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Training Counselors to be Consumers of Supervision

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by

Diane L. Parfitt, Ph.D., Devika Dibya Choudhuri, Ph.D., and Irene Mass
Ametrano, Ed.D.

Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, MI

Project Abstract

Most states require that professional counselors work under supervision before they receive a full license to practice, yet our data indicate that supervisees often don't receive training in how to select an effective supervisor. For those who do receive training, topics of importance are often omitted. We present these data, along with training module topics for educating counselors about the process of selecting a supervisor.

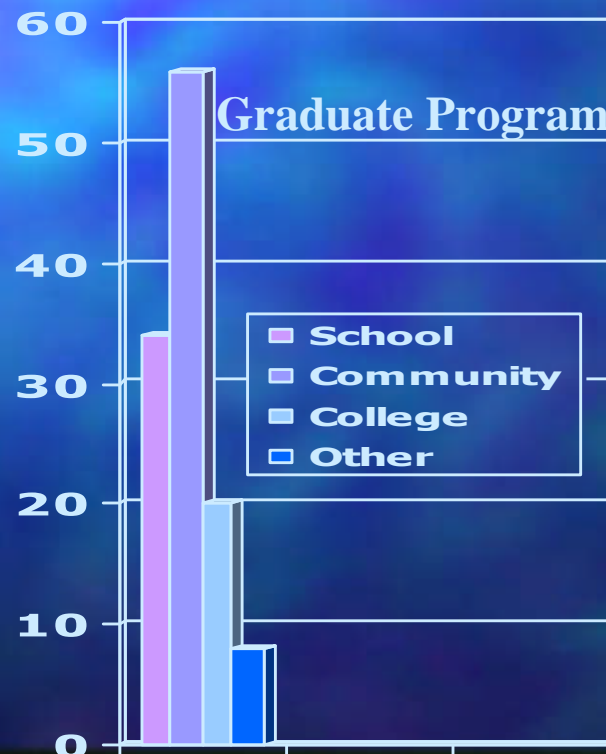
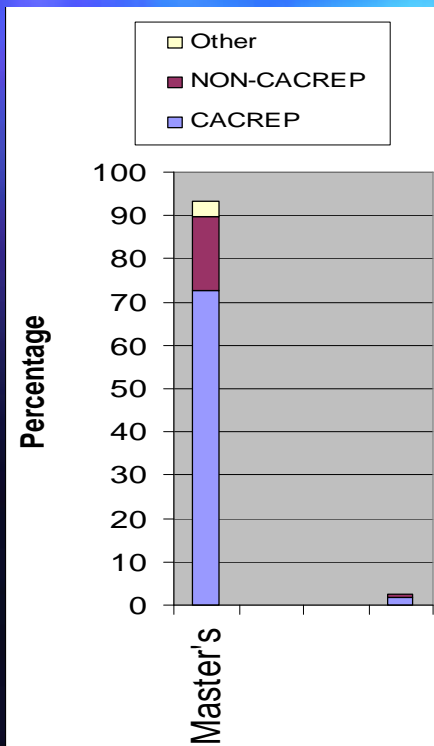
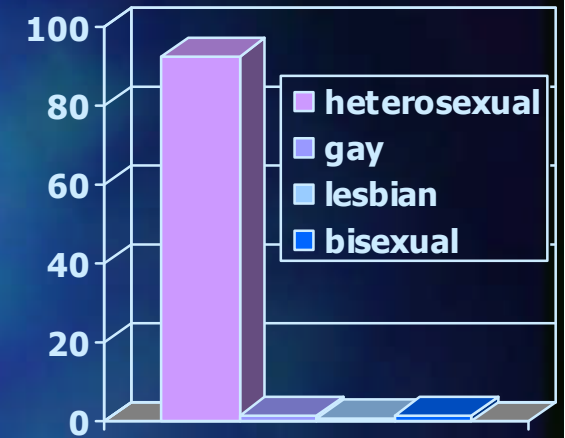
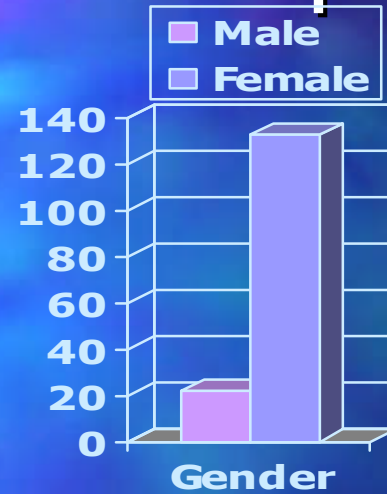
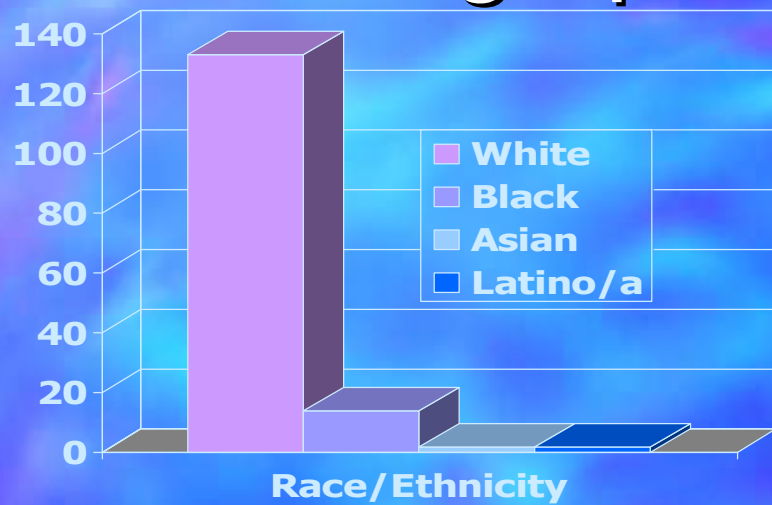
Literature review

