked in treatment programs and off and on with equine assisted therapy (EAT) work. During the times she was involved with EAT, she recognized the importance of EAT to her personally and to clients: “It was like lightning struck me. I realized I *had* to have horses in my life.”

There were several horses she had felt a special connection with over the years. One in particular was Sunny. One of the reasons Martina felt connected to Sunny was they had both experienced illness and recovery concurrently during their work together: “It was divine intervention. It was this sense of I had missed this like a piece of myself and came it back together.”

Martina went on to continue to work in the treatment field and grew closer and closer to the equine-assisted therapy world. Years later, she felt compelled to go back to school for a Ph.D. and continued pursuing AAT expertise. Martina knew from her clinical work that AAT could be transformative for clients. She’d witnessed significant changes for offenders and trauma survivors who had been involved in equine assisted therapy work. She realized that with a Ph.D. she could exponentially reach more individuals and families who needed this type of treatment

approach by training professionals. Her personal connections to her horses, the equine work, and bearing witness to the powerful therapeutic qualities of AAT drove her career path and inclination to develop training programs for other professionals. Martina also had a desire to conduct research into the AAT methods she'd been working with for so long. She wanted to “get down to the heart of how and why [AAT] does what it does.” Thus, she sought academic career settings that would allow her to develop training and support her research agenda.

At the heart of her efforts to train professionals were concerns about standards and ensuring competency of professionals that implement AAT. She reported gratitude for other professionals in the AAT field who were actively scaffolding the structures to guide competent and ethical practice. She reported that she had designed her training program to explicitly follow the AAT-C Competencies (Stewart et al., 2016) and the AAI *Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022).

Process Themes

Primary ideas that came from the data were “transferability” and “the container.” Martina was very clear that she believed the AAI strategies and approaches applied in therapy contexts were directly transferable to the supervisory contexts. She provided her understanding of how she was using her clinical theoretical orientation.

Transferability. Martina has several working conceptualizations about how and why AAI-S function and deliver such potent developmental and learning opportunities. Her clinical theoretical orientation provided the backbone for how she saw clinical applications of AAI-S working. She shared she believed that supervisors typically, naturally infused their clinical specializations into the supervision process:

I'm excited about [this research] because it's not just novel, which it is, but maybe you can encourage supervisors to expand their supervision tactics by incorporating animals into supervision. It's just like with play therapy. It's parallel. If you are a play therapist and supervisor, you naturally use the tool/s of play therapy in your supervision, because in essence in supervision, students are experiencing and learning through that process... it's just like clients.

For Martina, it was an obvious extension of therapeutic tools to usefulness in supervision; that the counseling skills, approaches, and interventions had direct transferability to the supervision setting. Although the roles and goals of supervision were different, the “process of supervision,” which is a learning source for supervisees, could deepen learning, reflection, and foster development as they did in clinical applications. There were additional risks to consider, however:

In my experience and from what I know from the literature, it is absolutely [transferable]. Yet, animals have natural behaviors for their safety, which can be dangerous to humans and themselves. Horses, especially because they are prey animals, and dogs too, because they bite. One cannot simply start doing this without training. This is a specialization just like any other, and it comes with specific significant risks, so there must be adequate training, experience, and supervision in AAs. Likely years' worth. Professionals must also have a great deal of knowledge of the species and their specific animals. A professional practicing AAs must be qualified because both people and animals involved get hurt.

The Container. Martina's theoretical orientation addressed the processes at play in AAs, specifically, process-experiential therapy (PET; Elliott & Greenberg, 2007) and relational

integrative psychotherapy (Finlay, 2015). Something she said when discussing the experiential and interpersonal processes occurring in HAIs/AAs stood out to me: “how we do one thing is how we do all things.” I asked her to elaborate. She said: “It comes from Process-Experiential... which addresses relational and interpersonal components of a dyad or triadic relationship. It has to do with having a different way of being. It has to do with being focused on the relationship and the therapy environment.”

In her words, PET was an “integration of person-centered, Gestalt, psychodynamic, and reality therapy.” She explained that PET influenced how she understood individuals and their behaviors, especially in the tripartite dynamic of AAs. Her meaning, she explained, was that what happened in the therapy context was a replication of the client’s outside world. She integrated relational integrative psychotherapy into the theoretical landscape by describing “the container.” She explained that once a stable container was created in the therapy environment by the therapist,

Imagine you have created this strategically designed equine therapy environment, the container, and thus when the client enters into this space, the client can begin to fill in that container. Which then leads to change because to function in that container, it requires the client to adjust, develop, and to change. If the client wants relationship with the horse and to do the equine techniques, they have to be able to modulate themselves in ways that the horse would respond to them. So then there exists this parallel. “How they do one thing is how they do all things.” What they do in ‘real life’ will show up inside this container, too. When it shows up, then I can deal with it in an environment that is predictable, as the container with the horses is, and I can help them modify.

She shared that for her, the container was the therapy environment she constructed with her animal partners. She knew the animals so well and the container became so predictable that simply adding the other individual allowed their needs, behaviors, and areas for growth to be amplified by the HAIs. Factoring the tripartite human-animal dynamic in AAI, there was another layer in which to see the individual's relational templates and patterns. Martina explained that she saw this with clients and supervisees playing out the same:

I see it as being the same with connecting and relationship with supervisees. The supervisee can learn about themselves and relational dynamics in counseling in this container much the same as a client does. Whatever is going on with that supervisee is inevitably going to show up in the animal's reaction to them in supervision. For instance, if the dog wants to step away from them, because their energy is so wild that is an opportunity to the supervisee to reflect or for me to recognize and bring into the here and now. Usually, based on the way the animal reacts, this is true for in therapy or supervision, is often how the individual is in their relationships. The key, though, is that that I, as the professional leading this interaction, have to have a clue as to what is causing the animal to react. I have to have competency about the animal's nature and behavior as well as the dynamics of human-animal interactions. Then I can work with the person to help them focus and find out what's going on inside. Ultimately, it comes down to science. It's neurobiology. The animal is socialized and affiliative and wants to connect, but only when it is perceived as safe to do so given their natural neurobiology. If a person is 'scary' to them, I can see it and address it. It gives supervisees a chance to see how their stress states can affect their clients or get in the way of their clinical work.

Martina explained that when she is supervising counselors-in-training (CITs) and other supervisees, she was able to see how they used their relational skills and counseling skills in their work with the animals. She was able to see limitations in skills and encourage supervisees to practice with Dutch or Holly. When she was able to see the supervisee interact with the animals, she could be a “neutral observer” and then step into help or interpret what was happening on the animal side so the supervisee could learn from it:

Essentially, I help to interpret what is going on for the animal and the animal’s reaction to you. So, in a way I speak for the animal to give the supervisee feedback about how they’re being received by their client. So, when you can transform the way that you are present with your client from your work with the dog or horse then it will shape you, and you can make meaning out of some of your own behavior and how it can impact others.

The theoretical dynamics Martina described lent guidance and structure to the provision of AAIs in both her clinical and supervision work. These constructs provided a sense of what kinds of inner workings were happening that allowed AAIs to be an additive to the supervisory process. The next two themes from within this case are “how” and “why” themes. They address practicalities of implementation (how) and rationale (why).

How Themes

Overall, Martina shared insight about “how” to implement AAI-S along two overarching themes. Like the other two participants, Martina had a central focus on the professionalization and credibility of this field with regard to implementation. She reported safety, credibility, and animal welfare as major concerns in her work with clients, students, and supervisees. She also shared that though many factors might influence her decisions in AAI-S, she was able to implement AAI-S with both organically emerging interventions that arose naturally from

interactions with the animals as well as structured, concrete interventions. All interventions were intentional and goal-oriented.

Safety, Credibility, Welfare. Martina explained that obtaining relational dynamics conducive to successful therapy and supervisor experiences began with safety first. She explained that this involved everything from the setting, the animal partners, and liability and risk mitigation. Even developing the working relationship with any animal partner was an essential safety measure in AAI and AAI-S. She shared that a practitioner and/or supervisor must “understand how their animals behave, their psychology, husbandry, zoonosis, even the species they come from.”

Safety, credibility, and animal welfare were evident in the components of the AAI certificate she developed at her university. There are five graduate level courses and a final capstone project. The course sequence scaffolds from introductory level content to more advanced topics such as program administration regarding AAI programming. There is also an in-person intensive practicum offered that provides an advanced level certificate. Martina infused the Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies endorsed by the American Counseling Association (Stewart et al., 2016) into her program and it “guides every aspect of the program.” The introductory course covered historical issues in the field, competency guidelines, general AAI techniques, registration and evaluation procedures for therapy animal teams, and other foundational concepts. Importantly, the second course covered what she called “Animal Action Plans.” This course served to prepare the student for safety and welfare considerations for implementing AAI such as identifying signs of stress in the animal partner. Martina explained that a rationale for her design of the certificate was to promote the credibility and professionalization of AAI through a comprehensive training program that had an explicit focus

on the risks and welfare issues in AAI. She shared that one of the reasons AAI have had a troubled history was because professionals integrated AAI with little to no understanding of the risks associated with AAI. A poignant statement on this topic, Martina said, “Whatever has the power to heal has the power to do harm.”

Martina also shared that that she advocated for AAI-S practitioners to be advanced clinicians, have formal supervision training (graduate course, training program meeting state licensure requirements for supervision, etc.), and formal AAI training (certificate program, workshops and specific AAT supervision for the craft of AAT) at a minimum. She explained that adding specializations did not necessarily multiply the experience and competency for the professional—they must have long-standing experience with both and a high degree of comfort doing them together: “[A supervisor doing AAI-S] needs to be well established with AAI and well established with supervision. There needs to be overlap. Blending. They have to be comfortable and competent with both independently first, then together.”

Organic and Structured Interventions. Often the opportunity for AAI revealed themselves naturally and organically in supervision sessions, just as in therapy sessions. Martina shared that both organic and structured AAI were implemented in her supervision sessions. By and large, the AAI procedures in supervision stayed the same. The process and the container were always the same but Martina’s intention and what she was looking for with the supervisee might change depending on where they were developmentally. Martina shared a typical scenario of the organic, naturally unfolding nature of some AAI-S episodes. She shared that supervisees would engage with Dutch by touching him and scratching his head while they discussed supervision topics. Sometimes Dutch would respond with nurturing behavior by leaning into them and putting his head on their knees:

I let it naturally occur and observe what he does and how the client or supervisee responds. I may not initially call attention to it, depending on the circumstances and what we're talking about. I may, after that moment inquire 'did you notice', 'what was that like for you', 'what do you think you were needing in that moment', or 'did you realize you needed anything'. Then we can explore and process further. They can then begin to recognize what they need to be able to procure for themselves. Dutch can offer nurturing in ways that would be inappropriate for me to do as a professional.

Martina's example also highlighted a function of AAIs: the animals could usually get away with something a human could not, given social mores and professional boundaries. Similar to discussions in the other two cases, the animal partners could deliver nuanced and important feedback in ways a human counterpart may not be able to. What might be difficult for the human supervisor to communicate came up naturally and immediately from the animal's communication.

Structured interventions were often designed based on some explicit need or the supervisory goal at hand. Martina shared a common scenario in which a supervisee had a goal to change their own behavior with clients and Martina would design an exercise with one of the animals to replicate or play out the dynamics of the supervisee's situation:

In supervision we've done this group activity where we work on the supervisees' development or identity. Sometimes somebody will say something like, 'I need to develop patience. I'm too task oriented and I want to get [the client] moving and working through their stuff! But I know need to be patient and listen. I need to be able to just relax and listen.' So, if that has become a stated supervision goal, we might go to the barn and do exercises again. It's the same container, learning environment, and we do the same

thing. The difference this time around is that the focus and what the supervisee is practicing is different. The task is the same, but what they're trying to accomplish with it is different.

