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Training in Supervision

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Introduction

- Clinical supervision has been a standard part of training for clinical practice for about a century. Since 2002 competence has been an ethical standard of the APA *Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct*. Even earlier versions of the *Ethical Principles* included competence as a principle to which psychologists aspired. Yet until the last couple of decades few graduate programs offered training in supervision. Thus the typical supervisor began the practice of clinical supervision with no training, and often with no supervised experience in providing supervision. This lack of training and experience prior to beginning to offer clinical supervision may be one of the factors that accounts for the well-documented reports among trainees of adverse supervisory experiences (Ellis, 2009; Gray, Ladany, Walker, & Ancis, 2001; Nelson and Friedlander, 2001).
- The NCSPP guidelines for graduate clinical training began to include management and supervision as a competency in the 1990s (Peterson et al, 1994; see also Bent, Schindler, & Dobbins, 1991; Kenkel & Peterson, 2010; Thomas & Hersen, 2010). Yet even today, we suspect, training and supervised experience in the provision of clinical supervision is inconsistent at best. Thus the purpose of the present study was to examine course offerings in clinical supervision by APA approved training programs. Our goal is to describe the training that is provided as documented in program web-sites and *Graduate Education in Professional Psychology* (APA, 2012). In addition we will explore for any differences among programs for Clinical, Counseling, and School programs and by geographical regions of the US.
- The current study reviewed data available on program web-sites of APA approved doctoral programs in clinical, counseling, and school psychology to identify whether or not a course in supervision is offered, where it fits in the training sequence, the number of credit hours devoted to the course, and other program characteristics that may be predictive of whether the program provides a supervision course, such as participation in the National Council of Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology (NCSPP). It is tentatively hypothesized that NCSPP schools will be more likely to offer a supervision course as courses in this domain have been part of the NCSPP core curriculum for a number of years (citation??).

Methods

- The listing of accredited graduate programs in clinical, counseling, and school psychology from the *American Psychologist* in December of 2011 was used to identify schools that offered doctoral degrees in the three practice areas. Approximately 350 accredited doctoral programs were identified.
- Information about the programs was gathered in two ways. The first was to survey the web-site for the school and gather data from it. The second was to gather data from the 2011 edition of *Graduate Study in Psychology* (APA, 2011). In some cases data from these two sources were found to be discrepant.
- Data regarding the programs and their supervision course offerings were obtained in two ways. First, efforts were made to obtain data from the program's current web-sites. This approach proved to be daunting. An informal estimate was that it took an estimated 30 minutes to discover what information could be obtained from a given web-site. Ratings of the web-sites are more or less inversely related to the difficulties experienced. Web-sites were extremely variable in the information provided as well as in accessibility. For many, it became apparent that there were supervision courses, but details about the course, including whether it was required, credit hours, and whether it was didactic, experiential, or both were often unavailable.

Methods Continued

Gathering Data

- Efforts to obtain data about supervision course offerings and requirements were quite challenging.
- Web-sites were difficult to navigate and often had incomplete information
- Program identity was sometimes ambiguous
- Program lengths were described in ranges at times
- Data were provided at times in terms of medians, means, and minimums; at times we could not tell which was available
- Some institutions had multiple programs that were listed together in ways that made it difficult to distinguish
- Supervision courses may include:
 - didactic courses
 - experiential courses
 - receiving vs giving supervision

