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## October 2010 Article of the Month

This month's article selection is by Chaplain Shannon R. Borchert,  
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Granello, D. H., Kindsvatter, A., Granello, P. F., Underfer-Babalis, J., and Hartwig Moorhead, H. J.  
**"Multiple perspectives in supervision: using a peer consultation model to enhance supervisor development."** *Counselor Education and Supervision* 48, no. 1 (September 2008): 32-46.

**SUMMARY and COMMENT/DISCUSSION:** ACPE has long believed in the use of a professional peer group for the development of supervisors. Now others in the realm of counseling and psychology are discovering what we have intuitively practiced for years. In this article, the authors are interested in researching the professional development of counseling supervisors. It has been commonly accepted that there is a necessary difference between the skills needed as a counselor and the skills necessary to supervise counselors in training. This parallel is also true in the area of clinical pastoral education. It is assumed that a CPE Supervisor must also have a unique set of clinical skills beyond that of a professional chaplain. Supervisory education and the development of a supervisor is an important topic for counseling psychology as well as clinical pastoral education. The researchers are interested in the factors that influence the supervisory development of a counselor. To put it in the language of CPE, we might say, what elements of a curriculum are going to help a Supervisory Candidate achieve certification? What will help a Supervisory Candidate achieve the educational outcomes the quickest?

One idea the authors settle on for supervisor development is that of self-criticality. By definition, the supervisor who is self-critical seeks out continuing education opportunities and seeks outside feedback from other supervisors about their work. The authors decided to put their theory to the test by establishing a supervisor peer group in which they could present their work and give and receive feedback from other supervisors. The research design for this article is the use of case study. The authors formulated a diverse peer group made up of counselors in academic programs at both the masters and doctoral level. As the peer group met, they prepared a written case which they shared with the group and then discussed. The article discusses one case in particular and gives examples of the varying perspectives each of the members brings.

The authors note several key ideas that are relevant to Supervisory Education in ACPE. First, they were surprised by the intensity of their discussions. As supervisors with diverse perspectives gathered, they shared their views and opinions openly and may have even disagreed. They were not used to this level of discourse because they had become accustomed to students who were more deferential to their power. Anyone who has attended an ACPE Supervisory Education peer group knows the intensity of the discussion.

In this peer group experience, the participants were reminded there are many perspectives to every supervisory case. No matter how many times they presented these cases in workshops, audience members were able to lift up a new perspective. This focus on multiple perspectives serves to keep the supervisor sharp and encourages

creative thinking. The supervisors were also reminded of how comforting and challenging it can be to receive feedback from trusted peers. Sometimes it is comforting because the supervisors experience a sense of solidarity in knowing that others have had similar experiences. Sometimes the feedback is difficult to hear and may be uncomfortable and yet necessary.

The final lesson the authors mention is the emotional reactions that each of them had when discussing cases. Sometimes their emotional reaction led them to justify their intervention, and sometimes their reaction got in the way of hearing the multitude of diverse perspectives in the room.

#### Discussion:

The language in this article refers to supervisors of counselors in training. With a small bit of effort it is possible to transfer the learning from this article into the realm of Supervisory Education in CPE. The article is particularly helpful in spelling out the "Why" of having a peer group. At this time when ACPE is thinking about curriculum for supervisory education, it would be important to know what the contributions of a peer group would be for the professional development of a supervisor.

I am from the middle of the country, where supervisory training centers are hundreds of miles apart. Geography makes it difficult for our peer group to meet in person on a regular basis. We have been meeting monthly by using teleconferencing technology. We have had some positive results, but this article has clarified for me some of the core reasons a supervisory education peer group is important. Here are some of the positive elements of a professional peer group:

- Exposure to a diversity of ideas from other CPE Supervisors and students.
- A peer group enhances the cognitive development of a supervisor by challenging that supervisor to continually learn and grow and develop a flexible approach to student needs.
- The sharing of clinical material in a formal manner with verbal feedback from multiple perspectives.
- Learning to supervise is a complex task that may require a lifetime of learning. The professional peer group fosters lifelong learning in a supervisor who is already fully certified.
- A peer group can be a place of support as well as a place that challenges one to further learning.

#### Related Items of Interest:

One concept in our featured article is that of *cognitive complexity*. For more, see the following:

Fong, M. L., Borders, L. D., Ethington, C. A. and Pitts, J. H. "**Becoming a counselor: a longitudinal study of student cognitive development.**" *Counselor Education and Supervision* 37, no. 2 (September 1997): 100-114. [This study investigated the cognitive development of counseling students during their training program. Results suggest a need to emphasize student cognitive development as strongly as skills development in graduate programs.]

Granello, D. H. "**Cognitive complexity among practicing counselors: how thinking changes with experience.**" *Journal of Counseling and Development* 88, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 92-100. [(Abstract:) The purpose of this study was to investigate whether years of experience in the counseling profession can help predict levels of cognitive complexity among practicing counselors. Results of a regression equation found that counselors with more years in the counseling profession had higher levels of cognitive complexity, with highest degree obtained in the counseling profession also contributing to the prediction equation. Years as a practicing counselor, age, gender, and race did not contribute significantly to the equation.]

Granello, D. H. "**Assessing the cognitive development of counseling students: changes in epistemological assumptions.**" *Counselor Education and Supervision* ., 41, no. 4 (June 2002):

279-293. [The author investigated the cognitive development of counseling students at 3 points in their training. A cross-sectional analysis of 205 master's students at 13 colleges and universities showed a linear trend between the students' progression through the program and their cognitive development. Initial results of a longitudinal study of students in 2 counseling programs corresponded with the results of the cross-sectional data. The results of the cross-sectional and longitudinal studies lend initial support to the idea that it may be possible to capture the broad development of counselor education students with a generalized model.]

Owen, J. and Lindley, L. D. "**Therapists' cognitive complexity: review of theoretical models and development of an integrated approach for training.**" *Training and Education in Professional Psychology* 4, no. 2 (May 2010): 128-137. [Therapists' cognitive complexity can influence a variety of clinical and educational processes, from how they make decisions to their engagement in classes and supervision. To date, cognitive complexity models have not been adapted or advanced to meet the demands of clinical training. We provide a review and critique of the current cognitive complexity models and examine the measures typically associated with these models. We also introduce a new model, the Therapists' Cognitive Complexity Model, which includes three components of therapists' cognitive complexity: session thoughts, metacognition, and epistemic cognitions. Implications for therapist training and suggestions for future research are provided.]

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