- The literature is sparse in exploring the role of universities and professional organizations in preparing pre-licensed counseling students for their required post-master's supervision for licensure (Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002).
- A gap has existed between the supervision regularly provided by universities while students are in graduate school followed by few, if any, linkages provided for the those students when they seek postgraduate supervision for licensure (Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002).
- Universities do little to prepare pre-licensed counseling students to seek and determine quality supervision and effective supervisors (Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002).
- There are few, if any, studies that have investigated the experiences of pre-licensed counseling students and newly licensed counselors in obtaining required supervision for licensure (Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2002).
- Supervisees who report that their supervisory relationships and experiences were not beneficial, or not good experiences, report negative effects on their development as counselors. (Anderson, Schlossberg, & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Magnuson, Norem, & Wilcoxon, 2000b; Ramos-Sanchez, Esnil, Goodwin, Riggs, Touster, Wright, et al., 2002).

Survey

- Online survey was posted from May to October 2007
- Participation solicited from members of the state counseling association and from those listed as being licensed and limited licensed counselors through the state licensing board. Emails were sent out to association listserv members and 500 postcards were mailed to a random selection of counselors listed with the State Board of Counseling (however, the URLs on the postcard were underscored making it difficult for many to enter the correct web-address for the survey). One follow-up email was sent out in September 2007.
- 154 respondents completed the survey (an estimated 10% response rate)

Demographics of respondents



Supervision Experience

Received training in supervision	14.5%
Are satisfied with the training they received	89.5%
Currently receiving supervision(21.4% had completed supervision requirements for licensure when completing survey)	45.3%
Found a supervisor through	
Employment site	35.9%
Referral from graduate program	15.5%
Supervisor list from professional association	2.9%
Recommendation from another counselor	10.9%
Supervisor produced a professional disclosure statement	47.6%
Supervisor and supervisee signed a supervisor contract	34%

For those who received training, what was covered?

Legal requirements.....	84%
How to locate potential supervisor.....	43%
What to expect from supervision.....	67%
Goals for supervision.....	70%
Supervisor qualities.....	50%
Supervisor professional disclosure.....	63%
Contents of disclosure statement.....	47%

Themes in comments on finding effective post-master's supervision

(open comment; 92 participants responded)

Difficulty in finding a supervisor.....24%

"I found my supervisor by chance after working a full year without being able to find one. It is very difficult!!"

Expense and cost.....11%

"The cost is too much and varies greatly --be careful and to not pick someone you can't afford."

"you might just have to pay out the nose to get your hours."

Begin supervisor search early.....7%

"Start looking early, secure a supervisor willing to make the commitment without a problem for the next 2-3 years."

"Be aggressive in your search, start looking before you need it."

Themes continued...

Seek help through university.....33%

"While still in university, make specific contacts that can help you find supervision or resources that will lead you toward supervision"

Seek names from professional organizations....24%

"Network! ...call practicing counselors for referrals."