Martina explained that what would follow, in this type of scenario, was the supervisee would inevitably replicate what they did with their clients (which puts the client off) and then experience some kind of rejection or failure in the task with the animal, which allowed them to experience and see differently where and how they were going wrong. Usually, she said, they were missing steps in the relationship with the client.

Why Theme

Martina brought rich information and color to the possibilities of AAI-S by sharing her personal experiences, the lessons she has learned through AAI-S, and considerations for implementing AAI-S. What follows is a description of the overarching rationale (why) theme for including AAI in supervision according to Martina.

Experiential Learning Container. Martina's discussion of AAI and AAI-S continually returned to the power of the human-animal interactions as a container. The container, she described, provided the stable environment for experiential learning and processing inherent in supervision. Martina summarized how with AAI-S she was able to discern where and how to focus her supervision skills:

The focus in process experiential theory is about building the right container, having the right relationship, and then allowing whatever is going to happen to organically unfold. All of that is intrinsic to my theoretical orientation. So, then superimposing my supervision orientation inside that container, I'm assessing "what do I need to be for this person in this moment," based on what's coming up. It informs me by way of what Dutch

or Holly choose to do with the supervisee. With them involved, I'm able to hone in on a stuck point or something that might be blocking the supervisee's clinical work. Additionally, throughout Martina's discussion of the container and its role in AAI-S, it was evident the container provided a laboratory for learning. Within the AAI-S container she created, supervisees were able to learn about themselves, exercise reflection and broaden self-awareness, and practice counseling skills in vivo.

Cross-Case Themes

The three single case representations of AAI-S were analyzed together following within case analysis. A multicase study calls for a dialectical tension requiring attention to the particulars and uniqueness of the individual cases while also attending to the similarities and commonalities aggregated across the cases (Stake, 2006). Cross-case analysis provides the researcher and readers with the opportunity to compare and look for commonalities across the cases, aiding in generalization. There were few instances of divergent views among the participants. The instances in which there appeared to be differences among participants were minor and did not seem to negate or provide substantive discourse to the core commonalities among the three cases. For example, one difference was in professional training of one of the participants, having been trained in a Psychology Ph.D. program. That participant, however, reported having a string counselor, counselor educator, and supervisor identity and had previously been trained as a counselor at the master's level. Overall, the cross-case themes constituting the quintain for this research were solidly coherent and consistent across cases.

Across all three cases, personal transformative experiences led to specialization with AAI-S and integration of AAI-S in supervision, guiding theoretical cornerstones for provision of AAI-S (most of which transferred directly from clinical AAI practice), focus on competency and

welfare in AAI-S, and central rationale for AAI-S grounded in the transferability of AAI-S into the context of clinical supervision practice.

In this section, the cross-case analysis findings are presented as Lessons Learned that constituted the AAI-S quintain. The within-case findings have been integrated and analyzed across cases (cross-case analysis; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 2006) using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) for categorical aggregation (Miles et al., 2018; Stake, 2006) to show the overarching themes were found across all the data. The *experiences, processes, hows* and *whys* of the three individual cases, when taken into consideration of the purpose of this research, provided lessons for future AAI-S supervisors and students. These Lessons Learned allowed for a composite image of the AAI-S quintain to be seen. The presentation format of the Lessons Learned followed the analysis organizational strategy used for structuring the within-case findings. First, the Context Lesson Learned is presented followed by the Experience Lesson Learned. Then, the Process Lesson Learned, the How Lesson Learned, and, finally, the Why Lesson Learned are presented. Table 6 provides a summary of the Lessons Learned from cross-case analysis.

Table 6

Summary of Cross-Case Lessons Learned

	Context	Experiences	Processes	How	Why
Cross-Case Lessons Learned	Context Conducive to Provision of AAI-S	Influence of Supervisor Transformative Experiences	Experiential, Relational Container	Competence, Safety, Welfare, Intention	Impact and Transferability of AAI-S

Note. This Cross-Case Lessons Learned constituted the domains of the Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision (AAI-S) quintain.

Context Lesson Learned: Context Conducive to Provision of Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

The cases presented in this study had both unique and common circumstances that were conducive to the provision of AAI-S. The elements conducive to AAI-S were an important consideration as they informed on what considerations might need to be in place for effective and safe implementation of AAI-S. Beginning with the settings of each case, it could be seen that specific aspects of the settings allowed for and supported AAI-S. Two of the cases were situated within academic university setting, which allowed for an environment that housed as well as supported AAI-S through access to resources requisite for provision of AAI-S. For example, in the university-based cases, the university and academic programs were “bought-in” to AAI-S as evidenced by the funding and infrastructure established to provide AAI training to graduate students. Simply creating faculty tracks and programming for AAI training is a major undertaking on behalf of a university and reflects their value of the training program. These programs included multiple resources such as financial support, grant-writing support, administrative support, and potentially other supports. For example, Case 1 involved a faculty member in a counseling graduate program who was solely responsible for the creation and development of an AAI training program. Roseanna and Martina both reported having both administrative and collegial support in their university and department. Without such support, it would be unlikely that an academic setting could accommodate the infrastructure necessary to support such a training program and faculty to carry out that mission. Further, as specifically relevant to AAI-S, without administrative and university buy-in to support the programming, there might not be students with which to engage in AAI-S. Theoretically, a counselor educator or university clinical supervisor could integrate AAI-S with or without an AAI training program.

However, the professional implementing AAI-S might face challenges such as risk management and safety concerns for the students and wellbeing of their animal partner. Such challenges might be much more difficult or even impossible to surmount without university support.

In Case 2, Clara currently operated only in private practice. She reported there have been choices unique to integrating AAIs into clinical practice that had implications for AAI-S. For example, she reported she previously practiced out of a historic building in her city. However, the historic building had environmental issues that undermined her provision of AAIs. Issues that undermined her AAIs included poor access to outdoor areas for animal-partners, feeling confined, and generally difficult to have animals in the space. This led to her decision to move locations when the opportunity presented itself. Clara chose to transition to a location with copious outdoor space, areas for the rabbit-hutch, space for large toys and sitting areas, and was generally more conducive to including animals in clinical work. With the larger space and open outdoor areas, Clara was able to add to her animal-partner family (rabbits, cats, additional dogs). The environment also allowed Clara to involve nature more readily into clinical and supervision practice, which was in alignment with her personal values and theoretical orientations (nature-based therapy; Harper et al., 2019). Clara explained in her interview that often clients and supervisees both engaged in reflecting on the natural environment during sessions. For example, they might quietly watch as deer stalked nearby or discussed existential issues of life and death stemming from the presence of life and life-cycles in the immediate environment (food grown on premises being fed to rabbits, rabbit excrement and other composting materials fertilize the garden, etc.). A particularity of Clara's case was the setting for her practice was also her home. Her family lived on the premises as well. For her, the benefit outweighed the cost of living so close to work because the animal-partners live there, too, making access to them less disruptive

and supportive of their wellbeing. Contrastingly, if this were not the case for Clara, she would have to transport animal-partners to and from her practice setting, potentially stressing the animals and impacting the nature of their presence and involvement in sessions. This is an important lesson in considering including animals in any clinical setting regardless of intention to implement AAI-S.

An overarching commonality of all three cases was the participants each had extensive training and experience with AAI, supervision, and the integration of AAI and supervision. Each participant had doctoral-level education and training in a counseling related field and advanced training in counseling, supervision, and AAI. These participants likely represented a very small portion of the accessed population (those implementing AAI-S). Their years of experience were likewise extensive. The participants had (in this order) 10, 7, and 10 years of experience with supervision; 20, 7, and 25 years of experience with AAI; 10, 7, and 10 years of experience integrating AAI in clinical supervision practices. This also underscored the sentiment shared by all participants that AAI-S is a specific integration of specializations: AAI and supervision requiring extensive training, experience, and specific consultation of AAI-S in order to ensure ethical, competent practices. This represented a specific contextual lesson gleaned from the cases regarding preparation and provision of AAI-S.

Experience Lesson Learned: Influence of Supervisor Transformative Experiences

Across all three cases existed stories of witnessing the transformative nature of AAI, both from personal experiences and bearing witness to AAI-S firsthand. Significant personal human-animal relationships were a part of the developmental history for each of the three participants. Influenced by their personal experiences in healing relationships with animals, they

each charted a path toward sharing what they had learned and experienced with others. All three had been the therapist-facilitator of such human-animal interactions within AAT contexts. All three had a desire not just to engage in the provision of AAT but to deepen their professional reach in their profession by teaching and training others in AAIs.

They also described a strong commitment to promoting the advancement of research and training pertaining to AAIs. This strengthened justification for potential areas of future research and inquiry regarding specific supervision models as applied in AAI-S. Additionally, the participants reported they had each witnessed incompetence and underprepared professionals in the field engaging in AAI provision. All three remarked they were committed specifically to promoting competency with AAIs through their training endeavors.

Another commonality across cases was each participant explained feeling driven to engage in AAIs and AAI-S from personally experiencing the profound benefit they experienced from healing and development promoting engagement with HAIs. Each participant shared that they had seen the beneficial nature of AAI-S firsthand and desired to facilitate such a powerful supervision practice for trainees based on their own experiences. Each participant spent time exploring their experiences of discovery related to the potential value AAIs could bring to supervision. Their discovery came from their provision of AAI-S and, for at least one participant, from being a recipient of AAI-S.

In summary, these professionals experienced personal healing and transformation through HAI and AAIs, which influenced their motivation to (a) continue to develop their own professional competency, (b) expand professional engagement by training others in AAIs, and (c) ultimately led them to integrate AAIs within supervision. Their decision to integrate AAIs in supervision was employed as a modality to deepen supervisory impact. The Lesson Learned for

this domain of the quintain was that professionals' interest in integrating AAI-S into supervision might flow from meaningful personal experiences and lead them to seek ways to share or "pay it forward," the potential benefits with others through integration of AAI-S in supervision.

Process Lesson Learned: Experiential, Relational Container

Each of the participants spoke of their own theoretical frame of reference by explaining the potential benefits of AAI-S and the unique experiential qualities inherent in AAI-S. Particularly, each participant detailed the in vivo relational attunement and adjusting that could occur from involvement of AAI-S in supervision. The theoretical orientations discussed by the participants were different, yet had similarities. Each participant's theoretical foundation identified the importance of the relationship and relied on experiential dynamics within the tripartite human-animal supervisory relationship as a driver of awareness raising, development, and reflection. Regardless of terminology specific to their theoretical orientations, each participant discussed the importance of relational moments within the human-animal interactions and the nature of the AAI-S environment as a "container" or vessel for supervisee growth, reflection, and development. Additionally, each participant discussed the importance of intentionally and competently constructed human-animal environment in which AAI-S might best be carried out.

