

# FACULTY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF COMMON FACTORS IN MFT TRAINING

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# PURPOSE

- TO PRESENT FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF TWO STUDIES THAT FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF COMMON FACTORS IN MFT TRAINING
- THE FIRST STUDY FOCUSES ON FACULTY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHING COMMON FACTORS
- THE SECOND EXPLORES THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF COMMON FACTORS TRAINING

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FIFE, S. T., D'ANIELLO, C., SCOTT, S., SULLIVAN, E. (2018). MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH COMMON FACTORS TRAINING. *JOURNAL OF MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY*. DOI:10.1111/JMFT.12333



# BACKGROUND

- THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED ATTENTION TO COMMON FACTORS IN THE MFT FIELD
- META-ANALYTIC RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE CONCLUSION THAT GENERAL FACTORS, THOSE THAT CUT ACROSS THERAPY MODELS, CONTRIBUTE TO THERAPEUTIC CHANGE
- IN RECENT YEARS, ATTENTION HAS TURNED TO THE ROLE OF COMMON FACTORS IN MFT TRAINING



# STUDY PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

- STUDY 1

- TO UNDERSTAND HOW COMMON FACTORS ARE INCLUDED IN MFT TRAINING PROGRAMS
  - FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
  - HOW ARE THEY INCLUDED?
  - WHAT ARE PROGRAM DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OUTCOMES?
  - WHAT ARE BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

- STUDY 2

- TO INVESTIGATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF COMMON FACTORS TRAINING
  - UNDERSTAND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF COMMON FACTORS
  - STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING ABOUT COMMON FACTORS
  - HOW COMMON FACTORS TRAINING INFLUENCED THEIR CLINICAL WORK



# METHODS

- STUDY 1

- QUALITATIVE SURVEY OF 31 PROGRAM DIRECTORS OF COAMFTE AND CACREP ACCREDITED PROGRAMS
- SENT RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO ALL PROGRAM DIRECTORS
- RESULTS ANALYZED USING THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- STUDY 2

- FOCUS GROUPS AND ANALYSIS OF COURSE JOURNAL RESPONSES
- RECRUITED STUDENTS IN A TRAINING PROGRAM IN THE WEST WHERE STUDENTS OBTAINED TRAINING IN COMMON FACTORS IN A PRACTICUM COURSE
- ANALYZED USING PHENOMENOLOGY



# STUDY 1 RESULTS: RATIONALE FOR INCLUDING OR NOT INCLUDING COMMON FACTORS

- EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR COMMON FACTORS
  - “THE ACCUMULATION OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE POINTS TO COMMON FACTORS AS BEING MORE INFLUENTIAL IN THE CHANGE PROCESS THAN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OF THERAPY”
- COMMON FACTORS’ SUPPORT STUDENTS’ CLINICAL DEVELOPMENT
  - “[COMMON FACTORS] ARE VERY RELEVANT FOR OUR MISSION OF PREPARING OUR STUDENTS FOR BEST PRACTICE IN THE COMMUNITY”
- THINKING ABOUT CHANGE
  - “PROMOTES THINKING ABOUT COMMON CHANGE PROCESSES THAT GO ACROSS SPECIFIC MODELS,” AND “COMMON FACTORS ARE A MAJOR AREA OF STUDY REGARDLESS OF PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC MODEL.”
  - “THE REASON FOR INCLUDING COMMON FACTORS IS TO HELP SHAPE THE THINKING OF STUDENTS ABOUT THE COMMON FACTORS AS A WAY OF THINKING ABOUT CHANGE”



# STUDY 1 RESULTS: BENEFITS OF INCLUDING COMMON FACTORS IN TRAINING

- “FOCUS ON THE....FUNDAMENTALS”
- “HAVE A BETTER COMPREHENSION OF WHAT TO DO IN PRACTICE”
- “COMMON FACTORS ENCOURAGE INTERNS TO THINK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND TO ACTUALLY DEEPEN THAT RELATIONSHIP”
- “THIS KNOWLEDGE ENHANCES AND BROADENS THE STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF WAYS TO APPROACH THERAPEUTIC PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE MULTIPLE FACTORS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO SUCCESSFUL THERAPEUTIC WORK WITH CLIENTS”