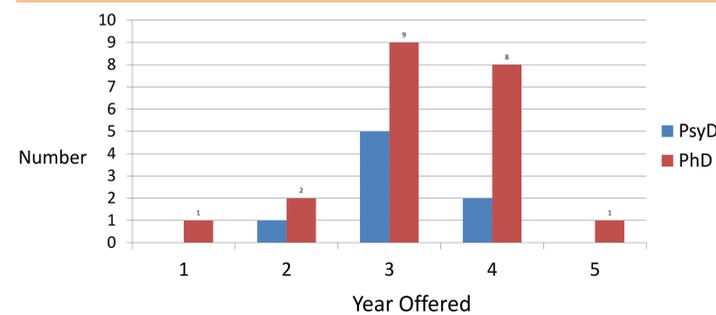
Results

- A total of accredited 362 graduate programs were identified. Usable data were obtained for 331 of these programs but data remains incomplete for most programs.
- **PsyD or PhD**
 - An association was found between disciplines and degrees conferred. For counseling and school psychology programs 13.6% and 11.0% of degrees conferred were PsyD Degrees, while for clinical programs 42.4% of degrees were PsyD degrees. A Pearson's Chi Square test with two degrees of freedom was highly significant (Chi Square = 17.17, $p < .001$).
 - In a multivariate analysis of variance, comparisons based on degree conferred (PsyD vs PhD) discovered a significant effect for:
 - Program length - $F_{(1, 108)} = 4.48, p = .007$ with PsyD degree programs shorter than PhD programs ($M = 5.13$ and 5.55 respectively).
 - Number of students $F_{(1, 51)} = 18.93, p < .001$ with PsyD degree programs enrolling about an average of four times more students than PhD programs ($M = 196.58$ and 49.68 respectively).
 - Cohort size $F_{(1, 85)} = 45.04, p < .001$, with PsyD degree programs annually admitting about an average of six times more students than PhD programs ($M = 45.00$ and 8.42 respectively).
 - And extent of class instruction in supervision $F_{(1, 24)} = 5.48, p = .028$ with mean hours of 2.00 and 2.76 for PsyD and PhD programs respectively.
 - However, number of faculty did not differ $F_{(1, 100)} = 3.26, p = .074$, with PsyD and PhD means of 16.08 and 21.39 respectively
 - Clinical, Counseling of School Programs
 - Significant differences were found among clinical, counseling and school psychology doctoral programs for:
 - Number of students enrolled - $F_{(2, 50)} = 5.02, p = .010, R^2 = .131$
 - Cohort/ entry class sizes - $F_{(2, 85)} = 4.84; p = .010, R^2 = .116$ and
 - Number of faculty employed by the program - $F_{(2, 100)} = 6.68, p = .002, R^2 = .084$.
 - A post hoc Scheffe test showed that clinical programs had larger faculties than school psychology programs while counseling program fell between these two groups and did not differ significantly from the others. No other post hoc tests were significant.

NCSPP and other Schools

- Comparison of NCSPP schools and other schools revealed significant differences in variability for all variables considered except program total hours and number of credit hours for supervision courses. Significant main effects were found for
 - Program length $F_{(1, 108)} = 8.65, p = .004$; means for NCSPP schools and others were 5.03 and 5.59 respectively.
 - Program hours $F_{(1, 45)} = 14.37, p < .001$; means for NCSPP schools and others were 116.50 and 94.88 respectively.
 - Numbers of students $F_{(21, 50)} = 22.31, p < .001$; means for NCSPP schools and others were 203.53 and 46.27 respectively.
 - Cohort/Entering class size $F_{(1, 85)} = 47.65, p < .001$; means for NCSPP schools and others were 42.40 and 7.21 respectively.
 - Number of faculty was not significant with 17.32 and 21.50 faculty for NCSPP and other programs (but note student body differences!)
 - Supervision Training
 - Of 26 programs for which we were able to locate supervision course descriptions, 6 reported 1 hour, 1 reported 2 hours, and 19 reported 3 hours of required class time for the course. No association was found between discipline and offering supervision ($X^2_{(4)} = 1.68, p = .680$). No association was found between degree offered and the timing of the supervision offering ($X^2_{(10)} = 3.41, p = .208$) as well. However a cross-tabulation showed that some programs offered their supervision course in the first or second year of the program (see Figure 1).
 - Missing data likely weakened all these analyses.

Supervision Courses by Degree Program and Year Offered in Curriculum



Selected References

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Discussion

- Findings indicated little standardization in the information provided, and even less standardization in the ways in which information was organized on program web-sites.
- The listings of accredited programs in psychology (APA, 2011) and in *Graduate Study in Psychology* (APA, 2012) were not fully consistent, possibly due to somewhat different publication dates. We included programs listed in either source.
- Altogether 362 APA-accredited doctoral programs were identified, and usable data obtained for 331 programs. However, missing data remains a significant problem that limits conclusions for the present results.
- Program lengths were reported in terms of a range of years, median, and mean time to completion. This further complicated data analysis.
- Program length was significantly shorter in NCSPP schools than in other graduate programs.
- NCSPP programs averaged about six times as many admissions per year and also averaged about four times as many total students enrolled.
- The smaller discrepancy in total enrolled students than admissions suggested there may be higher attrition rates among NCSPP programs, although we did not examine data regarding this outcome.
- NCSPP schools also reported significantly fewer total faculty members.
- Clinical psychology programs were significantly more likely to confer the PsyD degree than counseling and school programs. APA may more vigorously encourage Clinical Psychology doctoral programs to confer the PsyD or Counseling and School Psychology programs may more commonly aspire for their graduates to seek professorial roles where the PhD may be preferred.
- Gathering data on supervision course offerings proved difficult to accomplish from web-site postings.
- We found no association between offering supervision courses with either degree conferred or program identification.
- Some programs provided their courses in supervision in the first or second years of training, suggesting that they were more likely to focus on theory and research than on experiential practice in providing supervision to other trainees.
- Because of the difficulty in accessing information on supervision offerings we have little confidence in any conclusions based on these data.
- In some ways these findings bear more on program reporting and accessibility of information than on actual offerings of courses in clinical supervision. In short, we found the difficulty in determining from web-site information whether a supervision course was required by a given program to be daunting. We tentatively concluded that alternative methods will be needed to accomplish this goal.

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