Rosanna's "integrationalist lens" (including Adlerian [Carlson et al., 2006], feminist [Brown, 1994], and relational cultural [Jordan, 2017] theories), Clara's "developmental constructivist" orientation (integrating solution-focused therapy [De Shazer et al., 2021], strengths-based therapy [Jones-Smith, 2013], HART [Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021], and relational depth [Mearns & Cooper, 2017]), and Martina's focus on process-experiential therapy (Elliott & Greenberg, 2007) and Relational Integrative Psychotherapy

(Finlay, 2015) possessed overlapping elements, intertwined, and emerged sharing common threads related to and providing explanation for the process transpiring in AAI-S. The relational and experiential leaning components of AAI-S acted as facilitators of supervision quality and supervisee development. These different, yet related, theoretical orientations allowed the participants to understand and plan their AAI-S to support supervisees' developmental needs. The participants each spoke of the developmental needs of supervisees and how they might negotiate their planning and implementation of AAI-S in supervision dependent on supervisee developmental needs. Although each participant named supervisee development as a focus of supervision and at times determining factor for intention of AAI-S, only one participant named a formal developmental theory (integrated developmental model; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2011). I did not interpret this to signify lack of importance of development or models to the process of supervision or to the participants. It might simply be a byproduct of that participant's specific interest in the scholarship of supervision.

How Lesson Learned: Competence, Safety, Welfare, Intention

This Lesson Learned conveyed the commonalities across cases of considerations for implementation of AAI-S. A resounding lesson echoed from each of the three case perspectives was the importance of competency when implementing AAI-S and AAI-S. Within the context of competency was a strong emphasis on the importance of safety, risk mitigation, animal and human welfare, credibility of the profession, and professionalization of AAI-S that extends to the application of AAI-S in supervision. The concentration on safety, welfare, and risk were reiterated in the literature on AAI-S (Trevathan-Minnis et al., 2021; Winkle et al., 2020). The Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies (Stewart et al., 2016) and Animal-Assisted Interventions International Standards of Practice (Winkle et al., 2022) declared practitioner

competence, issues of safety, welfare, and wellness as central to the provision of AAIs.

Participants explained that supervisors wishing to engage in the provision of AAI-S must not do so without established competency in both supervision and AAIs before attempting to integrate the two. Additionally, all three participants reported high standards and currently developing guidelines for gaining experience and competency in AAIs. Unfortunately, they also shared the concern that in their experience, there were low levels of awareness within the mental health professions of the requisite training and oversight needed for developing adequate competency in AAIs. This concern was voiced on multiple occasions from all three participants in terms of having fears about potentially well-meaning professionals engaging in AAIs in any context in ways that were incompetent and could be harmful.

Participants also discussed the importance of differentiating between types of supervision. They explained that identifying the purpose and goal of supervision at the beginning of the supervision relationship was important because it had implications for what might be involved in the supervisor's designs. This was in reference to the differences in supervision for the purpose of supervising AAT practice versus general supervision in which AAIs might be integrated to enhance the supervision process. Both organic and structured interventions were implemented depending on the needs of supervision at the time. This was regardless of the purpose for supervision. All three case participants provided insight into the nature of and impact of processing that came from naturally occurring interactions between the humans and animals involved in supervision. All three participants also articulated instances that necessitated structured interventions. At times, structured interventions were intended for the purpose of promoting supervisee self-awareness and reflection as well as facilitating experiential learning and fostering supervisee development.

Why Lesson Learned: Impact and Transferability of Animal-Assisted interventions

All three participants were emphatic that there was potential for transformative experiences for supervisees that related to their learning and development. Case participants explained that as professional facilitators of AAIs, they had experienced firsthand the transferability of AAIs from therapeutic contexts to supervision. They shared the perspective that interventions purposed for therapeutic value could transfer directly into the supervisory context. For example, across the three cases, play therapy and expressive arts were used as examples of other creative modalities that paralleled to how AAIs could be both useful and applicable to supervision. The participants shared their rationale for including expressive arts or play therapy interventions was the same for the inclusion of AAIs in supervision. Likewise, the neurobiological dynamics at work in HAIs were discussed across the cases as strong components of AAI-S that they saw driving the potential benefit for supervisees and the supervision process. They each described that the neurobiological and mammalian similarities between humans and animals established this natural extension for the transfer AAIs to supervision. Lastly, the participants explained that the goals and roles of supervision might be different for supervisees seeking a specialization.

The Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision Quintain

Stake (2006) defined the quintain as “an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied – a target, but not a bullseye” (p. 6). The quintain is that which the researcher seeks to understand and the cases are a collection of instances representing the nature of the quintain. For this research, the quintain was Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision (AAI-S). The three cases investigated for this research served as “manifestations,” as Stake would say, of the

quintain (p. 6). Thus, what is presented last for the findings of this research is the whole of the AAI-S quintain. Consider the Lessons Learned (cross case themes) as a composite picture of AAI-S, operating as a conceptual framework for explaining the essential components of AAI-S. The Lessons Learned are distilled and summarized here to bring into focus a deliverable to be used by supervision, counselor educators, researchers, counselors in training, and other mental health professionals to inform practice and guide professional developmental goals.

The foundation of the AAI-S quintain is composed of the motivations and rationale for implementing AAI-S. When responding to the overarching research question of why supervisors were integrating animal-assisted interventions in supervision, the quintain allowed readers to understand the “why” (motivations and rationale) behind implementing AAI-S. As discussed by the participants, AAI-S is a highly specialized practice born of dual competency and experience as an AAI professional and supervisory professional. Given the risks and wellness concerns innate to AAI-S, engaging in such an undertaking required a high level of commitment to professional development, training, evaluation, and oversight. Thus, there must be a compelling rationale for taking on such a rigorous professional development process. As evidenced by the participants’ stories and professional insight, AAI-S has potential for meaningful and transformative supervision experiences for supervisees with capacity for positive impact on supervisee development and the relational quality of the supervisory relationship in certain circumstances. The participants’ endorsement of AAI-S was based upon their individual transformative, meaningful experiences with HAIs on a personal level and witnessing the impact of AAIs in supervision they facilitated. Participants voiced it was the potential gains afforded by implementation of AAI-S that made the rigorous training and competency measures worthwhile.

The quintain elucidated AAI-S further by providing insight into the AAI-S experiences of supervisors (corresponding to research sub-question 1, “what are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAI-S into supervision”) and by describing the processes by which AAI-S functioned and how it was implemented (corresponding to research sub-question 2, “how are supervisors integrating AAI-S into supervision”). The participants’ experiences of AAI-S provision both underscored the rationale for implementing AAI-S as well as highlighted the personal nature and influence supervisors’ personal experiences had on their attraction to AAI-S as a modality to enhance supervision. Consistent with a primary reason for carrying out multiple case study research, readers learned from the particularities of each individual case and the commonalities across cases to gain understanding of the possible impact of AAI-S and consider the fit of such interventions for their contexts and settings (Stake, 2006).

Lastly, as connected back to research sub-question 2, two final lessons were layered upon this quintain’s foundation. These two lessons emphasized the crucial considerations for those thinking of including AAI-S into their supervision practice. First, according to the evidence brought forth by the participants in this study were social and learning processes that explained what might drive and enable AAI-S to be impactful in supervision. The social and learning processes are subsumed in a phrase I constructed to encompass the learning processes at play in AAI-S: “The Experiential, Relational Container.” This is my collective term for the theoretical frameworks the participants described as core of their understanding of the processes behind AAI-S (human-animal relational theory [HART]; Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021; relational depth [Mearns & Cooper, 2017], process-experiential therapy [Elliott & Greenberg, 2007], and relational integrative psychotherapy [Finlay, 2015]). These theories for understanding and guiding the work in AAI-S provided framing for interested supervisors,

counselor educators, researchers, counselors in training, and other mental health professionals as they consider implementing AAI-S. The main takeaway here was the capacity for relational learning and supervisee development of AAI-S might be understood through experiential and relational learning processes inherent to competently implemented AAI-S.

As an aside, these advanced theories were integrated into the theoretical foundations of matured, seasoned professionals with the cognitive complexity developed over years of professional development as AAI and supervision professionals. This further reflected the complex, interconnected nature of the tripartite relationship and likewise complex dynamics to be attended to by the supervisor, necessitating competency in both AAIs and supervision prior to attempting to integrate the two. Indeed, two of the participants reported engaging in additional supervisor training for the express purpose of integrating these two specialties while in doctoral training.

The second lesson corresponding to research sub-question 2 (“how are supervisors integrating AAIs into supervision”) had to do with perhaps the loudest message from across all three participants: AAI-S must be implemented with safety, welfare, and competency front and center. This lesson served to guide professionals in the logistics and implementation considerations for how to safely and competently carry out the practice of AAI-S. The guidelines offered in this piece of the quintain are elaborated on in greater detail in Chapter V. In short, thorough, credible training is essential to preparation in doing AAI work including knowledge and skills acquisition, appropriate attitudes toward AAIs, evaluation of the therapy team (human and animal partner), and oversight and supervision of AAIs prior to integrating AAIs into supervision. Suggestions and considerations for practice and AAI preparation are provided in Chapter V.

Summary

The findings of this collective case study were provided in this chapter. Within-case themes and cross-case themes were described according to the analysis organizational strategy with focus on context, experience, process, how, and why themes. The elements of the AAI-S quintain were provided in the final portion of this chapter. In Chapter V, discussion of the findings and framework is provided as well as limitations of the study, implications for practice, and future directions and research for this topic.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, findings from this collective case study are discussed in relation to their situatedness in the current professional literature. Specifically, the findings are discussed as “lessons learned” that constituted the quintain of AAI-S. Lessons learned were derived from within and cross-case analysis of the three cases in this collective case study.

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand the experiences and processes of supervisors who have been implementing AAI-S within the context of supervision. This research was carried out through a qualitative multiple case study design. The following research questions guided this inquiry:

- Q1 Why are supervisors integrating AAI-S into supervision?
 - Q1a What are the experiences of supervisors who have been integrating AAI-S into supervision?
 - Q1b How are supervisors integrating AAI-S into clinical supervision?

Multiple sources of data were collected across three cases representing the phenomenon of animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S). The three cases included doctoral-level supervisors each with extensive training and experience in AAI-S and supervision. Each of the participants had multiple years of AAI-S professional experience. Two were university-based and one was in private-practice only. The three participants were informants for each case and provided in-depth information about their experiences with AAI-S, the process of AAI-S, and how and why they implemented AAI-S.

The sources of data were demographic questionnaires, interviews, animal introductions, virtual tours, and documents gathered from each of the three cases. Cases were analyzed independently (within case analysis) and then in comparison to each other (across case analysis). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) was used for categorical aggregation for within case analysis and in cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). The analysis organizational strategy of “intellectual bins” (Miles et al., 2018; context, experience, process, how, and why) was used to structure data for within-case analysis. Thematic analysis was used for categorical aggregation and theme development within cases. An adapted form of thematic analysis was used to facilitate cross-case analysis that revealed lessons learned from the cases about AAI-S. These lessons learned provided a collective sense from the cases that constituted the quintain of AAI-S. Essentially, the quintain captured the image of “what is now known” about AAI-S as relevant to the purpose and research questions of this study. The discussion that follows elaborates on the conceptual framework concepts from Chapter II by integrating the knowledge from the quintain and situating it within the current professional landscape of literature and professional standards.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion begins with a review of what Stake (2006) termed a quintain or holistic representation of a phenomenon under investigation that is investigated through instrumental cases. Following is a brief review of the contexts and findings of the single cases in this study. As described earlier, each of the three single cases in this study involved participants with extensive training and experiences with AAI, supervision, and AAI-S. The first case involved AAI-S within the context of a counselor training program in a university. The second case involved AAI-S within the context of a private practice. The third case involved AAI-S within the context of an interdisciplinary training program in a university training. The participants

shared their personal experiences, the processes they saw transpiring within AAI-S, how they implemented AAI-S, and why they believed it to be productive and worthwhile for supervision. Lessons learned from the cases provided a composite image of the quintain of AAI-S (Stake, 2006). The findings, lessons learned constituting the quintain of AAI-S, are discussed in the following section with relation to the AAI and supervision concepts identified and discussed in Chapter II. Literature not presented in Chapter II is included here as it related to findings from the study.

The Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision Quintain

Stake (2006) explained that the deliverable culminating from case study research that employed multiple cases to understand a phenomenon was a quintain. He defined a quintain as “a target” to be studied using multiple cases representing a certain phenomenon (p. 6). He further described the quintain was what researchers sought to understand that could be accessed through investigation of “sites or manifestations” of that which is sought to be understood (p. 6). For the current study, it was through single instrumental cases of AAI-S that we began to understand the quintain of AAI-S. Understanding AAI-S as its entirety through a qualitative multiple case study approach allowed potential audience members (e.g., counselors, counselor educators, mental health clinicians, clinical supervisors, counselor-in-training, etc.) to have a holistic account of what was involved in AAI-S, potential benefits, and considerations for implementation.

Miles et al. (2018) explained that one possible outcome of case study research was the development of a conceptual framework to make meaning of the data. This involved analysis of the data into patterns, categories, or themes and “moving up progressively from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape” (p. 292). These influential authors of qualitative analysis methodology and analysis methods advocated for moving from the

particulars to the abstract by aiming to develop some kind of conceptual or theoretical coherence “that can account for the how and why of the phenomenal under study” (p. 292). Through general thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), they explained that the researcher moves through a process of “establishing the discrete findings, relating the findings to each other, naming the patterns, and identifying the corresponding constructs” (p. 293).

Culminating from the investigation of the three cases representing AAI-S was an elaboration of the concepts presented in Chapter II that aimed to provide a holistic representation of AAI-S. Assertions made grounded in the AAI-S quintain are presented as lessons learned. The structure of lessons learned is presented in the same order of the components (intellectual bins; Miles et al., 2018) of the analysis organizational strategy discussed in Chapter III and themes in Chapter IV. The lessons discussed next are (a) Context Lesson Learned: Context Conducive to Provision of AAI-S; (b) Experience Lesson Learned: Supervisor Transformative Experiences; (c) Process Lesson Learned: Experiential, Relational Container, (d) How Lesson Learned: Competence, Safety, Welfare, Intention; and (e) Why Lesson Learned: Impact and Transferability of AAI-S.

Context Lesson Learned: Context Conducive to Provision of Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision

The lessons learned about contexts conducive to provision of AAI-S provided important information to those interested in implementing AAI-S. Unique and common circumstances across cases identified certain considerations and supports that might need to exist in order to effectively and safely implement AAI-S. Two cases existed in academic, university settings. Both had enormous administrative and collegial support and infrastructure allowing AAI-S and training of AAI-S at the graduate level. Although the emphasis in both cases was on the training programs for AAI-S, the institutional support and infrastructure allowed for the participant’s

creative and innovative integration of AAIs into their clinical supervision. In one case, the provision of AAIs extended to classroom teaching in non-AAI specific courses and extended into advising sessions. That particular case, Case 1, also allowed for an animal partner (Pooka, the rabbit) to live on the premises and have wandering privileges in the departmental vicinity of the participant's office. Such supports at the institutional level are imperative to these cases functioning and safe, competent implementation of AAI-S. In the existing literature, this type and amount of support was in alignment with recommendations for the setting and environment for AAIs as described in the Animals Assisted Interventions International (AII) *Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022).

A consideration in the realms of contexts conducive to implementation of AAI-S and how to implement AAI-S is programmatic and organizational support and practices. One leader in the AAI field is the AII organization, which outlined *Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022) specific for members of their organization for integration of AAIs. The AII is specific to AAIs including dogs only. They outline explicit expectations for implementation of AAI programs. Such expectations serve to guide development of programs and identify best practices for carrying out programs. For example, the AII *Standards of Practice* describe what is “considered a minimum of what is required to conduct different AAI program for AII members” (Winkle et al., 2022, p. 4). While the AII has these expectations for AII members (individuals and programs), it is a current gold standard in the field of AAIs and should be recognized as a guidepost for those considering personal and programmatic development. For example, if an institution or agency wanted to develop a program that integrates AAIs into educational, clinical, or supervision services, the AII standards were \ designed for administration of such programs including program structure, complaints policy, safe working

environment, image protection, confidentiality measures, insurance management, navigating operations partners, marketing and fundraising (Winkle et al., 2022). These expectations are in the interest of practitioner and animal wellness. Standards apply to members, member organizations, volunteers, staff, and anyone participating/facilitating programming. Other standards areas included ethical treatment and welfare of participants, standards of practice for dog handlers and the support of dogs, and standards of practice for the health, welfare, wellbeing and training of dogs. Standards of practice for specific types of AAI (activities, education, therapy) are also provided. The AAI is an example of the efforts being made nationally in the United States and internationally to promote competency and standards of practice to ensure safety and welfare of those involved.

In addition to institutional and organizational support, Roseanna and Martina expressed having support from colleagues and administrative staff. Having the backing from colleagues and staff allowed the programs to have a united front when it came to fidelity and protection of policies, procedures, and safety. Similarly, but from a very different context, Case 2 revealed the benefit of a specifically chosen environment (sole ownership of a private practice) on implementing AAI and AAI-S. In Clara's case, she had the buy-in and support of her family and colleagues for facilitating AAI in a home-work context. Further, the environment of Clara's case was conducive to AAI and AAI-S because it was embedded in the natural environment. This was a value of Clara's specifically nature-based therapy underpinned by her theoretical foundations (Harper et al., 2019).

Another commonality of the cases that yielded an important implication was these participants' history of extensive training and experience with AAI, supervision, and the integration of AAI and supervision. For example, all three were doctoral-level counselor

supervisors with a range of 7 to 25 years of experience with AAIs and counseling and 7 to 10 years of experiences specific to AAI-S. This was in alignment with ethical guidance in the American Counseling Association's (ACA, 2014, Section C) *Code of Ethics* as well as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes outlined in the animal-assisted therapy in counseling (AAT-C) competencies (Stewart et al., 2016). The AAT-C competencies specifically stated that practitioners needed the following: (a) knowledge—formal AAT-C training, in-depth animal knowledge, knowledge of existing ethical requirements; (b) skills—mastery of basic counseling skills, intentionality, specialized skill set; and (c) attitudes—animal advocacy, professional development, and professional values. These should form the foundation for pursuing AAI professional development and should already be well established prior to integrating AAIs into supervision. Additionally, the participants for this study completed formal supervision training and recommended that future AAI-S professionals should have supervision training and experience. This aligned with the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision's (ACES, 2011) *Best Practices in Clinical Supervision*, specifically section 12 (Supervisor Preparation: Supervision Training and Supervision of Supervision), which outlines training expectations for the development of supervision training programs. The participants explicitly recommended that future practitioners considering implementing AAI-S needed to have competency in both supervision and AAI separately as well as supervised and overseen AAI-S integration. Thus, a contextual lesson found in this study was when implemented competently and under certain circumstances, AAI-S could be an effective additive to supervision. The essential takeaway for readers was access to the potentially powerful nature of AAI-S must be implemented competently and with a great deal of experience in both supervision, AAIs, and AAI-S integration.

Experience Lesson Learned: Supervisor Transformative Experiences

Each participant expressed having had transformative experiences with human-animal interactions (HAIs) and AAIs, both professionally and personally. They had witnessed the powerful potential of AAIs in their personal lives and seen the movement and enhancement of supervision when AAIs were integrated. Based on the findings of this study, collective understanding of AAI-S was that professionals and supervisors might be drawn to AAIs based on similar experiences. As the participants were drawn to AAIs through personal experiences with animals, so might other professionals be drawn to AAIs due to a love for nature and animals and likewise wish to integrate AAIs into clinical and supervisory work as these participants did. An important caveat, though, was well intended professionals might be drawn to integrate AAIs based on personal experiences but forego the necessary training and unintentionally under-prepare for this integration of separate specializations.

Supervisors might position themselves to train and supervise others because they know the value AAIs have in supervision. They might actively integrate AAIs to promote the quality of supervision and supervisee development. To adequately implement AAI-S, a supervisor must do so with a high degree of competency (in supervision and AAIs) and actively take measures for the safety and welfare of all beings involved (Fine et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2016; Winkle et al., 2022).

Personal experiences shape and influence individuals' choices and directions. This is true of career choices and development of professional identity. Useful qualities in supervision could emerge from the meaning made of personal experiences in supervisors' lives that could impact supervision relationships and processes (Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Nassif et al., 2010). The participants of the three cases indicated they all had had personal experiences that drew them to

become trainers and supervisors of clinical mental health professionals with specific emphasis on AAI-s. Clearly, the supervisor participants in this study were influenced to share what they perceived to be a valuable impact on the supervision experience and process.

An interesting and relevant dynamic was provided in an article entitled “Am I Doing Expressive Arts Therapy or Creativity in Counseling?” (Rosen & Atkins, 2014). These authors shared their dialogue about “definitions, theoretical frameworks, and ethical considerations of using the arts in counseling” (p. 293). In their conversations, Rosen discussed her initial attraction to expressive arts and desire to integrate such techniques into their clinical work. Her interest in such techniques stemmed from personal enjoyment of art and creative expression (dance, writing, etc.). These activities had long been helpful to her in her personal life, intuitively understanding the benefit of these practices. Her integration of these practices personally and with clients remained intuitive, based on personal experience, and guided by previous training in Gestalt therapy and trauma-informed counseling. However, she discovered a discipline called expressive arts therapy in which the practices she had been using in her clinical practice were associated with specialized training and guidelines. Thus began a reflective journey and consultation relationship with her colleague (Atkins). As they discussed, Rosen began to question whether she was implementing expressive arts or engaging in creativity in counseling. Further, in reflecting upon these distinctions, she identified that either way, she was subject to expectations of competency as outlined in the ACA’s (2014, Section C.2) *Code of Ethics* regarding professional competence in specialty areas. In light of this realization, Rosen worried that perhaps she had not been as ethical as she imagined herself to be in her integration of arts and creativity. Atkins responded sharing about her attraction to creativity and expressive arts, which was likewise from personal experiences growing up, and that she too had integrated arts

(poetry) into therapeutic activities with clients naturally. Both authors explained they had had personal experiences drawing them to specialized practices and ultimately sought out appropriate training and guidance for developing competency with these areas.

Rosen and Atkins' (2014) stories were not dissimilar to those of the participants. What I believed to be the important take-away from this dynamic, in which professionals might be drawn to unique techniques and practices based on personal lived-experiences, was there appeared to be a "normal" and perhaps common occurrence in the professional counseling field. The implication of this was professionals need to be wary of their own possible naivety in a desire to integrate personally exciting and novel interventions and techniques into clinical practice. These specializations should be recognized as potentially having more idiosyncratic nature and thus require additional training. The possible dangers of such professional naivety were seen in Schlau's (2017) article, "Bring Your Pet to Work Day: What Animal Assisted Therapy Is Not." Schalu explained the risk, liability, and welfare issues endemic to partnering with an animal in AAIs, which she said could exponentially increase when an unqualified professional brought a pet to the workplace or attempted to implement AAIs without specialized preparation and experience.

The participants' personal experiences with animals influenced their self-selection into professional training and development, allowing them to competently implement AAIs and AAI-S. Given the rapidly growing field of AAIs (Fine et al., 2019), it is likely many professionals might consider bringing their dog to work as Schlau suggested. Thus, it remains important to amplify the necessary considerations and competency required to engage in these interventions with an animal partner. This increase in complexity when integrated into supervision, which

contains many moving parts, requires a multiplicity of awareness on multiple entities in the tripartite AAI relationship.