# STUDY 1 RESULTS: CHALLENGES OF INCLUDING COMMON FACTORS IN TRAINING

- TEN PARTICIPANTS STATED THAT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE IS MAKING SURE STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT COMMON FACTORS DO NOT REPLACE THERAPY MODELS
- “STUDENT CONFUSION ABOUT COMMON FACTORS—MANY FEEL COMMON FACTORS MEANS NO NEED TO LEARN MODELS IN ANY DEPTH”
- “SOME [STUDENTS] JUST WANT TO USE COMMON FACTORS AND PULL IN THEORETICAL CONCEPTS RATHER THAN EMBRACING A THEORY”





# STUDY 2 RESULTS: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF COMMON FACTORS TRAINING

- ALL STUDENT PARTICIPANTS REPORTED A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH COMMON FACTORS TRAINING
- COMMON FACTORS BROUGHT AN INCREASED UNDERSTANDING OF THE THERAPY PROCESS AND INCREASED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THERAPY LEADS TO CHANGE.
- ENHANCED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THERAPY MODELS AND COMMON FACTORS
  - COMMON FACTORS CUT ACROSS MODELS
  - COMMON FACTORS SUPPORT MODELS
- COMMON FACTORS FACILITATE MODEL INTEGRATION
- INFORMED THEIR THINKING ABOUT CLINICAL PRACTICE
- COMMON FACTORS TRAINING INCREASED THERAPIST CONFIDENCE IN THEIR CLINICAL PRACTICE
- COMMON FACTORS GUIDE STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE



# STUDY 2 RESULTS: EXEMPLARY QUOTES

- “I ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND THE MODELS MORE, NOW THAT I KNOW COMMON FACTORS”
- “THE MODERATE STANCE OF COMMON FACTORS IS THAT COMMON FACTORS ENHANCE THE USE OF MODELS, AND THAT THEY ARE THE VEHICLES THAT FACILITATE THE USE OF COMMON FACTORS. COMMON FACTORS ARE NOT INTENDED AS A REPLACEMENT FOR MODELS”
- “I THINK THAT COMMON FACTORS AND MODELS ARE LIKE HAVING A PAIR OF BIFOCALS: THROUGH THE [BOTTOM] THE THERAPIST CAN FOCUS ON THE PROCESS OF CHANGE THROUGH THE MODEL; AND WITH THE TOP OF THE LENS, THE COMMON FACTORS PART, THEY CAN MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE GETTING THE BIG PICTURE”
- “I REALLY LIKE EFT AND AM DRAWN TO USING IT OFTEN. I REALIZE THAT MUCH OF THE SUCCESS REPORTED IN THE EFT OUTCOME STUDIES ARE BASED ON COMMON FACTORS, ESPECIALLY THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE AND ALTERING COGNITIONS”



# DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

- MFT EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS MAY BE BEST SERVED WHEN DISCUSSIONS OF COMMON FACTORS SITUATE THIS PERSPECTIVE OF THERAPEUTIC EFFECTIVENESS IN CONJUNCTION WITH MODEL-SPECIFIC TRAINING
- UNDERSTANDING THAT COMMON FACTORS WORK HAND IN HAND WITH MFT MODELS AND THAT COMMON FACTORS TRAINING DOES NOT PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR A CASUAL APPROACH TO LEARNING MFT MODELS
- COMMON FACTORS CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO AN EXISTING COURSE, TAUGHT AS AN INDEPENDENT COURSE, AND INCLUDED IN SUPERVISION
- STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT FROM HAVING COMMON FACTORS INTRODUCED EARLY IN TRAINING
- THESE TWO STUDIES SUPPORT THE NEED FOR GREATER INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH INTO MFT TRAINING AND PRACTICE



# CONCLUSION

- THE PRESENT STUDIES MARK SOME OF THE FIRST EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF COMMON FACTORS IN MFT TRAINING
- RESULTS SUGGEST THAT STUDYING COMMON FACTORS HAS A NUMBER OF POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR THERAPISTS IN TRAINING, AND MFT PROGRAMS ARE ENCOURAGED TO INCORPORATE COMMON FACTORS INTO THEIR CURRICULUM
- RESULTS SUGGEST CONTINUED RESEARCH INTO THE ROLE OF COMMON FACTORS IN CONTRIBUTING TO THERAPEUTIC EFFECTIVENESS