Interview before deciding.....22%

"Find someone you are comfortable with"

"Find out what his/her experience is with clients and as a supervisor. What is his/her theoretical beliefs and practices. Why are they a supervisor? Can you have a name of someone who they supervised."

Process Comments

"Although my supervision was provided through employment it was free to me. However I would not report that it was the best quality of supervision. My supervisor had no real desire, but was willing to do it for me. "

"Make sure you keep the group small enough so each person has the time needed for adequate supervision. My group was larger than 5 at one time and it became difficult to find enough time for everyone to share cases."

"I had established a relationship with a supervisor prior to a period of time I was laid off (3 months). After obtaining another position, the LPC I was working with did not return my phone calls. Since that time, I have repeatedly contacted a variety of counseling offices and Universities and followed several leads to dead ends. A small group of LLPCs I have working relationships with have had similar lack of success. "

Comments cont...

"I had no formal training on how to locate supervision and on what may be a reasonable price to pay for supervision. I am very very lucky to have found a job where I can receive supervision from an LPC who has been trained in supervision at no cost to me through my employment. "

"The best way I found was trial-and-error, as well as being willing to change supervisors if I wasn't getting the kind of supervision I desired. "

"Looking back, I would have asked the supervisor to be specific in giving examples on how their supervision would be provided."

"Look for someone you can feel comfortable admitting mistakes and weaknesses to. Find someone that you can relate to on a morals, standards level."

Discussion of survey

- Very few pre-licensure counselors receive any training in finding an effective supervisor. Noteworthy because so many states require post master's supervision towards licensure.
- When it occurs, training focuses more on legal requirements for supervision than on the process of finding a supervisor.
- Most neglected topics of importance are on how to locate potential supervisors—a challenging task for beginning counselors; supervisee expectations; supervisor competencies and qualities, and supervisory fit.

Discussion cont...

Based on their experience, consumers of supervision suggest :

- Consulting with university counselor educators and professional counselor organization members regarding potential supervisors.
- Courses that cover what to expect from the supervisor and supervision process (e.g., contract, expectations, goals; appraisal).
- Program coverage on finding out how to select an experienced and well-trained supervisor
- Aspects of interviewing supervisors for fit regarding approach, style, meeting times, fees, personality and cultural sensitivity

Considering the “Supervisory Fit”

- The relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is one of the most influential factors in supervisee satisfaction (Ramos-Sanchez, et al., 2002)
- Four A’s of a good supervisor – Available, accessible, able and affable (Powell & Brodsky, 1998)
- Supervisees at lower levels of development need supervisors who emphasize the supervisory alliance (focus on building trust, supporting and advocating for supervisee, openness to feedback from supervisee) (Ramos-Sanchez, et al., 2002)
- Supervisee’s stage of development can influence extent to which supervisee benefits from exposure to different counseling orientations and increased latitude in decision-making (Stoltenberg et al., 1998)

Assessing the “Fit”

- In what modality (individual? group? combination?) does supervisee learn best? (Magnuson et al., 2002)
- Supervisory style (attractive, interpersonally sensitive, task-oriented) can influence supervisee satisfaction with supervision and supervisee perceived self-efficacy (Fernando & Hulse-Killacky, 2005)
- Dual roles: What difficulties, including ethical issues, may arise if the supervisor is both administrative and clinical supervisor? (Thomski-Klingshirn & Davis, 2007)
- Are goals for supervision and expectations for supervisee performance clear and compatible? (Ramos-Sanchez, et al., 2002)

Interviewing Potential Supervisors

Primary Question: Will this supervisor provide a supervisory relationship in which the supervisee can learn and realize his/her potential as a professional counselor?

- Inquire about experience, knowledge, & skills:
 - Theoretical approach
 - Areas of specialization/expertise?
 - Training as a supervisor?
 - Ethical and legal issues
- Focus of supervision: Administrative? Clinical?
- Nuts and bolts of supervision structure
 - Availability
 - Cost
 - Time & Location
- Review professional disclosure statement and contract.

Training content and coverage

- Exploring Supervisee's Expectations
 - Going beyond experience in graduate program
 - Acknowledging real world realities of expense, accessibility, licensure needs, etc.
- Help supervisee to formulate goals
- Clarification of what supervision entails
- Develop understanding of supervision theory in terms of supervision roles and functions
 - Teacher, counselor, consultant
 - Provides resources and information
 - Supports, understands, and challenges
 - Establishes clear evaluation guidelines
 - Gives feedback
- Time commitment and availability
- Resource listings and referrals to supervision providers

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