Process Lesson Learned: Experiential, Relational Container

According to the findings of this study, AAI-S established an experiential, relational learning environment. Participants discussed AAI-S as a social laboratory for counselors-in-training (CITs) to experiment with personal awareness and behavioral modulation (of themselves) with immediate feedback from the animal partner. Counselors-in-training might have the opportunity to feel at ease and have a greater sense of trust when animals are involved, thereby increasing likelihood of perceiving a sound supervisory working alliance (SWA; Bordin, 1983; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2016). Authors established that a CIT's ability to practice in a low-pressure environment with immediate, congruent, and authentic feedback could promote supervisee development (Calvert et al., 2016; Meola et al., 2020). Participants understood the mechanisms responsible for these benefits through a variety of relational, experiential, and developmental frameworks.

Each participant shared a guiding theoretical perspective for inclusion of AAIs in clinical work and AAI-S. The theories also explained for the participants how AAI-S functioned. One theoretical framework discussed by two participants as a core to their AAI and AAI-S work was the human-animal relational theory (HART; Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021). Chandler (2017, 2018) developed a theoretical framework for understanding how the human-animal bond, human-animal interactions, and AAIs functioned together to present moments for change, relational depth, and growth in therapeutic contexts. The HART provided a framework for understanding and operationalizing relational and spontaneous HAIs that emerged in clinical applications of AAIs. The HART guided the practice of AAT-C and recently had validation and

increased credibility through a constructivist, grounded theory study (Otting & Chandler, 2021). Otting and Chandler (2021) explained that in the HART framework, "the therapy animal is recognized as a therapeutic catalyst in the primary roles of nurturer and emotional distress detector for human participants in counseling" (p. 1). The animal role was facilitated through naturally occurring mammalian social stress responses (Odendaal & Meintjes, 2003) that provided immediate and authentic feedback and "grist for the mill" as Clara said of AAI-S in her interview, for clients, and, in the case of AAI-S, for supervisees.

Through what Chandler (2017, 2018) termed relational moments, human and animal interactions could spurn therapeutic dynamics, which are then highlighted and processed by the qualified professional. Two participants reported reference to HART as a guide for understanding the happenings in AAI-S as well as operationalizing AAI-S for training purposes. The other participant reported use of different theoretical models central to her understanding of AAI-S and AAI-S. Martina reported her theoretical frame for AAI-S and AAI-S was established from process experiential therapy (Elliott & Greenberg, 2007) and relational integrative psychotherapy (Finlay, 2015). Martina described both approaches as foundational to conducting AAI and AAI-S for her. A central tenet she drew from these approaches was the idea that the therapist creates a "container" or in the case of AAI-S, the supervisor creates this container, which then provides the venue to the social laboratory of the tripartite relationship in AAI-S. Parish-Plass and Oren (2013) discussed the animal partner as representing one of three points on a triangle in animal-assisted psychotherapy. In their view, the animal partner acted as a relational medium for facilitating client self-awareness. If this dynamic is translated to the supervision realm, the animal partner becomes a facilitating element in the supervisory triad. For Martina, creating the container including an animal partner she was highly bonded with allowed an

amplification of the clients or supervisees' behaviors, which she could highlight and discuss with the supervisee.

How Lesson Learned: Competence, Safety, Welfare, Intention

Lessons learned about AAI-S regarding how it should be implemented involved attention to the competent and intentional practice of both AAIs and supervision. Competent and intentional application of AAI-S involves ensuring animal and human welfare and wellbeing including particular attention to and mitigation of risks and safety concerns endemic to practices involving animals. To illustrate this point, consider a point of comparison. If a supervisor wishes to integrate play therapy or expressive art techniques in clinical supervision, they could easily do so after reading articles and attending workshops that provide at least a foundation to begin adding such interventions into supervision. In doing so, they should also seek appropriate supervision and consultation as indicated in the ACA's (2014) *Code of Ethics*. Integrating these types of interventions carries relatively low risk and may require some additional items such as a sand tray or art materials. However, unlike play therapy and expressive art interventions, AAIs carry inherent risks and wellbeing concerns beyond understanding the projective and interpersonal dynamics at play with play or expressive art techniques. For example, risks associated with involving animals in any setting, but particularly in AAI implementation, could include risk of injury to a human or animal (e.g., bites, scratches, zoonosis; Fine & Griffin, 2022). Thus, implementation of AAI-S requires extensive history of training and experience (Stewart et al., 2016; Winkle et al., 2022).

Section C (Professional Responsibility) of the ACA's (2014) *Code of Ethics* outlines very clear expectations around professional competency. As Myers (1992) pointed out, professional counselors must demonstrate competencies in general areas of counseling as well as in areas of

specialization. This was reflected in Section C of the ACA's *Code of Ethics*, both the Boundaries of Competence (C.2.a.) and New Specialty Areas of Practice (C.2.b.). Specifically, regarding specialty areas of practice,

Counselors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervised experience. While developing skills in new specialty areas, counselors take steps to ensure the competence of their work and protect others from possible harm. (ACA, 2014, C.2.b.)

Monitoring Effectiveness (ACA, 2014, C.2.d.) extended this requirement to affirm competency in general and specialty areas through self-monitoring of professional efficacy and seeking supervision consultation when improvement was needed. Since AAI is a specialization area, it is imperative and ethically sound to seek appropriate training, education, and supervision of practices involving this specialization. Further, AAI-S involved an integration of two specialization areas: AAI and supervision. Thus, competency of both specialty areas should be ensured through education, training, and supervision measures.

For AAIs, the current gold-standard for standards of practice was found in the recently revised Animals Assisted Interventions International (AAII) *Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022). The AAII *Standards and Competencies* expanded upon the *Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies* (Stewart et al., 2016) adopted by the ACA (2014). Competency regarding AAIs in the clinical mental health field is a current issue that is rapidly evolving. In 2016, Stewart et al. published the first set of competencies in the mental health field specific to animal assisted therapy. Adapting the competencies for an international audience, AAII began developing the competencies and standard practice. This international interdisciplinary workgroup sought to meet a crisis in the field regarding inconsistent terminology, inconsistent

standards, and absence of guidance for professionals partnering with animals. Now in its fourth revision, standards now exist for the administration of animal assisted programs, ethical treatment and welfare of participants human participants, standards for handlers working with dogs, standards for health welfare well-being of training dogs. In addition to these foundations, there were nine categories of specific animal assisted interventions approaches. The standards also included an adaptation of the Stewart et al. (2016) competences for including benchmarks for entry level, intermediate, advanced, and expert level animal assisted interventionist. They also had a glossary of terms aimed at standardizing terminology aimed at creating a universal language for discussing AAIs. Following suit, in 2019, the human animal interaction section (13 of division 17) of the American Psychological Association (Kogan et al., 2019) presented their competences and ethics for animal assisted intervention. With clear health, safety, client, and animal welfare issues at stake, ensuring supervisor competency in AAIs was essential.

Beyond the complexities of integrating AAIs alone, there is a second layer of complexity because of the nature of supervision. Essentially, the practicing AAI-S professional is integrating two stand-alone specializations. Tracking all of the moving pieces requires a great deal of practice and competency for both realms. Borders et al. (2014) explained that competencies for clinical and best practices define knowledge base and expectations for supervisors' roles in counseling development, ethics, and gatekeeping. She continued, in her review of best practices for supervision and effective supervision practice, to describe that supervisors develop competency over time and through specified training programs. Indeed, many professional entities, such as state licensing boards for counselors, recognize supervision as a separate professional designation from the profession of counseling and the need for specific training and competency to operate as a supervisor (Center for Credentialing and Education, n.d.). Although

it is well established that professionals supervising other professionals or professionals-in-training should engage in specialized training and gain experience in supervision, little was documented about competency when integrating specialized techniques into supervision. Play therapy supervision literature might offer some guidance in that there was a great deal of content and numerous proposed models for supervision of play therapy and training supervisors of play therapy (Donald et al., 2015; Ray, 2004).

Stewart et al. (2015) reminded readers, “Although AAT-C may offer professional counselors and supervisors with a flexible and beneficial modality for enhancing their practice, it is important to note that AAT-C is not appropriate for every client, supervisee, or setting” (p. 8). Findings from this study affirmed this recommendation. Each of the participants reported that part of ethical and welfare-minded approaches to including AAI in clinical or supervision sessions must consider fitness of the client, supervisee, and setting for inclusion of AAI. I thought Clara’s explanation of why she chose to move her private practice to an environment was more conducive to inclusion of animals in her clinical and supervision practices. Additionally, appropriateness and safety of the animal and human consumer of AAI was echoed in both the AAT-C Competencies (Stewart et al., 2016) and AAI *Standards of Practice* (Winkle et al., 2022), which were reiterated across all three cases by participants. Considerations are presented in the implications section of this chapter for implementation of AAI-S with respect to the findings of this study.

Why Lesson Learned: Impact and Transferability of Animal-Assisted Activities

All three of the supervisor participants in the study viewed AAI-S as providing unique impacts for supervisee learning and development. In short, there seemed to be a resounding

message across the participants that AAI-S is a compelling, novel, productive additive to supervision. There was a focus across the cases on the potential positive impact of AAI-S and the transferability of AAI-S from the counseling context to the supervisory context. In particular, participants identified elements of the supervisory working alliance (SWA; Bordin, 1983) as being impacted positively by the integration of AAI-S in supervision. All three participants reported experiencing increased trust and bond in the supervisory relationship in AAI-S. For example, Roseanna said she believed

a lot of the same benefits to the counseling process that the literature shows about animal-assisted therapy, I see show up in supervision. It helps facilitate the relationship with me. I get to model to the supervisee and develop trust in a proxy way because of my relationships with my animal partners. That allows me to gain credibility more than just by talk or through my informed consent. Animals don't fake responses. The way they respond to me has been developed and it is a pattern that the supervisee recognizes and can trust.

The other participants shared similar observations about elements of the SWA such as experiencing supervisees to have greater ease with vulnerability, which might reflect trust and bond in the SWA. Likewise, for some supervisees, engaging in AAI-S seemed to have a relationship with goals and collaboration in supervision. However, it is important to note that supervisees specifically sought supervision where AAI-S was a primary supervisory practice in instances where they wanted to learn the craft of AAI-S. Thus, strong SWA specific to goals and collaboration could be more so related to supervisees engagement in AAI-S because of their intention to learn AAI-S.

Another factor relevant to SWA is the effect on supervisee disclosures (Mehr et al., 2010). When supervisees perceive supervision as a positive experience (SWA), research indicated that satisfaction with supervision (Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002) increased supervisee disclosures (Mehr et al., 2010), and improved coping with stress (Gnilka et al., 2012). On the other hand, when supervisees perceived poor trust, low power, and non-collaboration in supervision, they reported lower levels of SWA (Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002) and also experienced high anxiety and reluctance to make disclosures in supervision (Mehr et al., 2010). Thus, supervisees who perceived the supervisory relationship as negative, threatening, or unsupportive would be reticent to engage in vulnerability and openness required for development and growth through supervision (Mehr et al., 2010; Ramos-Sánchez et al., 2002).

When competently implemented under certain circumstances, integration of AAIs into therapeutic processes might facilitate a sense of warmth, trust, and acceptance of the professional (Reichert, 1998). This was congruent with the suggestions by Stewart et al. (2015) and Owenby (2017) that AAIs might facilitate elements that strengthened the SWA. The findings of this study aligned with this theoretical proposition. Participants of this study reported experiencing stronger supervisory relationships and decreased difficulty in managing supervisee stress and anxiety. They also shared they experienced greater ease in establishing initial working relationships with supervisees when animals were involved (AAI-S). Another important consideration supporting the inclusion of AAIs in supervision was the possibility for addressing supervisees' individual personality differences (Newgent et al., 2005) and individual diversity needs (Sheade & Chandler, 2014). This was reiterated by Stewart et al. (2013) who identified that mental health professionals who included AAIs in counseling experienced enhanced therapeutic processes "beyond process in ways that are beyond the scope of traditional counselor-client relationships"

(Stewart et al., 2015, p. 3). The experiences of the participants supported this view in the context of supervision, particularly the ability to broach difficult or uncomfortable topics. Kruger and Serpell (2010) affirmed that accessing difficult topics when animals were involved in therapeutic situations could be a product of the ability to engage in appropriate therapeutic touch with the animal and the otherwise enhanced core conditions of therapy. Additionally, Stewart et al. (2015) asserted that such factors present because of the animals' presence would stimulate processing in supervision and animals' spontaneous behaviors could allow for authentic reactions and broaching hard subjects with more felt safety: "In this way, a counseling technique that positively impacts the therapeutic alliance (such as Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling) could have been transferrable to the supervisory working alliance" (p. 7). These authors also suggested inclusion of AAIs in supervision "offers supervisors and counselor educators with a potential strategy to encourage the practice of self-care strategies and burnout prevention" (p. 7). These authors' suggestion about self-care and burnout prevention was resonant of the participants' examples of engaging in nature-based activities that promoted mindfulness.

Possible explanations for the influence of AAIs on SWA could have to do with the neurobiological systems engaged in AAI circumstances. Human-animal interactions and AAIs were identified to have positive neurobiological, physiological, and psychological effects such as decreasing cortisol and blood pressure, indicating reduction in stress as well as promoting positive mood and increased sense of calm (Beetz, 2017; Chandler, 2017, 2018). Additionally, animals have been said to be social lubricants (Fine, 2019b), allowing for enhanced therapeutic alliance and promoting positive interactions (Bleiberg et al., 2005). As such, it was clear to see why previous authors (Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015) suggested incorporation of AAIs into

supervision for the purpose of supporting and enhancing the SWA. A closer look at suggested impact of AAI's on the therapeutic alliance and transfer to the SWA follows.

The SWA is a long-standing guide and considered a crucial component to successful supervision (Watkins, 2014). Further, it has been established that the SWA (Bordin, 1983) is a pan-theoretical conceptualization of the working relationship between supervisor and supervisee analogous to the therapeutic working alliance (Bordin, 1979). Tedeschi et al. (2019) and Parish-Plass (2018) discussed the possibility of early therapeutic alliance establishment when AAI's were involved. Importantly, Parish-Plass' (2018) study, examining the effect of animal-assisted psychotherapy (considered for the purposes of this study as subsumed under the umbrella of AAI's) and establishment of therapeutic alliance among children in residential care with a history of maltreatment in Israel, found evidence that therapeutic alliance might be established earlier and in some cases maintained throughout the therapeutic relationship more readily when animal-assisted psychotherapy was involved when compared to the control group (play therapy with no animal involvement). The implications for therapeutic alliance improvement were reinforced by Wesley et al.'s (2009) finding that there was a more positive feeling about the therapeutic alliance when a therapy dog was involved in treatment.

Authors asserted (Parish-Plass, 2018; Tedeschi et al., 2019) the positive impact on therapeutic alliance might be explained by scientific research that indicated an increase in oxytocin in humans when animals were present (Odendaal & Meintjes, 2003). Specifically, increased oxytocin was found responsible for development of trust (Theodoridou et al., 2009), social affiliation (Carter, 1998), and management of anxiety and stress (Heinrichs et al., 2003). This was especially relevant to processes in supervision such as the SWA (Bordin, 1983). Parish-Plass (2018) extended this further by connecting the research on oxytocin and presence of

animals with Porges' (2011) polyvagal theory through which human and animal stress response systems perceived signals of safety or threat. As discussed in Chapter II, Porges' polyvagal theory might have important implications for the SWA and be relevant to issues of enhancing trust and relational safety in supervision. Positive implications found in recent research (Parish-Plass, 2018; Wesley et al., 2009) on AAI-S and TWA might have implications for the SWA.

A final discussion point regarding the compelling nature of AAI-S has to do with the potential impact AAI-S might have on wellness for both supervisee and supervisor. An important goal of supervision relates to wellness of the professionals involved. Gatekeeping, counselor development, and other ethical concerns are central to the function of supervision across the career developmental lifespan (Stoltenberg et al., 1994). Burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue plague mental health professionals and health care workers as occupational hazards requiring particular attention among gatekeepers such as counselor educators and supervisors (Tyre et al., 2016). The ACA's (2014) *Code of Ethics* contained multiple references to ethical obligation that counselors monitor their own professional effectiveness, seek assistance (e.g., supervision, treatment) for problems that impair professional performance, and evaluate for impairment of those under their supervision. Highlighting this important role of supervision, Sommer (2008) discussed the intersection of vicarious trauma and supervision and provided suggestions for trauma-sensitive supervision. Therefore, an important consideration is the potential of AAI-S to support wellness and offer protective factors among professionals. There might be support for AAI-S to support wellness by enhancing the SWA.

For instance, Williams et al. (2012) investigated vicarious trauma, history of childhood trauma, and SWA. Results indicated that development of a strong SWA might protect professionals' experience of vicarious trauma. These authors suggested that forming a close

SWA with a supervisor might aid in establishing a supportive context in which processing and exploration of personal reactions could unfold. Particularly in the case of the human-animal relational theory (Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021), relational experiences and processing are central components to the work in AAT-C, which has analogous implications for HART applied within the supervisory context (AAI-S).

One promising indicator of the protective value of interactions with animals was found in Casey et al.'s (2018) qualitative study of staff in a residential care facility for seniors. Long-term care workers frequently experience high levels of stress and burnout (Woodhead et al., 2016). These authors found participants expressed positive mental health and regard for the work environment when AAIs were implemented onsite. Casey et al. reported, "The majority of respondents found the animals had a positive impact on the affect and behavior of residents, indirectly... creating a more positive work environment" (p. 1241). These authors noted this might suggest AAIs could have a positive effect on workplace stress and burnout. They recommended further research to determine this relationship; yet, this indicated a possible hopeful role for AAIs in protecting against burnout and occupational stress. More recently, Acquadro Maran et al. (2022) completed a systematic review of the literature investigating AAIs' impact on healthcare workers' psychological health. Results confirmed previously articulated benefits such as reduction in cortisol, improved sense of well-being, improved mood, and, importantly, reduction in "burnout syndrome." In another important outcome of their review, Acquadro Maran et al. found "other benefits of AAI in healthcare workers [that] relate to the areas of relationships and interpersonal communication, such that their empathy towards colleagues and patients may increase" (p. 10). This was significant in relation to the context of the current study as related to SWA and goals of supervision.

Implications

There are several implications to examine from the present study. First, this study provided a much-needed initial foundation for understanding AAI-S. In the pilot study I completed, the participating supervisor reported they had not considered integrating the AAI's into the supervision practices they carried out even though they had been practicing AAI's for approximately 20 years. Having the existence, experiences, and processes documented might serve to inform professionals of the potential benefits of AAI-S and guide professionals to consider the requisite preparation activities for application of AAI's. This research amplified the specific competency and implementation considerations for providing AAI-S. Agencies, organizations, and academic institutions involved in provision of AAT and AAI services might find inspiration to develop pathways for AAI-S in their settings. Lastly, future research might utilize this study as support for further investigation into the impact of AAI-S in supervision and the qualities AAI's bring to the learning environment.

Another important implication of the current study was the potential benefit AAI-S might have for the SWA (Bordin, 1983; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). A SWA is important to efficacy of supervision and AAI-S; it might have a protective quality factor for burnout, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance trust in supervision. Establishing a theoretical guide for AAI-S might be a potential next step in this research agenda. Parish-Plass' (2018) discussion of oxytocin and implications of polyvagal theory, discussed earlier in the discussion section, was in alignment with Chandler's human-animal relational theory (2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021). The HART was established on the premises of mammalian stress and safety response systems. Chandler suggested the significant human and animal relational moments that take place within animal assisted therapy and counseling (AAT-C) play upon and function in part

because of these neurobiological systems. Chandler built upon this neurobiological foundation with a framework that operationalized specific actions taking place in the tripartite AAT-C relationship including guidance for how professionals might recognize and process human-animal interactions that transpire in that context. As is addressed in the future research section, HART might provide a possible guide for AAI-S when applied in the supervisory context. This statement should be investigated further.

Another implication of the current study related to larger standards of practice issues endemic to AAI-S. This research revealed the intricate intersection of two specializations that require definition of practice and competency as a blended intervention. Therefore, it is important to understand how the complexities of the integration of AAI-S and supervision intersect and if there are issues particular to the provision of AAI-S that imply need for specialized training, protocols, or other specific consideration for ensuring the competency of a dual specialization. Relatedly, the issue of informed consent and supervisor disclosure statements came up in the implications of this research. With the nature of supervision as a gatekeeping, evaluative, hierarchical professional activity standard in the health professions, ensuring safety of the public and oneself was essential. This was complicated when animals were added to the liability concerns inherent to supervision. Policies and oversight might need to be developed to protect both supervisees, their animal partners, the supervisees, and the public. Perhaps such standards could be made at institutional levels; however, they certainly need to be addressed by individual practitioners for the purpose of explicit informed consent to supervisees of the risks, benefits, and expectations of AAI-S.

Supervisors must have awareness of the essential elements of training and professional competency requisite for implementing AAI-S. Based on the current study and the extant

Standards of Practice and Competencies for AAT-C (Stewart et al., 2016; Winkle et al., 2022), there are six primary recommendations for professionals interested in implementing AAI-S.

First, professionals need to evaluate the cost versus benefit of implementing AAI-S.

Professionals might find this approach to supervision compelling for a variety of reasons; yet, the implementation of AAI-S is costly in terms of time and finances. Time and financial costs come in the form of preparation for AAI-S and supervision, both of which could be financially burdensome. The remaining recommendations did not attend to preparation for supervision as that was beyond the scope of this research. Many state licensing boards have requirements for preparation to provide supervision and it is recommended that professionals follow those guidelines as applicable to individual region and professional. I do recommend that those professionals interested in engaging in AAI-S complete requisite training supervision and adhere to the ACA's (2014) *Code of Ethics* regarding specializations, the *Best Practices in Clinical Supervision* (ACES, 2011), and the *Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors* (ACES, 1995) (or other professions' ethical, best practices, and guidelines for clinical supervision).

Animal-assisted interventions are implemented with a companion animal. Professionals should seek out guidance from training and credentialing bodies such as Pet Partners (2016), though there are other regional programs such as Intermountain Therapy Animals (n.d.) individuals might wish to investigate. A common misconception by individuals interested in providing AAI-S is the animal is trained to do therapy or the animal must undergo special training to perform AAI-S. This is incorrect. The animal partner typically does need to meet basic obedience standards and be evaluated for fit by a registered evaluator; the training is for the human part of the AAI provision (Pet Partners, 2016). Training with Pet Partners, for example, situates a therapy animal team to volunteer in a variety of settings. Beginning by developing an

orientation to such activities is a great way to start in this field and procure the initial foundations of training to move forward with therapeutic applications of AAI.

Additionally, professionals should consider if they have the space, time, and financial resources to adequately support implementation of AAI-S. Animal-assisted intervention preparation involves establishing adequate infrastructure for an animal partner (setting, support of the animal's presence, appropriate informed consent, etc.), completion of training for AAIs, and supervision of AAIs practices as experience is developed. Upon determining readiness for moving forward, professionals should seek further appropriate professional training in AAIs. Such trainings could be found in university settings and on occasion as non-academic organizations specializing in training of AAI in the context of counseling. Professionals should investigate websites and review what training is involved. Any professional seeking to implement AAIs or AAI-S should become familiar with the professional competencies of their profession regarding AAIs as well as the *AAI Standards and Competencies* (Winkle et al., 2022). For the American Counseling Association, the competencies are the *Animal-Assisted Therapy in Counseling Competencies* (Stewart et al., 2016). For the American Psychological Association, the competencies are the *Animal-Assisted Interventions: Competencies and Ethics for Section 13 or Division 17 (Human-Animal Interactions Ethics Workgroup, n.d.)*.

Completing formal training in AAIs is an important step in preparation for implementing AAI-S but it is not the final step. Based on this study, I recommend that professionals also engage in supervision and consultation with other professionals providing AAI-S during their development of AAI-S integration. This is analogous to beginning supervisors engaging in supervision of supervision (Bjornestad et al., 2014; Dye & Borders, 1990). Another potential measure professionals might take to ensure competent practice is to hold credentials that reflect

adequate preparation and experience. Following the conclusion of data collection during the write up of this study, the Association of Animal-Assisted Intervention Professionals (AAAI-P, n.d.) launched a credential program. Membership with AAAIP and obtaining credentialing (certified AAAI-P) offers the same benefits and recognition of competency as any other recognized professional specialty credential such as registered play therapist (Association for Play Therapy, 2019). Obtaining the certified AAAI-P credential includes AAAIP course completion and successful passing of an examination. Such credentialing is somewhat analogous to becoming a registered play therapist in that once verification of training is accomplished, certain rights and privileges are associated with such credentialing. However, the certified AAAI-P goes a step further in attempting to verify competence through examination. Lastly, professionals seeking to implement AAI-S need to thoughtfully consider informed consent, supervisory disclosure statements, liability, and institutional support for their AAI practices involving supervision.

Limitations

Several limitations need to be outlined before delving into the discussion of the results. The participants for this study were highly interested and invested in this research. They each brought forth important insight about AAIs in supervision. A possible by-product of participant interest and investment in this research was they might have had bias about the phenomena they reported on during data collection. There might also have been an element of self-selection bias at play in this study. For example, as practitioners of AAIs, they could have had such strong favor for AAIs that they experienced or reported disproportionate benefits and potential. Although, in theory, this could be the case for any specialization in which a practitioner could theoretically view that specialization more favorably than others. Even so, it was this very

interest and investment in the research and AAI that made these participants potent informants of the phenomena of interest, which revealed highly congruent, unanimous sentiments among participants. This affirmed, to a degree, the validity of the issues, beliefs, and experiences of the participants. Yet, understanding could be enhanced through inclusion of more diversity in professional identity, practice setting/focus, and professional level (master's level versus doctoral-level).

A second limitation was the participants were highly similar, leaving little variation of identity and education level, which restricted representation of larger mental health professional communities. The participants' demographics were concentrated in terms of age, gender identity, and professional and educational backgrounds. Of particular concern was the concentration of educational and career development backgrounds of these participants. This could limit generalization to professionals without doctoral degrees, those at earlier points in their careers, and those in non-academic settings. Additionally, although the participants could speak to private practice settings and academic settings for application of AAI-S, there remained a gap in understanding possible differences or considerations for application in other settings such as agencies, hospitals, and schools. Additionally, professionals with doctoral degrees might be specifically situated to develop training programming, obtain institutional buy-in, have skills for attaining grant-funding, or have other resources specific to academic environments and academic networks.

Additionally, a consequence of doctoral-level education is one might have the opportunity and/or access to specialization and advanced clinical training from their doctoral program that a master's-level professional might not have. An example of this was found in counselor education doctoral programs where supervision training was a central piece of the educational goal for the

degree. There might also be an emphasis on additional clinical training in counselor education doctoral programs. As such, a master's-level professional might have to seek out multiple training opportunities (i.e., supervision, AAIs) in their community or region. Likewise, they might not have the professional connectivity afforded in an academic setting such as developing relationships with leaders in the field of supervision and/or AAIs that could lead to locating mentorship and professional development trajectory. Further, because the participants were all doctoral-level practitioners, there was no indication of the experiences or particular considerations for master's-level practitioners. It is possible master's-level practitioners might have unique perspectives and needs that were uncovered by this research. This was of particular interest given the participants reported the imperative of competency with both AAIs and supervision. Master's-level practitioners might, therefore, have specific needs and considerations regarding preparation for implementing AAI-S.

A fourth limitation was the small sample size for this study. Stake (2006) recommended a sample size of 4 to 10 but indicated there were times in which the sample might be higher or lower. In this case, the small sample was a result of difficulty locating available participants in a timely manner and restrictions on professional identity requisite for inclusion (e.g., social workers excluded). Although possible participants were identified, enough to have been well within the range Stake suggested, several were unavailable or declined to participate. Some responded to recruitment outreach but declined participation due to timing and other obligations and some did not respond at all. The other major barrier to a larger sample size was occupational restrictions on inclusion (e.g., social workers, other mental health professionals outside of professional counseling and psychology). For example, one potential participant was screened out because they are a social worker even though the individual had a great deal of experience

with inclusion of AAI-S in supervision. Exclusion of social workers and other mental health professionals might have limited perspectives relevant to generalizing to the mental health professions at large.

Another limitation of this study is the absence of supervisee voices. The study was designed to elicit and document supervisors' perspectives with the intention that supervisee voices would need to be addressed in future research. The absence of the human counterpart to the AAI-S supervisory triad was a limitation as supervisees might have valuable perspective on the quality of supervision delivered in AAI-S, the relational aspects of AAI-S discussed by supervisor participants, and the depth of reflection and learning this experiential supervision activity supported. The current study only attended to "one side of the story." Remedying this through future research in which supervisees were heard would provide a more holistic account and potentially inform development of AAI-S practices. Further, hearing supervisee perspectives could uncover currently unknown information about the processes of AAI-S, enhance knowledge about implementation of AAI-S, and provide additional support and rationale to AAI-S provision.

Lastly, because there was minimal existing literature and research on this topic, my design and development of methods and procedures used in this study might have been biased. Carrying on with this research as an agenda that includes further robust research, participants with varied occupational and educational backgrounds, and captures the voices of supervisees is imperative to having a holistic understanding of AAI-S. The current study was an important initial step in developing understanding of this practice and standards for preparation and implementation of AAI-S.

Directions for Future Research

Several directions for future research should be addressed going forward. The first is supervisee experiences were absent from the current study and need to be examined. Although this collective case study provided valuable insight into the provision of AAI-S, it was from a single population perspective—that of the supervisor. Thus, future research should seek to explore supervisees' experiences and perspectives of AAI-S to develop a holistic understanding of AAI-S and inform potential preparation and implementation for AAI-S. Valuable information could be found in the supervisee point of view that could enhance provision of AAI-S. For example, the supervisor participants in this study reported viewing AAI-S as a useful tool for supporting supervisee development and reflection. What are supervisees' experiences of those outcomes? How would they rate their development and learning within the context of AAI-S? Supervisor experiences and perspectives were less represented in the supervision literature as opposed to supervisee experiences (Grant et al., 2012; Wheeler & Richards, 2007), which was one reason this study focused on exploring supervisors' perspectives. A possible explanation for the emphasis on supervisee perspectives was the desire to understand what worked in supervision and interest in supervisees' perspectives as a measure of that which works (Milne & Reiser, 2012), similar to using client perspectives to inform on outcomes in clinical research. In the same vein, this research agenda could be more fully representative of the processes and possible outcomes of AAI-S with the inclusion of supervisee perspectives in future research. Understanding both sides of this relationship is essential for establishing expectations for AAI-S as well as standards, competencies, and preparation for providing AAI-S.

Future research should also address diversity of perspectives within the supervisor population. Specifically, varied experiences and background regarding educational background,

occupational setting, and professional identity might provide rich insight into the provision and implementation of AAI-S. As discussed above in the limitations section, participants of this study were concentrated in terms of education level and professional identity. Professionals with different professional identities, such as social workers, might provide valuable insight around AAI-S. Perspectives of other mental health professionals with regard to AAI-S might inform all potential practitioners in the mental health field. Animal-assisted interventions are interdisciplinary interventions and, thusly, are present in a variety of professions and settings. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that AAI-S is in existence outside of the counseling and psychology professions. Inclusion of those perspectives might improve efforts to more fully understand AAI-S and develop standards for practice and preparation for AAI-S provision. Likewise, research addressing AAI-S in different settings such as agencies, hospitals, and schools would enhance understanding of AAI-S.

An extension of this direction for future research is the need for specific attention to master's-level professionals. As discussed in the limitations section, master's-level professionals might have just as strong a desire to implement AAIs into supervision practices in the field as doctoral-level professionals but might have much less access and additional barriers to information about AAI-S, best practices, training and consultation, and might have other specific needs. For example, master's-level licensure supervisors might have a desire to integrate AAIs into supervision. Most state licensing boards require specific supervision training for such supervisors. Awareness of training and practice standards, however, is not as readily available to the general counseling professional. Additionally, they might have conflicts around choice of continuing education and be less likely to pursue AAI training due to inability to receive continuing education credit for such training. Without delving further into the specific

experiences and perspectives of master's-level practitioners, researchers and educators might leave these practitioners in the dark.

Other directions for future research identified from this study have to do with conceptual and methodological issues. A conceptual issue that should be addressed in future research is how the HART (Chandler, 2017, 2018; Otting & Chandler, 2021) might be applied within the supervisory context. The HART was identified by two participants as a primary theoretical foundation for how they understood the dynamics of AAI-S, both clinically and in supervision. This begged further investigation into how it might be enacted within AAI-S and be used to understand supervisees and the supervision process. For example, could HART be used as a model for guiding AAI-S as it is in clinical work? If so, how would that work? What could be learned from it? In essence, is HART transferable to AAI-S and to what end? Understanding this framework within the supervision context might be particularly useful to beginning AAI-S practitioners and could be a tool for preparing those interested in implementing AAI-S. Research could address experiences and perspectives of supervisees and supervisors through qualitative approaches to understand how it operates. An example of a model of supervision connected to a specialized clinical approach is adventure-based counseling and supervision (Christian & Perryman, 2018). Because they found traditional supervision approaches limited in supporting counselors using adventure-based counseling, Gass and Gillis (2010) developed a model of adventure-based counseling activities applied within the context of supervision called the ENHANCES model. The ENHANCES acronym represents a sequential model for integrating experiential and adventure activities into supervision for the purpose of facilitating “clinical and technical growth in supervisees” (Christian & Perryman, 2018, p. 24). It is worthwhile to investigate best practices for AAI-S as well as a model to guide practice. Perhaps HART offers

the framework for such a model. Another possible research direction could be to use grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop a theory of how AAI-S works. Doing so could also provide groundwork for standards of practice and preparation for AAI-S. Grounded theory might also allow for the development of a model of AAI-S to guide practice. Specifically, grounded theory could also explore the viability of HART as a possible model useful to the application of AAI-S in supervision.

Additionally, future research and professional advocacy efforts should address guidance for supervisors' competency when it comes to integration of other specializations into supervision practices. Integrating AAI-S into supervision creates a complex landscape of moving pieces supervisors are tasked with in tracking, navigating, and managing. Supervisors must attend to their roles as clinical consultant, educator, gatekeeper, and evaluator for the supervisee while simultaneously tracking and attending to the wellbeing of the animal partner including the animals' responses to the supervisor and supervisee. On top of these moving pieces, the supervisor must also interpret human-animal interactions in the tripartite system of AAI-S and make use of these interactions for the purposes of supervision. This requires a great deal of cognitive complexity (Wilkinson & Dewell, 2019).

A final suggestion for future research is related to measuring different components of AAI-S and determining outcomes. Quantitative and mixed-methods research could address learning about several components of AAI-S. Assertions made through this research included improvement in supervisory relationship quality, reduction in supervisee anxiety and increase in self-awareness, and deepening of learning for supervisees when involved in AAI-S. Isolating variables and determining to what extent they might have impacted or be impacted through AAI-S would be helpful in further validating or revealing other mechanisms within these assertions.

For example, previous literature suggested the supervisory relationship, specifically the supervisory working alliance, might be enhanced when AAI-S was implemented (Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015). Quantitative research using the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory (Efstation et al., 1990) might help determine the extent to which this might be true and under what circumstances this might be most efficacious. The Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory includes supervisor and supervisee forms so it could be advantageous for understanding both perspectives of AAI-S as related to the supervisory working alliance. Another potential avenue for relevant investigation could be to understand the supervision relational quality in AAI-S through investigation of supervisee attachment (e.g., Supervisee Attachment Strategies Scale; Menefee et al., 2014). Perhaps an improvement in supervisee disclosure in AAI-S could be understood using the Supervisee Disclosure in Supervision Scale (Li et al., 2020).

Research specific to understanding what exactly might be improved when AAI-S is implemented would be useful, i.e., differences in power dynamics in AAI-S as opposed to traditional supervision methods (Cook et al., 2018) or changes in competency development in supervision (Lambie & Ascher, 2016). Additionally, assertions made in previous literature such as supervisee anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1983), anticipatory anxiety (Liddle, 1986), and supervisee self-efficacy (Melchert et al., 1996) could be investigated to determine the possible impact of AAI-S on such phenomena. Such future research would also add to the validity of this method in supervision and inform development of standards of practice and preparation for AAI-S implementation.

Concluding Thoughts

Animal-assisted interventions in supervision (AAI-S) have been identified in the counseling literature over the last decade as a possible productive addition to supervision practices (Chandler, 2017; Jackson, 2020; Meola, 2017; Meola et al., 2020; Owenby, 2017; Stewart et al., 2015.) This qualitative collective case study explored the experiences and processes of AAI-S from the perspective of three supervisors who integrated AAIs into their supervision process. Notable limitations of the present research included small sample size and no supervisee perspective of AAI-S. The lessons learned through this study could inform counselor educators, supervisors, mental health professionals, students, and researchers interested in this unique and creative approach to enhancing supervision. Implications based on the findings of the study were presented as well as recommendations for AAI-S preparation and implementation. Directions for future research should address various matters, namely investigating supervisee perspectives and gaining more specific understanding to the possible mechanisms of action taking place in AAI-S (e.g., impact of AAI-S on supervisory working alliance, etc.).

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

Date: 08/02/2021

Principal Investigator: Connie Couch

Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**

Action Date: 08/02/2021

Protocol Number: [2107027891](#)

Protocol Title: ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS IN SUPERVISION: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:



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Institutional Review Board

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).
- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. *You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu. Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Morse".

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

APPENDIX B
RECRUITMENT LETTER



Exciting research on the integration of Animal-Assisted Interventions in clinical supervision is beginning soon. If you are fully licensed as a professional counselor or counseling or clinical psychologist and have been integrating Animal-Assisted Interventions into your work with supervisees, you are invited to participate in this study! The study will explore the experiences of clinical supervisors' integration of Animal-Assisted Intervention in their supervision practices.

Your participation would include three stages:

Stage 1: Initial Interview (exploration of your experiences with this intervention, a tour of the space where you practice, introductions to the animals you partner with, reflection on artifacts of your practice and documents you may use in your supervision work.

Stage 2: Think-Aloud Reflection (following a recent supervision session in which Animal-Assisted Interventions were incorporated you'll be asked to audio-record your think-aloud responses to a provided reflection guide).

Stage 3: Follow-up Interview (follow-up on new information or reflections since beginning participation).

Participation is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time. Your participation is expected to take 2-3 hours of your time over the course of approximately 4-6 weeks. All interviews will be video and audio recorded but maintained in protected locations, to which only I will have access. Participants will be given the option of receiving a \$25 gift card to a retailer of their choice or a \$25 donation made to a non-profit organization of their choice. Participants will also be given a collection of complementary literature on the subject of AAI-S.

This study is a component of the requirements needed for completion of my PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado and is under supervision of Dr. Jennifer Murdock Bishop. Institutional Review Board at the University of Northern Colorado approval has been obtained (Protocol # 2107027891).

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email indicating your interest and we will schedule an initial meeting.

Sincerely,

Connie Couch, M.Ed, LPC (CO)

Doctoral Candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision, University of Northern Colorado

Couc2753@bears.unco.edu

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM



**CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**

Project Title: Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision: A Collective Case Study

Researcher: Connie Couch, MEd, LPC (Colorado), Doctoral Student in Counselor Education and Supervision

Email: couc2753@unco.bears.edu **Phone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Research Advisor: Jennifer Murdock Bishop, PhD, LPC, Professor of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education

Email: jennifer.murdock-bishop@unco.edu **Phone:** (970) 351-2544

IRB Protocol: 2107027891

Purpose and Description: The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to understand supervisor's experiences and perceptions of the process of integrating Animal-Assisted Interventions (AAIs) into clinical supervision activities. There will be two separate interviews, an initial interview and a follow-up interview approximately one month later. Both interviews, and activities included during interviews, will be video and audio recorded. Both interviews are expected to last between one to two hours. In addition to the interview of your experiences and perceptions, there will be four tasks during the initial interview: 1.) virtual tour of setting of your Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision (AAI-S) activities, 2.) virtual introductions to the therapy animals you partner with in your provision of AAI-S, 3.) exploration and reflection of one to two artifacts related to your AAI-S activities, and 4.) review of related practice documents. Between the initial interview and the follow up interview, you will complete a "Think Aloud Reflection" yourself using an audio recording device of your choice. The Think Aloud Reflection is expected to take approximately 15 minutes from beginning your recording to emailing the recording to me, although you may elaborate longer if you wish. The recorded reflection should be completed following a supervision session where you involved your partnering therapy animal in the clinical supervision process. The follow-up interview will consist of the researcher providing you with preliminary themes from analysis of the data collected in the first interview and form the Think Aloud Reflection. This gives you a chance to determine if you agree with the analysis so far.

Information collected through your participation will be reported de-identified (e.g., use of pseudonym for participants, regional description of setting versus city and state). The results of this research will be used for a dissertation study and may later result in publications and/or conference presentations.

Your participation and responses will be kept confidential to the extent that is possible, as we cannot guarantee confidentiality. The researcher will never confirm your participation in this study to others. Efforts will be made to maximize confidentiality of your interview responses. Data will be maintained on a password protected computer. Identifying information will be a part of the interview itself, but the researcher will make efforts to maintain confidentiality in the final written product. This researcher is adhering University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board standards and the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014).

Potential risks in this project are minimal. However, you may feel anxious or frustrated talking about supervision activities. Please seek consultation and/or supervision and/or personal counseling if the thoughts and feelings that emerge from the interviews that interfere with your well-being or client care. I will assist in locating potential resources for your support if needed.

The potential benefits to you may include personal processing and reflection regarding your experiences in supervision and thoughts and feelings that surface while being interviewed. You may also find it beneficial knowing that your participation is contributing to research that will aid in understanding of this topic.

Participation Incentives: If The results of this study are published in a peer reviewed journal, you will receive a copy of the article. Additionally, participants will be given a \$25 gift card to a retailer of their choice or \$25 donation made to a non-profit organization of their choice. Participants will also be given a collection of complementary literature on the subject of AAI-S.

Participation is voluntary. **You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time.** Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO; 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu.

 Participant signature

 Date

 Researcher
 Connie Couch, MEd, LPC

 Date

APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Age

OCCUPATION

- Current Position Title
 - (brief hx of career)
- Credentials/Licenses
- Degrees
- Specialized trainings?
- Theoretical orientation?
- Population
- Setting

ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS EXPERIENCE

- AAI Training completed
- Time integrating AAI in therapy/counseling
- Time integrating AAIs into supervision
- Animals working with

SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

- Time providing supervision
- Approximate number of supervisees having received AAI-S
- Supervisory models/orientation/training?

APPENDIX E
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Background

- a. Demographic questionnaire
- b. Who do you supervise?
- c. Where do you do it (setting)?
- d. Who are your animal partners?

2. Describe AAI-S, as you see it.**3. How do you “do” AAIS?**

- a. How did you begin doing it?
- b. What do you do?
- c. What is your supervision theory/what model do you use (e.g., IDM, Discrimination Model, etc)?
 - i. How do you incorporate AAIs within your supervisor theoretical framework/model?
- d. How do you prepare your supervisees for AAI-S?
- e. What is a typical day in the life (what happens in a typical session)
- f. Describe your general supervisory approach.
- g. What do you expect of your supervisees in general and in AAIS?
- h. How do you decide how/when to include animals (AAIs) in supervision?
- i. What considerations do you take into account when you decide to do AAI-S? CIT characteristics, client characteristics, situational characteristics?
- j. Do you attempt to structure the AAI to achieve a specific purpose, if so how? Do you let the AAI unfold organically?
- k. How does counselor development influence AAI-S?

- i. How do you determine AAI in relation to counselor development (i.e., how does counselor development influence your choice of AAI?)

4. Why do you “do” AAIS?

- a. What are the potential benefits as you see it?
- b. What are the potential risks as you see it?
- c. What is happening in AAIS?

5. Into the future:

- a. If someone wanted to begin integrating AAI into clinical supervision, what should they consider?

6. Other:

- a. Tell a story of a time that really stands out to you related to AAI-S.
- b. Tell about your intentions for integrating AAI into your supervision.
- c. Tell about procedures do you have for integrating AAIs into supervision.
- d. Tell about your process for integrating AAIs into supervision.

The “Virtual Tour”, Animal Introductions, and reflection on a chosen artifact will occur within the initial interview. Some information from the protocol may be generated through the process of the tour, etc.

APPENDIX F
THINK ALOUD REFLECTION

I will ask participants to reflect on a recent (within a day) supervision session in which they incorporated Animal-Assisted Interventions. They will record themselves and email the recording to me.

1. Following a supervision session in which you have integrated AAIs in the supervision session, do the think aloud.
2. Use: iPhone Voice Memo app, or iTalk app (free) – participant to email recording to me.
 - a. They can talk as long as they need, just reflect on the following. I will provide the reflection questions and written instructions by email following the 1st interview.
3. Reflect on these questions:
 - a. What did we do? (basic synopsis of the sup session)
 - b. How was the animal involved?
 - c. What was the supervisee's response?
 - d. What came up for me?
 - e. What happened as a result in the supervision process?
 - f. Any other thoughts?

APPENDIX G
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW SEMI-STRUCTURED
PROTOCOL

1. What thoughts, concerns, or reflections have you had about Animal-Assisted Interventions in Supervision since the initial interview on _____?
 - a. Since the think-aloud reflection?

2. Here are the initial emergent themes from our work together (I will provide a deidentified digital copy of initial themes from their respective within case analysis and the cross-case analysis available at that time). What questions, thoughts, reflections come to mind as you review these initial themes?
 - a. Are there corrections or changes you wish to see?